

Nora M. Basurto Santos

**Transition in EFL from
Secondary to Preparatory
in Mexican State Schools**
Participant Perspectives



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ABSTRACT

The teaching and learning of English as a foreign language has a long tradition within the Mexican Education System. However, it has been widely recognised that this endeavour has been unsuccessful for the most part. This inquiry looks at three interrelated fields in education and in TESOL — academic transfers, language-in-education policy and planning, and students' and teachers' perceptions — in order to answer the following question:

How can transfer between secondary and preparatory school be made more effective?

A qualitative instrumental ethnographic case study, descriptive in nature, was undertaken with a focus on developing a detailed picture of how the main stakeholders in EFL teaching and learning in Mexican state schools perceive the transfer process of students moving from secondary to preparatory education.

Two phases of fieldwork were carried out in secondary and preparatory schools in Xalapa, Veracruz. Semi-structured interviews, official documents, transcripts, and field notes were the main sources of data. 7 EFL teachers, a secondary school co-ordinator, a head of a secondary school, and 14 core students making the transfer from secondary to preparatory education participated in this investigation.

The findings of this study suggest that a first important step forward to improve the EFL transfer experience within the state school sector is to move away from the top down approach to language-in-education policy making that has prevailed for such a long time. This investigation has also identified that there is a disjunction between policy-makers' rhetoric and what in actuality is feasible

to implement in real classrooms given the contextual constraints that teachers and students have to face. It has also illustrated some of the most salient issues hindering the EFL teaching and learning in state schools. The outcomes of this study suggest some obstacles that could be addressed by people who are most directly concerned with EFL policy and its implementation in the public sector. It also provides a greater understanding of the issues to be addressed in further research

Key words: Transfer, transition, language-in-education policy and planning, students' and teachers' perceptions, qualitative research, Mexico.

INTRODUCTION

English is the foreign language taught in Mexican State Schools. Millions of people have been involved in this academic activity for over 50 years in state schools in the State of Veracruz (see LGEV¹) where a great deal of effort and money have been invested in this activity with very disappointing outcomes. Although English as a Foreign Language (EFL, hereafter) is regarded as an essential part of education in Mexico, profound problems concerning EFL have been long disregarded. The continued emphasis on EFL in the Mexican educational system (Cancino, 2002; Herrera, 2002; Medellín, 2002) has also seen its introduction as a compulsory subject at university level (Carrizales, 2002). For example, in my own institution, which has offered an undergraduate EFL programme for over 40 years, much more recently, EFL was introduced as a compulsory subject in the first two semesters of the curricula of all undergraduate programmes offered by the Universidad Veracruzana (UV). However, even though EFL is regarded as an essential part of education in Mexico, no effort seems to have been made to address fundamental problems associated with its delivery.

Anecdotal evidence and word of mouth suggest that the EFL situation in Mexican state schools has not been a healthy one for the most part. Furthermore, among students, parents and even EFL teachers there seems to be a prevalent belief that very little progress, if any, can be made in EFL, especially in secondary and preparatory state schools. An indication of this can be gleaned from the fact that

¹ Ley General de Educación en el Estado de Veracruz

there has been a steadily growing number of private institutions that offer EFL courses and the increasing number of students who enrol in these institutions to take EFL despite already studying English in their secondary or preparatory schools. Why should this be the case?

The aim of any educational system is to provide and create opportunities for efficient and continuous learning. Previous learning acquired in a level of education is expected to serve as the basis upon which new learning can be built. However, the prevailing situation of EFL learning within the Mexican educational system has resulted in students having to start from scratch every time they start a new level in which EFL is compulsory throughout their student career.

A further fact that supports the prevalent belief of non-progression in EFL learning in state schools is that students beginning an undergraduate EFL programme at the University of Veracruz report that, despite the prior 500 hours of EFL instruction, they have to start from zero since the two syllabi for EFL courses in first semester are designed for complete beginners, thus assuming very little or no knowledge of the target language. In other words, students say there is a sense of non-progression since every time they have to start a new level of education in which EFL is a compulsory subject, they have to start from scratch.

Why are students treated as beginners in preparatory schools when they have already experienced 300 hours of EFL instruction in secondary schools? Why are they assumed to have no or very little knowledge of EFL when entering the university after 500 hours of EFL learning experience in previous learning levels?

It seems obvious that the transition from one level to the next with regard to EFL teaching and learning is an unsatisfactory situation that has prevailed in the Mexican educational system for over half a century and which has not yet been addressed. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to explore the first transitional stage students have to undergo (from Secondary to Preparatory) with a view to proposing a response which will contribute to the improvement of the current situation of EFL teaching/learning in the Mexican educational context.

This research seeks, therefore, to gain understanding of this situation by conducting an exploratory qualitative case study so that the findings resulting from this investigation can be translated into recommendations/suggestions to the educational authorities. The aim of this study is to understand the learners' and teachers' perceptions of issues of (lack of) continuity in ELT in the transfer from secondary to preparatory schools. At this point, transfer is understood as the stage that students experience between the last year of their education in secondary and their experience in beginning their English lessons in their preparatory school.

The research was prompted partly by a concern for these issues but also as a result of my own experience as both an EFL teacher, and more recently as a teacher trainer. I offer the following personal narrative as an illustration of a fairly typical situation that EFL teachers face.

A PERSONAL NOTE: SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR!

The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something — because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck him. (Wittgenstein, 2001:43)

I have a long-standing relationship with English as a Foreign Language. At the age of 11 I took my first EFL lessons and at 18 I started my undergraduate studies in EFL. When I was 20 or 21 and had not yet completed my university studies I was asked to teach EFL lessons in a state secondary for a three-month period to cover a maternity leave. Shortly afterwards, I was offered the opportunity to teach EFL in a private preparatory school for a year. In both schools I was the only EFL teacher, so I was teaching all grades and all students.

I still remember the sheer excitement, enthusiasm, and also the fear with which both offers were taken. They both represented a unique opportunity to be both an EFL teacher and an undergraduate student. I would have the opportunity to experience 'the two sides of the same coin'.

During those short teaching experiences I remember having mixed feelings. By and large I felt proud to have been chosen for the task. I had no idea what lay in wait. However, I must admit that as soon as those commitments were over I swore to myself that I would not go back to teach in those settings if I really did not need to. At that time, I thought it was a nightmare to try to teach groups of over 40 adolescents who seemed uninterested in EFL lessons at all and who were very difficult to handle, especially for an inexperienced teacher like myself. I also remember having felt sympathy for the teachers in those levels of education for the first time. At that time I thought that what I had experienced was the typical teaching experience of an EFL teacher in those settings. However, most importantly, I did not reflect on why that should be the case. I just reflected on how difficult it was to deal with adolescents but I must admit that I did not give any consideration to why the students seemed to lack interest in learning EFL.

In 1981, as soon as I finished my undergraduate studies I started working for the *Universidad Veracruzana*. This time I was offered the opportunity to teach EFL for beginning students in what is currently known as DELEX (*Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras*). The teaching situation was completely different from the previous ones. Students taking EFL lessons in these courses had decided to do so. That is to say, these classes were not compulsory and were taken mainly by students from different undergraduate programmes, although there were a few from state preparatory schools who wanted to take extra EFL lessons. The *only* difference between this experience and the previous ones — I thought — was that these students *did* want to learn English, so the situation in the classroom was *better*, especially for a teacher with still very little experience. I must admit that the fact that these students were taking beginner's courses despite having already studied EFL in secondary and preparatory or were still studying — in the case of the preparatory students — did not strike me at all. In hindsight, I imagine I took for granted what seems to have been *vox populi* for over 50 years with regards to the learning of EFL: '*lessons in state secondary and preparatory schools do not work. So, if you really want to learn EFL you have to take private lessons*'.

A few years later I became part of the teaching staff in the EFL undergraduate programme. However, as soon as I started teaching in this programme my relationship with EFL changed. It was no longer a learning/teaching experience and has since encompassed a wider range of activities related to EFL as well: designing and implementing new curricula, implementing changes in the assessment system, administrative duties, among others. I was even involved doing a few small scale research projects within the Language School. The experience gained by getting involved in all these activities alongside the teaching to learners beginning the undergraduate programme following an EFL syllabus which acknowledged no previous learning of the target language did not strike me at all for many years. The realisation that something was 'wrong' grew very meaningful some years later and was triggered by something that happened outside my own teaching environment.

In the early 2000, I embarked on a joint research project with two colleagues and an experienced researcher for the first time. In this project we were trying to identify successful activities in EFL lessons in preparatory schools (Basurto *et al.*, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c and 2002). In order to do this, we had to visit a number of state and private schools, interview students and EFL teachers and do a good number of class observations. On one occasion I approached a teacher to explain the aim of the research and ask for her permission to observe her class. In responding to my request she suddenly said something along the following lines:

'If you really want to know what the EFL situation is like you should start by investigating the secondary schools. There is where the problem begins. We, teachers at preparatory can do little with students who start here lacking the basic knowledge of EFL. All we can do is to try to fill in the gaps they bring from the secondary school'.

This time this preparatory EFL teacher's answer struck home and all of a sudden led me to put together the significance of all my previous experience with EFL. Paradoxically enough, I had been incapable of reflecting on the state of the EFL situation which had been 'in front of my eyes' both as an EFL student and teacher all those years. Why should students with formal instruction of EFL in secondary and preparatory start from zero at degree level?

RESEARCH ON EFL IN THE MEXICAN CONTEXT

This teacher's answer also made me realise that despite the fact that EFL has been an important part of the Mexican educational system for over 50 years, very little is known of the real everyday situations of teachers and learners in schools. No research has been undertaken that could provide a description of the 'real' experiences from the point of views of students and teachers in secondary and preparatory state schools to help understand the situation described above.

Research institutes concerned with issues in the field of education are very recent. They were created in the 1980's (Latapí Sarre, 1994). Although the interest in qualitative social research in Mexico is increasing (Cisneros Puebla, 2000), educational research in Mexico has been mainly conducted by using quantitative methods or focused on issues other than EFL in state schools. For example, Guevara Niebla has researched the issue of backlog in education (1984); Herr and Anderson (1997) have concentrated on issues of students' identities. Mathematics, physics and literacy are among the most researched areas (Chain, 1999). Published research reports of any sort in the field of applied linguistics are very scarce, and this seems to be even truer of published research relating to the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language within the Mexican school system (González Robles *et al.*, 2004; Ramírez Romero, 2007; White Libera, 2007).

Owing to both the important role of EFL within the Mexican educational system and the increasing demand to include EFL as a compulsory subject in state primary schools, the urgent need for research on issues relating to the teaching and learning of EFL has already been recognised (Guzmán Gómez, 1998). There-

fore, one of the expected outcomes of this study is to respond to that urgent need to try to bridge this enormous gap given the importance of EFL within the whole range of educational levels in Mexico.

The lack of research on issues concerning the teaching and learning of EFL in state schools in Mexico is both striking and surprising. The only exceptions to date are an exploratory study conducted during 2001-2002 in over 100 state Secondary schools in Mexico City. This large-scale study was conducted by people working for the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP). The researchers stated, in the new document for EFL teaching in secondary school, that despite the fact that a communicative approach to the teaching and learning of EFL in Secondary schools had been implemented in 1993, 'little change' in practice had occurred since (SEP, 2006: 7). Unfortunately, neither a detailed description of the study nor the results of this investigation have been published so far and therefore have not been available to researchers in the TESOL field. However, it is even more important to note that the result of this study leaves a lot of questions unanswered. For example, it did not attempt to describe why the change is not taking place or what the reasons are for this 'little change'.

More recently, another large-scale research project was undertaken to find out students' EFL knowledge when entering Higher Education Institutions in the metropolitan area of Mexico City (González Robles *et al.*, 2004). This will be presented and discussed in chapter two in the review of relevant literature.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study is therefore the first attempt to contribute to our knowledge of issues concerning the teaching and learning of EFL within the Mexican context from a qualitative stance. I would like to highlight that at the beginning of this study the main focus of this study was on the students' perceptions of their transfer or transition from secondary to preparatory school regarding EFL lessons. However, as the research process progressed the initial question inevitably evolved as part of the reflexive process of data collection and analysis with the result that, for example, the issue of transition moved from centre stage to a subsidiary issue. Therefore the initial question became a number of main and subsidiary questions which reflect a wider focus touching in three intertwined fields of knowledge concerning EFL teaching and learning in Mexican state schools. Therefore, the questions that are posed and will be answer in this thesis are as follows:

How is official policy on EFL teaching in secondary and preparatory schools in Mexico implemented in practice?

What is stipulated in the official documents regarding EFL teaching in secondary and preparatory schools?

How is the stated policy realised in practice?

What are the students' and teachers' experiences of the key EFL transitional stage from secondary to preparatory state schools in Mexico?

How is the relationship between expectations and realisations in EFL perceived by learners and teachers in the process of moving from secondary to preparatory education?

What are the issues arising from this that affect the educational process?

What are the key issues in continuity between one level of education to another?

What is the impact that any continuity issues have on both teachers and learners?

The answers to the above questions will form the basis for responding to the following research question:

How can transfer between secondary and preparatory school be made more effective?

The process of transfer and transition that learners have to experience during their student careers in the context of education in Mexico has not yet been studied. Therefore, the main theoretical concepts guiding the current study come from research carried out mainly in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America.

Most studies on transfer or transition in education have concentrated on the move from levels of compulsory education: from primary to secondary schooling or from middle school to high school (see for example, Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969; Measor and Woods, 1984; Galton *et al.*, 2003). However, much more recently,

interest seems to be growing in investigating issues related to the impact of the process of transfer to tertiary or higher education, for example, persistence or attrition (Pargetter *et al.*, 1998); moving from A Level to undergraduate in English Literature (Ballinger, 2003). However, it is important to note that while there is an extensive body of literature on transfer and transition and the impact of these processes on students' progress, attainment and their adjustments to the new learning environments in the above mentioned countries, there has been almost no research conducted in the field of learning modern languages other than English (see Lord, 2003).

Therefore, this is a first attempt to try to understand what happens in the learners' first experience of transfer where a modern language — EFL in this particular case — is a compulsory subject: from secondary to preparatory state schooling.

DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of this research is to understand how students experience the transfer from one school to another, specifically with regard to their learning of English as a foreign language (EFL). The tradition chosen to find out how students and teachers perceive the transfer from secondary to preparatory school in Xalapa, Mexico regarding EFL lessons is a qualitative case study. The reasons for this are discussed in section 3.2 of this thesis.

Taking into account the nature of the research question, I decided to adopt an in-depth qualitative case study selecting a case that would be of a manageable size. The research considered the above areas of concern by looking at the students' and the teachers' perceptions of what happens (or not) during the transfer process. The careful selection of official relevant documents and records and the use of my research diary and field notes were also part of the data collection process. Data were collected from multiple sources of information 'because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective' (Patton, 1990:244).

The fieldwork of this study was carried out in two phases. The first one was undertaken in June 2004 during the last month of the participants' secondary education. The second was carried out during February-March 2005 when the students had just finished their first semester of preparatory education and therefore had just completed the first compulsory EFL course in their new level of education. These periods were carefully chosen insofar as these dates would

provide an opportunity to get ‘fresher’ (Richards, 2003: 66) accounts of the participants’ experiences or perceptions of the transfer process under study rather than accounts told in hindsight.

In order to collect data for the current investigation, three state secondary schools in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico were chosen as research sites in the first phase of fieldwork. Seven EFL teachers also participated in this study: five secondary school teachers and two preparatory school teachers; a headmaster and a school co-ordinator in two secondary schools. During the fieldwork period, semi-structured interviews with all participants were audio recorded and later fully transcribed (see chapter three section 3.3 for a detailed description of data collection procedures and analysis 3.5).

It is important to note that although generalisations are not to be expected from a case study such as this, it can be said that it contains elements that are very likely to have a resonance for practitioners and people interested in the field of TESOL (for a discussion of this see 3.2.3.3) and the teaching of foreign modern languages.

HOW THIS THESIS IS ORGANISED

Chapter one provides general information of the Mexican Educational system in which the EFL teaching and learning is embedded.

Chapter two presents a review of the relevant literature and introduces the theoretical concepts that underpin the current study. It also aims at presenting a discussion of relevant research and identifies the areas in which this study will contribute to existing research on transition in education.

Chapter three describes the research orientation chosen to answer the research question posed and describes the approach and process of data collection and analysis as well.

Chapter four will present a detailed analysis of official documents of the syllabi for the both levels of education that are the focus of this study while chapter five will be dedicated to presenting and analysing what goes on inside the state school classrooms from the participants’ perspectives.

Chapter six will show how the students respond to the EFL learning situations in state schools while chapter seven will be devoted to a brief consideration of the EFL teachers’ views. Finally, chapter eight will discuss the outcomes of the study and make recommendations for future research.

1

CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

Although the focus of the current study is the learners' experience of the transfer from 3rd grade of secondary school to 1st grade of preparatory school, focusing on English lessons, it is necessary to provide an overview of the general educational context in which these EFL lessons take place.

Any deep understanding of the present situation of education in Mexico must begin, albeit briefly, with an acknowledgment of some of the most relevant aspects of the country and the changes that its educational system has undergone. It could be argued that these aspects mirror the complexity of the present educational system and, therefore, that in which the teaching and learning of English is embedded. Therefore, section 1.2 will provide relevant information about the context in which the research was carried out, while section 1.3 will provide an overview of the history of the educational system in Mexico in order to shed light on the understanding of the complex situation under study. Section 1.4 will deal with English as a Foreign Language within the educational system in Mexico. Finally, section 1.5 will present an overview of the research on educational issues in Mexico.

1.2 MEXICO, VERACRUZ, XALAPA

Mexico is a socio-economically, culturally and linguistically diverse nation. This diversity is the result of its past and its ongoing changing situation. Mexico achieved its independence early in the 19th century after three centuries of Spanish dominance. One of the results of this Spanish rule is the status of official language that Spanish has had for many years throughout the country to the present time. However, Mayan, Nahuatl, Zapotec and many other regional indigenous languages are still spoken and the Spanish language is a second language for most indigenous peoples in Mexico (Flores Farfán, 2001).

Mexico is a federal republic which comprises 31 states and one Federal District (DF) with an estimated population of 106,202,903 in 2005. The vast majority (74.6%) of this population live in urban areas (INEGI, 2005). Mexico is located in the North part of the American Continent together with two English speaking countries: the United States of America and Canada. The states situated in the north of the country (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas) share a border of 3,169 km with the southern states of the USA. Guatemala and Belize are the bordering countries in the south of Mexico. In 1994 Mexico signed an Agreement of free trade with the USA and Canada (NAFTA). The geographical situation of Mexico together with the NAFTA agreement are two vital aspects that have weighed on the rapid widespread perceived necessity of the learning and teaching of EFL across the whole country. It is generally believed that Mexicans who can use English proficiently will have access to better education and job opportunities.

The current study was carried out in schools in Xalapa, the capital city of the state of Veracruz, the 10th biggest state in the republic, located in the east part of the country on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Almost 7% of the Mexican population lives in this part of the country. Mexico is said to be a country of young people. The average age of the population of the state of Veracruz is 25 years (INEGI, 2005).

Education in Xalapa is provided either by public or private schools. These are both regulated by the federal government through the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (henceforth SEP) and the state government through the *Secretaría de Educación del Estado de Veracruz* (henceforth SEV). In Xalapa there are 194 Primary schools (170 public and 24 private), 71 secondary schools (54 public and 17 private) and 64 Preparatory schools (22 private and 42 public). The number of private universities has increased in recent years. This may be due to the increasing number of students who do not get a place in the state University of Veracruz (UV) which

is the biggest and oldest university in the state providing higher education to most students enrolled in higher education throughout the state. The UV has offered an undergraduate programme in EFL since 1965 (Port@l SEV).

1.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

For many years education was the privilege of the rich in Mexico; most Mexicans, peasants and working classes, did not know how to read or write. It was not until 1867 that the first important law concerning education (*Ley Orgánica de Instrucción Pública*), was passed under the presidency of Benito Juárez. This law declared that education would be secular, free and obligatory. At the outset of the twentieth century, Article Three of the 1917 Constitution gave the federal government great powers over education and made all private schools subject to government supervision. Ever since, many amendments have been made to Article Three in attempts to fulfil the growing social demands of 'education for all' (*educación para todos*) and to respond to the continuous modernisation of the country (Bolaños Martínez: 11-40).

Late in the 1960s a period of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in Mexico began. The federal government helped to establish the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Educación* (SNTE), and for the first time a national strategy for public education was developed by the state. Consequently, 'everything turned national: the National Teachers College, the National Institute for Teachers Training, the national curricula, national free textbooks and, of course, a national unified system of education' (Ornelas, 1997). There was an even greater expansion of primary, secondary and distance education but priority was to be given to urban areas. However, since the SEP still exercised all the control over education the 31 state governments remained stagnant (*ibid*). Responses to alleviate both this situation and the demand for more years of compulsory schooling were advanced, yet many years of discussions and attempts to reform the educational system passed before they could crystallise (see Álvarez García, 1992: 158-186; Ornelas, 2000).

Finally, in May 1992 a federal initiative changed Article Three of the Constitution and approved the new *Ley General de Educación* (General Law of Education) in 1993. This represented a milestone in the present Mexican Educational System (see Ornelas, 2000; Gutiérrez, 2000; McLaughlin, 2002). Since this year, Mexico has had:

1. a decentralised system of education which transferred to the 31 states in the republic the responsibility over basic education and teacher education;
2. an extended basic education from six to nine years of compulsory and free schooling;
3. a re-emphasis of subject areas in the curriculum.

This decentralisation reform has generated important institutional change in the states. However, as Ornelas (2000:431) has pointed out:

With the passage of the general Education Law in 1993, the local educational authorities have been assuming new responsibilities, such as: planning, hiring new staff, devising educational innovations, organizing new supervising functions, launching in-service programs for teachers, creating infrastructure, publishing books or journals (either for teachers or the public at large), and managing large sums of money. They are also responsible to local congresses for executing educational policies and managing relationships with SEP and other institutions. However, an overall evaluation of the system and of student achievement has not yet been done, and so accountability is still forthcoming.

Owing to the considerable socio-economic and cultural diversity of the country, education has always presented a real challenge to the people concerned with developing and carrying out the tasks of learning and teaching. Education in Mexico is always trying to cope with a dynamic growth in the school population, curricular reforms and the complexity of its organisation. The two primary mandates of education are to form citizens and human capital, but these mandates imply rather different kinds of educational priorities that have not been easily melded into a coherent educational policy (Ornelas, 1995: 49).

Despite the fact that Mexico is still struggling with an educational backlog (*rezago*), especially in the rural areas of the country (see Tatto 1999; Cantú, 1992; Guevera Niebla *et al.*, 1992), it can be said that today Mexico has nearly reached its goal of providing facilities for all school-age children.

The Mexican educational system comprises six educational levels: pre-school, primary school, secondary, post-secondary (*Bachillerato y profesional media*) and undergraduate and graduate schools (see Table 1.1, adapted from McLaughlin 2002, for the different levels and types of education offered by the educational system in Mexico).

Table 1.1 The Mexican Educational System

Preschool (4-5 year-olds) and Primary school (Grades 1-6)	Middle Grades (Grades 7-9)	High School (Grades 10-12)	University or Politécnicos (4-5 years = 8 to 10 semesters)
<p>Pre-escolar: Federally funded programmes for children ages 4-5</p> <p>Primaria: Schools with grades 1-6 and at least one teacher per grade</p> <p>Multigrados: One-room schools with one teacher for grades 1-6 or multi-grade schools with several teachers, each teaching more than one grade</p>	<p>Secundarias: Generales Schools that enrol non-rural students, including those who are college-bound.</p> <p>Técnicas: Schools that provide vocational training for non-college-bound students</p> <p>Telesecundarias: Rural schools offering a televised curriculum, which enrolls a majority of rural students.</p>	<p>Preparatorias or Bachilleratos: Schools for college-bound youth, where students must choose one of 4 professional areas in their final year: physical-mathematics; chemical-biological; economic-administrative; or humanities.</p> <p>Tecnológicas: Schools for students who have a particular vocational career in mind.</p>	<p>Licenciaturas: (undergraduate programmes) Funded by both federal and local state government. <i>Licenciaturas</i> are offered in different areas: physical-mathematics; chemical-biological; economic-administrative; arts and humanities</p>

Education provided by the federal (SEP) and state government (SEV) is of two different types: *escolarizada*, where students have to attend school on a daily basis following the official school calendar, and *no escolarizada* which caters for people to continue or conclude their education who are unable to attend school on a regular basis. This is done through tutorials without imposing attendance at a school on daily basis as in the *escolarizada*.

The subsequent sections will provide information on these different educational levels but will be primarily concerned with *educación escolarizada* since all the participants in the current study are involved in this type of education. However, it is worth noting that the private sector has been rapidly expanding and nowadays there are also private schools offering all the different levels that comprise the Mexican educational system. This situation results in students transferring from state schools to private schools and vice versa, thus making the EFL teaching and learning process even more complex since private schools usually provide more EFL teaching and learning resources than public schools and may devote twice as much time to teaching the subject.

1.4 BASIC EDUCATION: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

Compulsory secondary education had long been the dream of some reformers (Meneses Morales, 1988) and by 1990 the SEP had made great strides in providing communities with various options. However, it was 1993 that marked a watershed in contemporary Mexican educational policy with the extension of compulsory education from six to nine years. This is now referred to as *Educación Básica* (Basic education): six years of *primaria* (primary school) and three years of *secundaria* (Secondary school) (Port@l SEP).

Primary education is obligatory for children aged from six to 14. Students over 14 can opt for one of the types of education for adults. It comprises six grades (1st to 6th) and is provided in urban and rural areas. There are three different types of primary education: general, bilingual-bicultural (for indigenous people) and community courses.

Eight subjects comprise the curriculum implemented in 1993: Spanish, mathematics, natural sciences, history, geography, civic education, arts and physical education. According to Article 15 of the General Law of Education (LGE), students have to attend 200 working days in basic education in either of two shifts: morning (8.00 to 12.30 hrs) or afternoon (12.30 to 17.00 hrs).

The 1993 curriculum introduced some significant structural changes, the most important innovations of which were: a) an emphasis on the acquisition of the intellectual skills (reading, writing, oral expression, search and selection of relevant information; and b) the application of mathematics to quotidian activities with a quarter of the class-time devoted to this subject. The development of proficiency in Spanish — oral and written — is heavily emphasised, allotted 45% of class time in the first two years and 35% in the four remaining grades of the class-time (SEP, 1993). A certificate is obtained at the end of a successful completion of primary education which is an indispensable requirement to enter secondary education.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is not yet a subject within the curriculum of primary education in state schools, though for some years now 'pilot' English classes have been introduced in some state schools throughout the country. However, it is important to point out that in *all* private elementary schools in urban areas EFL lessons are compulsory. EFL lessons differ considerably from school to school in the private sector: whereas EFL may be taught throughout the six years in other primary schools, EFL in these may not be introduced until 5th grade or the final year. The time allotted to EFL lessons in these schools also varies: EFL is taught from three to ten hours weekly depending on the school. This situation

does have an impact for students making the transfer from a private elementary school to a state secondary school.

Secondary education is also free and obligatory for students aged from 12 to 16. It consists of three years and there are three different types of secondary schools: *Generales* (General), *Técnicas* (Technical), and *Telesecundarias*.

General secondary schools enrol mainly students who are considering continuing their studies at university level. Technical secondary schools follow the same academic programme as General secondary schools but also provide vocational training in four areas: industry, agriculture, fishery, and forestry. Students completing this type of education can enter the labour market or continue their studies in a university. Most of the secondary schools for adolescents in Mexico, have two shifts: one in the morning (General Secondary Schools: 07.20 to 13.40 and Technical Secondary Schools: 07.00 to 14.00) and one in the afternoon (General: 13.50 to 20.10 and Technical: 14.00 to 21.00). The latter is worth bearing in mind since there are many EFL teachers that cover both shifts and this fact plays a very important role in understanding the teachers' experiences of EFL working conditions at this educational level. Although not very common, it is possible to find an EFL teacher whose working day begins at approximately 07.00 and finishes at 21.00 with an hour-break or less between the two shifts — if they are not teaching the last class in the morning shift and the first in the afternoon!

Officially, each subject in the curricula is delivered by 'specialised teachers' (see Table 1.2 below for the common subjects for secondary education) except in *Telesecundarias* (Por@l SEP).

It is worth noting how many different compulsory courses students in the Mexican educational system have to take. They are only given the opportunity to choose the elective subject among the ones that are offered in each school. This also applies for preparatory or upper middle education.

Telesecundarias were created over 30 years ago to respond to the growing demand for education from people living in rural areas where it was not possible to implement the other two types of secondary schools. However, nowadays, *Telesecundarias* can also be found in urban areas and some adolescent students are opting for these secondary schools. In this type of secondary school, there is a teacher in charge of all the subjects that comprise the curriculum. Although EFL is part of the curriculum, it is not usually taught since teachers working in these schools are not EFL teachers (OEI- Mexico). It may be the case that a very few students transfer from one of the other two types of secondary schools to a *Telesecundaria* and vice versa.

Table 1. 2 Common subjects in Secondary Schools

	FIRST GRADE (Year 7)	SECOND GRADE (Year 8)	THIRD GRADE (Year 9)
ACADEMIC SUBJECTS <i>(Asignaturas Académicas)</i>	Spanish <i>5 hpw</i>	Spanish <i>5 hpw</i>	Spanish <i>5 hpw</i>
	Mathematics <i>5 hpw</i>	Mathematics <i>5 hpw</i>	Mathematics <i>5 hpw</i>
	World History I <i>3 hpw</i>	World History II <i>3 hpw</i>	History of Mexico <i>3 hpw</i>
	General Geography <i>3 hpw</i>	Geography of Mexico <i>2 hpw</i>	Elective (to be decided by each entity) <i>3 hpw</i>
	Civic Formation and Ethics <i>3 hpw</i>	Civic Formation and Ethics <i>2 hpw</i>	Civics and Ethics <i>3 hpw</i>
	Biology <i>3 hpw</i>	Biology <i>2 hpw</i>	Chemistry <i>3 hpw</i>
	Intro. to Physics and Chemistry <i>3 hpw</i>	Physics <i>3 hpws</i>	Physics <i>3 hpw</i>
	Foreign Language: ENGLISH <i>3 hpw</i>	Foreign Language: ENGLISH <i>3 hpw</i>	Foreign Language: ENGLISH <i>3 hpw</i>
	ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT <i>(Actividades de Desarrollo)</i>	Expression and Appreciation of the Arts <i>2 hpw</i>	Expression and Appreciation of the Arts <i>2 hpw</i>
Physical education <i>2 hpw</i>		Physical education <i>2 hpw</i>	Physical education <i>2 hpw</i>
Technological education <i>3hpw</i>		Technological education <i>3 hpw</i>	Technological education <i>3 hpw</i>
Total Hours per Week	35	35	35

1.5 PREPARATORY SCHOOL OR UPPER MIDDLE EDUCATION

Preparatory or Bachillerato is the educational level that is studied by those students who have completed secondary school and are intending to go on to university level. It is also free but it is not yet obligatory. However, apart from the secondary education certificate, students have to pass an entrance exam to start this educational level (see chapter four).

The students' age, in this level of education, ranges from 15 to 18. This level of education consists of three years (Years 10, 11 and 12) and, like *secundarias*, there are three different types of schools: *Generales*, *Técnicas* and *Telebachillerato*. The last is more commonly found in urban areas, unlike *secundarias*.

Like *Secundarias*, *Preparatorias Generales* enrol mainly students who are considering moving on to university level. Technical schools in this educational level follow the same academic programme as *Preparatorias Generales*, at the same time providing different types of vocational training courses which allow students, after completing their studies, to enter the labour market if they wish to do so (Port@l SEP). However, students completing this type of education, especially in towns and cities, tend to continue their studies in a university. Most of the preparatory schools in Mexico, have two shifts: one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Each subject in the curriculum is delivered by specialised teachers for each subject. It is important to note that EFL is only a compulsory subject during the first three semesters (see Table 1.3). However, this situation varies from school to school. Some state preparatory schools offer EFL as an elective subject from 4th to 6th semester. This situation varies among preparatory schools and the offer of EFL as an elective depends on whether the school has the academic staff or the necessary resources. The subjects and the number of hours per week that students have to study during the six semesters that comprise preparatory education are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1. 3 Common Subjects in Preparatory Education

SUBJECTS	1°	2°	3°	4°	5°	6°
Reading and Writing workshop	4	4	4	4	-	-
ENGLISH *	3	3	3	-	-	-
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	-	-
Research Methods	4	4	-	-	-	-
Physics	4	4	4	-	-	-
Introduction to Social Sciences	4	4	-	-	-	-
Introduction to Law Studies	3	-	-	-	-	-
Chemistry	-	4	4	4	-	-
History of Mexico	-	-	3	3	-	-
Labour and Social security legislation	-	-	3	-	-	-
Human Relations	-	-	3	-	-	-
Biology	-	-	-	4	-	-
Philosophy	-	-	-	3	3	3
Literature	-	-	-	-	3	3
Earth Sciences	-	-	-	-	3	-
Socio-economic structure of Mexico	-	-	-	-	3	-
Ecology	-	-	-	-	-	3
Psychology	-	-	-	-	-	3
Education orientation	1	1	-	-	-	-
Extra-curricular Activities **	2	2	2	-	-	-
Technological elective ***						

* English may be offered as a “Capacitación para el Trabajo” in the last three semesters in some Preparatory Schools in Xalapa. The syllabus and the number of hours per week for the last three semesters change considerably, i.e. from Reading Comprehension to General English (4 skills) and from 3 hours per week to up to 6hpw.

** These activities may vary from school to school and are compulsory.

*** The offer of these activities depends on perceived regional pertinence.

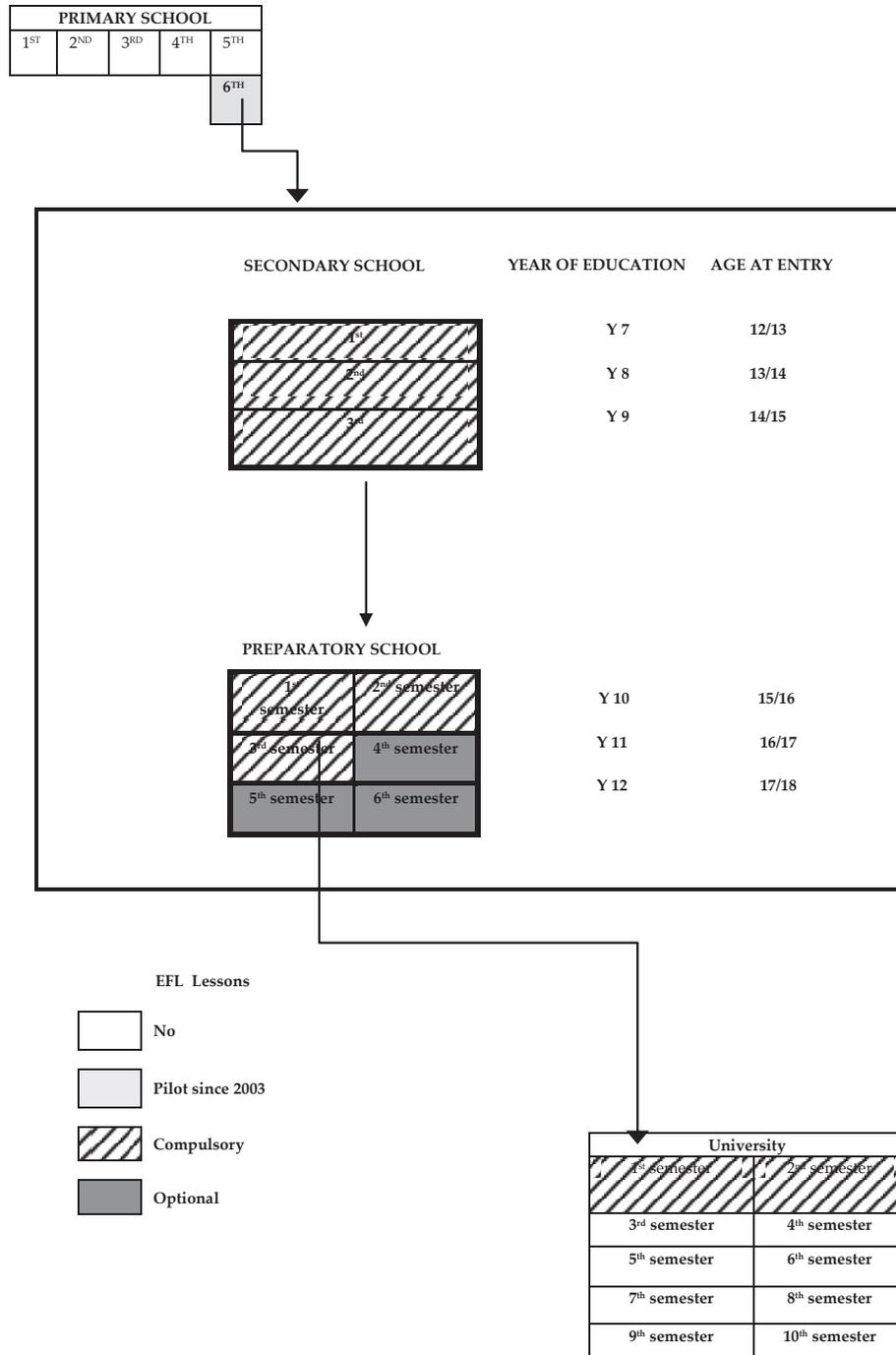
1.6 UNIVERSITY

There are approximately 9,000 institutions offering higher education in Mexico. During the 90's, 1,837,884 students were enrolled in university studies. Two of the most important universities are the *Universidad Autónoma de México* (UNAM,

1551), and *El Instituto Politécnico Nacional* (1937), both located in Mexico City. Other important universities are *Universidad de Guadalajara* (1791), *Universidad Veracruzana* (1944) and the *Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey* (1943), this latter a private institution.

Universidad Veracruzana, my teaching environment for over 20 years, has offered a BA in English Language since 1965. However, although students entering the BA in English Language have already studied EFL, at least in the two previous educational levels, the target language syllabi for students in first semester is designed for complete beginners. Figure 1.1 below shows the transfers or transitions that the students have to undergo within the Mexican educational system. An overview of the EFL subject within the two levels of education — secondary and preparatory — that this study concerns will be provided in chapter four.

Figure 1. 1 EFL Transfers in the Mexican Educational System



2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, this investigation seeks to understand students' perceptions and the interrelated issues in the process of transfer from one level of education to the next with regard to their EFL compulsory learning in state schools in the Mexican context. In order to do so, it is necessary to review relevant literature in three interrelated areas of knowledge that shed light on the phenomenon under study: academic transfers and transitions (section 2.2), language-in-education policy and planning (section 2.3), and students' and teachers' perceptions of EFL instruction (section 2.4). Thus, this 'set of concepts will be used to define, describe, and suggest possible explanations' that account for the different issues interconnected in EFL learning when students transfer from one level of education to the next (Walford, 2001:148). The absence of published studies carried out focusing on educational transfers, EFL policy and planning in Mexico and how students experience or perceive EFL learning in state schools in Mexico is striking. Therefore, all studies reviewed in this chapter were conducted in English speaking countries (2.2.2) except for the one reported in section 2.2.4. Finally, a summary of this chapter will be presented in section 2.5.

2.2 RESEARCH ON TRANSFER AND TRANSITION IN EDUCATION

During students' formal educational life, they have to inevitably undergo a series of school transfers or transitions. Some of these school transfers can provide students with many interesting and enriching opportunities for both personal and academic growth while others seem to represent for them quite the opposite: negative and frustrating experiences leading, if they are not taken care of on time, to students becoming disengaged in learning and finally even dropping out of school thus interrupting their educational development.

There is a long tradition of research that has concentrated on different issues of students' transfers within compulsory education in mainstream education (see for example, Murdoch, 1966; Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969; BEDC, 1975; Gorwood, 1986; Gimeno Sancristan, 1996; Youngman and Lunzer, 1977; Measor and Woods, 1984; Galton and Willocks, 1983; Delamont and Galton, 1986; Youngman, 1978; Anderman *et al.*, 1994; Schiller, 1999; Pointon, 2000; Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Galton *et al.*, 2003). More recently, interest seems to be growing in investigating issues related to the process of transfer to tertiary or higher education (see, for example, Pargetter *et al.*, 1998; Ballinger, 2003; Peel 1998; Smith, 2002, 2004; Clerehan, 2003; Macaro and Wingate, 2004). It is worth noting that studies focusing on issues concerning students' transfer in learning foreign languages are scarce and recent (Hill *et al.*, 1998; Scarino, 2003; Cunningham, 2003; Bolster *et al.*, 2004; Hunt *et al.*, 2008). As these studies are more relevant to the current investigation, they will be reviewed in more detail (see 2.2.3)

However, there are no studies, so far, that have investigated the transfer from one level of schooling to the next focusing on EFL learning in the field of TESOL. This lack of research results is striking for at least two reasons: a) the millions of students taking EFL lessons compulsory in state schools classrooms, as stipulated by policy makers in most countries where English is not the official native language, will inevitably undergo not only one but several transfers in EFL learning which may pose different challenges (see section 2.3); and b) most importantly, the widespread perceived failure in achieving satisfactory results in EFL learning and teaching in the public sector where millions of people have been involved and considerable amounts of money have been invested. With this in mind, this investigation seeks to understand students' perceptions of the process of transfer from one level of education to the next with regard to their EFL learning in order to bridge this existing gap specifically in the Mexican context and in general in the area of TESOL.

2.2.1 DEFINING TERMS

For some researchers there is a difference between the processes of changing school and moving up a year within the same school (Galton *et al.*, 2000; Galton and Hargreaves, 2002), whereas for others the term *transition* is used for both (Anderson *et al.*, 2000).

Most scholars writing about the process of transfer and transition use these two terms interchangeably. However, more recently Galton *et al.* (2000: 341; 2002: 26) suggested a distinction between the term *transfer* to talk about the move from one phase of education to another involving a change of schools, whereas *transition* describes year by year moves within the same school when moving up a grade (*ibid.*). However, I would like to suggest that the distinction between the terms *transfer* and *transition* is more complex than just whether the focus is a change involving a school or just a school-year. As I will show in later chapters, in the EFL learning experience in the Mexican context the terms *transfer* and *transition* convey important contradictory messages regarding the continuity and/or progress in language learning.

Academic transition has been defined as ‘a process during which institutional and social factors influence which students’ educational careers are positively or negatively affected by this movement between organizations’ (Schiller, 1999: 216-217). Schiller’s definition indicates that there should be a shared responsibility of the middle school and high school (secondary and preparatory school in the Mexican context) personnel for guiding young adolescents through this major educational transition (Smith., 2006).

In order to talk about the learning contexts in which the transfer is taking place, researchers also have their preferences. Some writers refer to *pre-and-post transfer* schools or *exit and entrance* schools; others use the term *feeder* school (Schiller, 1999) to talk about the schools from where the students come and the *transfer* school to refer to the school where students are beginning their new studies. However, some researchers have pointed out that the term *feeder* school is:

no longer welcomed by some primary head teachers because they feel that it implies that their task is merely to groom pupils for what then takes place when pupils move to ‘big’ school (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002: xvii)

Therefore, in the context of this study the secondary school is the *pre-transfer*, the *exit* or the *feeder* school, while the preparatory school is the equivalent to *post-*

transfer, entrance, or transfer school (for further details of the Mexican educational system, see chapter one).

2.2.2 RESEARCH ON TRANSFER AND TRANSITION IN EDUCATION

Owing to the lack of literature in the field of academic transfers in the Mexican context, it was necessary to review studies which have been carried out in other countries where these issues have been the focus of research for over four decades: the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America among others. This presented a real challenge since these countries have a very different educational system to the one of the current study. Compulsory education in most educational systems is structured around two- or three-tier systems. However, the case of England and Wales, where most of the research reviewed in this chapter has been conducted, is to the outsider 'remarkably complicated and difficult to manage' (Galton and Heargraves, 2002). Demetriou *et al.* (2000: 425) also highlight this difficulty:

Transfer is a difficult issue to write about for an international audience because the system in England is so diverse. President de Gaulle is reputed to have asked: 'How can you govern a country that makes 500 different cheeses? We might well ask, in our country, 'How can you manage an education system where students can transfer from one school to another at so many different ages? Indeed, transfer can take place at virtually any age between 4 and 18.

Despite the age difference when the transfer takes place and in the organisation of the school system in most of the studies reported here, they are germane to the current study insofar as some of the problems raised or associated to the process of transfer in these studies are relevant for the current investigation. However, it is important to point out that an awareness of these differences is necessary as they seem to help rather than hinder the understanding of the phenomena under study. For example, almost 30 years ago Burrows discussed the effective links that were necessary for the transfer between the middle and upper schools in Britain. He stated that one of the responsibilities that lay on middle schools was to prepare 'their pupils in knowledge and attitudes, for life in the school to which they next go' (1978: 195-197). In other words, they have to learn how to become 'professional pupils' (Lahelma and Gordon, 1997: 126). Of particular relevance for the current

study is his observation regarding the continuity or rather the discontinuity in foreign language learning during the transfer from middle to upper schools. Over three decades ago, he accurately pointed out that:

The first foreign language in this country is traditionally French, and all first and second year upper school pupils are likely to learn it. But what is the starting point to be? If there are six contributory middle schools and there has been no co-ordination, there may well be two which have already given their pupils a four-year course, one a two-year course, one through exigencies of staff an erratic now-we-have-it-now-we-don't provision, one no French at all, and one minded school which instead has provided German. What is the language department of the upper school to do? One can hardly blame its members if they decide to ignore the preceding chaos and start everyone at the beginning — which is quite unfair to the pupils, some of whom will be happily whisked along, some bored at covering again ground they have covered already, some rebellious at losing their German, and some confused because their group is so heterogeneous that orderly teaching rapidly becomes impossible” (ibid: 196-197).

Although Burrows' words referred to the transfer situation concerning foreign language learning/teaching in England over thirty years ago, it is noticeable how they seem to mirror the current Mexican situation in the teaching/learning of EFL (see chapters four, five and six). However, a very important consideration that accounted for the discontinuity in the foreign language teaching/learning in the British and Australian schools (see 2.2.4) was the fact that the provision of the foreign or modern languages taught in those educational settings varied from school to school. Thus, changing schools may have resulted in finding out that in the transfer to a new school a different foreign language was taught and not the one that the feeder schools included in their curricula and to which the students had been exposed to in their previous language learning experience. This was a major consideration that accounted for the lack of progress in foreign language learning. However, this is not a plausible explanation in the Mexican context since as mentioned earlier English is *the* foreign language that students in state schools are required to study. In the Mexican educational context the provision of a different foreign language between the pre-transfer to the post-transfer school is not something that could have an important bearing for the lack of continuity or progress in EFL.

How, then, can the lack of progress be understood or explained? As can be seen from other studies in different parts of the world, lack of progress or failure

in foreign language learning is not an exclusive issue to the Mexican context. However, I would argue that this issue is much more complex than in the studies reviewed here. To mention just a few considerations that have to be borne in mind when seeking understanding of the current EFL learning situation in the Mexican state schools context it can be said that: a) the same language (English) is taught throughout most of the state and private education in Mexico; b) it is compulsory at least during 7 years in state schools; and c) there seems to be a careful planning concerning continuity and progress in the curricula of secondary and preparatory education that this study concentrates on (see chapter four). According to Gorwood (1991) the problem of continuity between schools would not be solved by a national curriculum because the real problem is lack of communication between teachers. This issue of communication will be taken up in the thesis.

2.2.3 EARLY RESEARCH ON TRANSFER AND TRANSITION IN EDUCATION

The process of transfer in education has been studied from different perspectives for almost four decades. Some of the earliest studies on transfer were carried out during the 60's and 70's. The most cited studies in the literature on transfer during this period are Murdoch's (1966); Nisbet and Entwistle's (1969); and Youngman and Lunzer's (1977). They all focused on the transfer from primary to secondary education and concerned the social aspect of the transfer experience. In summary, these early studies on the transfer to secondary education, using mainly quantitative data, were able to identify that students who were 'younger, less mature, less confident pupils; ones of non-academic disposition, often from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds' are the students most at risk from the transfer process (Galton *et al.*, 2000: 346).

However, Measor and Woods (1984) pointed out that these large scale studies using mainly quantitative data did have their limitations since 'they were normative studies cast in terms of what schools were trying to achieve. There was nothing wrong with that provided that it is clearly recognized as the case. However, these studies left a great deal unresearched and could have possibly yield distorted interpretations' (*ibid.*: 2). Studies using such large samples have failed to capture the pupils' own 'system of relevances' (Shutz 1962 in Measor and Woods, 1984) and consequently they have missed the 'authentic cognitive problems' that

students experience with transition and the consequences for the pupil of school policy, practice and organization (*ibid*).

Relatively few studies have examined the transition from middle school to senior high school (secondary to preparatory school). Results of these studies suggest that this transition also has a negative impact on youth. Effects which have been observed include reductions in students' grade point averages, reduced participation in extra-curricular activities (Gifford and Dean, 1990; Seidman, *et al.*, 1994), and reduced engagement with the school (Seidman *et al.*, 1996; Reyes, *et al.*, 1994).

2.2.4 TRANSFERS AND ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS

For the last 20 years research looking at issues related to the process of transfer and transition in the field of education 'has swung between such topics as the age of transfer, factors affecting choice of school, and the impact of transfer as a *rite de passage*, on students' personal and social adjustment' (Demetriou *et al.*, 2000: 425). The impact of transfer on the pupils' academic progress has been the concern of Galton's research since the 1970's (*ibid.*).

There has been a particular interest in investigating how students' academic attainment is affected when they transfer from primary to secondary school; that is, to find out if there is a natural progression, if the students are motivated and ready for secondary school but most importantly what happens to their achievement when they start the next level of education (see Galton *et al.*, 1999; Galton *et al.*, 2000). Studies addressing particularly how school transfer impacts on students' attainment have suggested that there is a hiatus in progress for a considerable number of students. Together with this hiatus there is a decline in motivation towards certain subjects (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). An important factor associated with this decrease in students' motivation is the repetition of work done in previous years. It has been noted that after transfer students expect subject content and teaching and learning strategies to be 'new' and 'challenging' (Galton *et al.*, 1999). It is important to note that the vast majority of studies on transfer have been conducted in mainstream education and have focused on the 'core' subjects of the curriculum. However, although these findings are also relevant to foreign or modern language learning, it has been noted that 'even greater difficulties can be encountered in modern languages and science' (Galton *et al.*, 2000: 363). These difficulties in foreign modern languages will be looked at in the remainder of this section.

2.2.5 RESEARCH ON TRANSFER IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH (LOTE) AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (MFL).

‘Languages are like any other subject in that the key to effective transition lies in recognising and building on a pupil’s prior knowledge, understanding and achievement’ (Transition - the CILT 7-14 Project, p.1).

One of the most cited studies in primary language learning is that of Burstall *et al.* (1974), which sought to identify the relative effects of early MFL learning, by starting the learning of French in primary, as opposed to secondary, school. French was taught at primary school level to around 17,000 pupils, and Burstall *et al.*’s evaluation aimed to establish whether a substantial gain in competence had been achieved by the means of introducing modern foreign language at an earlier phase. It was concluded that there were no significant long-term benefits, except sometimes in matters of pronunciation, in comparison with those who had not started learning until the age of eleven. However, the researchers’ observations implied that there might be some factors hindering successful transition in foreign language learning: a lack of continuity and differentiated provision in the secondary phase, insufficient liaison between the two sectors, and failure to deal with mixed ability groups in the transfer school (secondary). Therefore, further investigation was deemed necessary.

Hill *et al.* (1998) investigated the effects of the transition from primary to secondary schools on language learning in Victoria, Australia. These researchers found evidence of stasis rather than progress, thus questioning the benefits of early foreign language learning. Similar results have been found in other countries. For example, in Scotland researchers found that teachers did not necessarily build on what pupils had done during their primary education. Rather, they found that there was a lack of meta-linguistic emphasis and, although secondary pupils were able to use more language, it tended to be ‘more of the same’ rather than a richer mixture (Low *et al.* 1993, 1995; Low and Johnson, 1997). A more recent study showed that there was no evidence, as yet, that Scotland was achieving an increased level of post-16 competence as a result of languages in primary school, as the transition from primary to the next phase of education remained ‘patchy’. A major issue contributing to unsuccessful transitions is the lack of communication between schools in the two sectors. It was found that communication can vary from considerable liaison and transfer of information to little or no contact with

regard to modern languages, with the result that pupils were not guaranteed continuity of the language studied at primary level (Tierney and Gallastegui, 2005).

*2.2.5.1 STUDIES ON TRANSFER AND TRANSITION IN LOTE
AND MFL: THE ISSUE OF CONTINUITY*

Continuity in foreign language learning has been defined in various ways. A simplistic view of continuity in foreign language learning has to do with learning the same language across phases. However, 'a deeper interpretation is pragmatic continuity in the strategies used and the content covered in learning through successive levels of schooling, especially ensuring fluid transition across potential stages of dislocation such as the primary-secondary interface' (Cunningham, 2003: 4 ; Scarino, 2003).

In Australia, although the learning of languages other than English (LOTE) began in the 1970s, the process of transition or continuity in language learning from primary to secondary school was not considered a major issue that required serious action until the early 1980s (Cunningham, 2003). According to Cunningham, the first important issue to be addressed was that of 'a change in language choice offered by a secondary school confronted by a range of learners having had prior learning in a different language. Once the desired choice of language has occurred in the secondary school, continuity in learning could be addressed' (ibid.: 16).

In the context of LOTE, transition issues include the continuity of the study of a language, the teaching method, and the resources used from primary to secondary school. That is, transition is as a matter of promoting continuity in learning and also continuity in teaching methods, aims and content (Scarino, 2003: 4; Hill, 2003: 21). Scarino (2003) states that when addressing the issue of continuity in transition the discussion often revolves around aspects of school structures and organization issues (time, student grouping, staff allocation, timetabling, information system), staff availability, or the curriculum (goals and objectives, tasks and pedagogy, resources, assessment, and evaluation). She acknowledges that all these matters are worth investigating, although she concludes that consideration of these issues is not sufficient for what is at stake in transition, whether from one school year to the next or from one school to another. Rather, there is 'the need to negotiate differing contexts and cultures and find ways of communicating to bridge differences' (2003: 4).

According to Cunningham (2003), Australia has had 20 years to identify successful strategies for continuity in foreign language learning from primary to secondary education and yet little has been accomplished. He concludes that continuity persists in being a challenge which has been aggravated:

by the legacy of economic rationalism as more demands are made on teachers: increased class sizes, larger allotments, curricular change, professional development requirements, the advent of information communication technologies, administrivia, duty of care, accountability, system targets — in addition to teaching per se and assessment and report writing (ibid.: 21).

2.2.5.2 KEY ISSUES IN TRANSFER: LIAISON, DIFFERENTIATION,
MOTIVATION AND PROGRESSION.

On investigating the transition in early foreign language learning (FLL) from primary to secondary phase in English schools, Bolster *et al.* (2004) adopted a case-study approach to find out:

1. the factors that all stakeholders perceived as important in the transition from primary to secondary education for young learners of foreign languages;
2. the impact that those factors identified above had on the pupils' achievement and enjoyment of learning a foreign language at Key stage 3;
3. the school strategies that were in place to deal with key factors in transition and the measures deemed necessary to lessen any negative impact in language learning.

In order to answer their research questions the researchers involved the learners, the foreign language teachers, the heads of modern languages and the head teachers of one primary school and five secondary schools to which it is a feeder school. The methods employed for data-gathering were semi-structured interviews and small focus group discussions with all the participants. The interviews covered the same range of questions irrespectively of the 'age or status of the interviewee' to achieve triangulation (ibid: 36). In each secondary school, the discussion focus groups comprised four or five students from Years 7 and 8 (half of the pupils in each group had studied French in primary school and the other half had not) together with a sample of 6 Year 6 primary school students. The findings were grouped into three main themes: a) transition-links between pri-

mary and secondary schools; b) organizational issues; and c) effects on pupils' motivation and achievement.

LACK OF LIAISON:

Bolster *et al.* (2004) reported that one of the 'major disappointments in their findings was the virtual absence of liaison between the pre and post transfer schools. The researchers did not find evidence of information reported on modern languages 'either in terms of kind and quality of experience, or in relation to individual student performance; nor was there evidence of visits or links between the secondary FL department and the primary schools '(ibid.: 37). Although head teachers at both ends of the transfer process were aware that closer links were necessary, they had not found how to forge such links successfully. This lack of liaison, the researchers assert, has negative implications, not only for foreign languages, but for all subjects.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES: CONTINUITY AND DIFFERENTIATION:

Bolster *et al.* state that 'given the lack of liaison across phases, it is unsurprising that continuity of FL curriculum into secondary schools in the study was virtually non-existent' (ibid.: 37). They also found that there was a lack of agreement on key issues on both sides of the transfer process: different methodologies employed in FL language teaching (exclusively grammar-based or exclusively oral/aural approach); shortage of qualified and experienced teachers to teach in primary schools; lack of uniformed teaching contact time, and lack of assessment. However, they assert that what posed the greatest difficulties for foreign language teaching in secondary schools 'was the immense variety in kind, frequency and length of the prior FLL experience of their pupils' (ibid.:37).

PUPILS' MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENT.

A further problem created by the lack of transfer of information was a lack of differentiation of students with prior foreign language learning in secondary schools. Bolster *et al.*(2004) found that although all secondary teachers and most head

teachers were in favour of streaming students with prior FL learning or giving them a 'fast track', it was just not possible yet and all students had to 'start again from scratch' (ibid.: 38). This unanimous teachers' decision to ignore any pupils' foreign language background knowledge seems to have contributed to 'the somewhat disillusioned attitude of a certain number of secondary students with an FLL background interviewed' (ibid.). The comments made by some of these students showed that they felt they were wasting their time as a remark made by a Year 8 student illustrated: 'We would have done better to spend the time on extra maths and English' (ibid.:38).

Similar results concerning the issue of continuity were found in Gallastegi and Tierney's (2009) study concerning Scottish students' perceptions of the transition in learning Spanish as a foreign language from primary to secondary school. Some students highlighted the repetition of some Key Stage 2 learning experiences as a negative factor. However, among the positive results these researchers found that a large number of students found learning Spanish across the Key Stage 2 to 3 transition without significant difficulty, and a high percentage of students were motivated to continue learning Spanish as a foreign language beyond the Key Stage 3.

In summary, Bolster *et al.* (2004) concluded that their admittedly small-scale study confirmed those results found by Burstall *et al.* in 1974, when they stated that early foreign language learning did not guarantee any long-term advantage since fundamental detrimental factors such as 'a lack of continuity and provision for differentiation at the secondary phase' (ibid.: 39) still persisted in secondary schools where building on pupils' prior foreign language knowledge was largely wasted.

In a more recent study, Hunt *et al.* (2008) also investigated transition issues from primary to secondary education in modern language learning. Their study was part of a larger project (Muijis *et al.*, 2005 cited in Hunt *et al.*, 2008) comprising 19 Pathfinders funded by DfES in England. Hunt *et al.* concentrated on eight case studies in order to explore how the Pathfinders were working in practice. A total of 41 different schools were included in the sample reflecting different types of schools, representing diversity in factors such as socio-demographic characteristics and location, socio-economic groupings and schools that were performing or improving at different rates (ibid.: 919). The three main methods of data collection utilised were class observations, interviews with head teachers, teachers, and pupils, and gathering of documentary evidence. Three categories were developed from the interview data a) choice/continuity; b) information transfer/commu-

nication; and c) progression to KS3. With regard to the issue of continuity, Hunt *et al.* (2008) found that there were still foreign language learning discontinuities when transfer occurred. Lack of continuity in learning a specific language was a 'concern voiced by many, especially where the secondary school changed its Year 7 language from year to year' (*ibid.*: 920).

Diverse practices in transferring information found in the schools made it difficult to generalize. However, the researchers assert that whereas some Pathfinders had developed or were developing effective transition and transfer arrangements (e.g. primary-secondary reciprocal visits, reciprocal planned observations for some staff, good liaison between Year 6 and secondary school), in others there were no effective transfer mechanisms to pass on information regarding what students had achieved: 'in some schools there were meetings with secondary staff for literacy and numeracy but not for languages' (*ibid.*: 921). Information exchange on pupils' foreign language learning was considered a key factor to pupils' progression. This issue of progression in foreign language learning was very diverse. In some secondary schools pupils were set according to what they had learnt in primary schools, whereas in others differentiation was difficult as not all primary schools were providing languages and secondary teachers were going back to basics (*ibid.*: 923). Hunt *et al.* concluded that the curricula for the top KS2 and early KS3 should be aligned, both in terms of content and approaches to teaching as 'a coherent approach and mutual understanding are crucial to progression' (*ibid.*: 924).

In summary Hunt *et al.*'s study (2008), like that of Bolster *et al.* (2004), has identified some key issues in the process of students' transferring from one level of education to the next in foreign language learning which are relevant for the current study. However, it must be borne in mind that this study differs in at least two major ways: a) the foreign language learnt and taught in public secondary and preparatory schools is the same, unlike in the British context where there still exists diversity in language provision; b) there is a national curriculum for EFL learning at secondary level and a state curriculum for preparatory level, thus these two curricula are apparently 'aligned' concerning the methodologies and contents of language teaching; and c) EFL is compulsory at both levels of education that concern this study, with the same amount of time allocated to it in all state schools. As Hunt *et al.* (2008) have rightly pointed out:

These findings paint a distinctly diverse picture with regard to primary MFL provision, choice and continuity at secondary level, information transfer and

transition arrangements. Whilst these findings relate to the specific context of England, each country needs to look at its own individual situation regarding transition, but these key issues will still apply (ibid.: 924).

It is then necessary to look at the particularities of the Mexican context to try to seek an understanding as to what are the other important issues in the transfer process that are preventing the achievement of the desired progress in learning EFL in state schools (see chapters five, six, and seven).

2.3 EFL AND LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY

An understanding – albeit a basic one – of what language policy and planning entails is necessary to gain insight as to why the learning of English as a foreign or second language has or has not been successful in public school settings. Therefore, in this section of the literature review, I provide a widely accepted definition of the terms language policy and language planning. I then present findings of research conducted in this field in which various issues discussed in EFL policy and planning shed light on the phenomenon under study in this thesis.

Language policy and language planning are oftentimes used interchangeably in the literature. However, the former concerns the plan and the latter has to do with plan implementation (Baldauf, 2005: 958). In other words, while language policies comprise ‘bodies of ideas, laws, regulations, rules, and practices intended to achieve some planned language changed’, language planning focuses on the implementation of such plans (Kaplan and Baldauf, 2003 in Baldauf, 2005: 958).

Language-in-education planning also known as *acquisition planning* (Cooper, 1989 in Kaplan and Baldauf, 2007: 1013) is one of the four types of language policy. The other three types of language planning are *status planning* (see van Els, 2005), *corpus planning* (see Liddicoat, 2005), and *prestige planning* (see Ager, 2005).

As stated by Kaplan and Baldauf (2005: 1014; Baldauf, 2005), language-in-education planning comprises seven interrelated policy or form-related goals that must be addressed when planning language teaching and learning in general (language and literacy in formal educational settings) if it is to be successful:

1. Access Policy (addresses questions such as who learns what and when?)
2. Personnel policy (concerns issues of where teachers come from and how they are trained)

3. Curriculum policy (addresses the issues as to what the objective is in language teaching/learning)
4. Methodology and materials policy (i.e. what methodology, materials and how long they will be used for.)
5. Resourcing policy (concerns how everything is paid for)
6. Community policy (who is consulted and/or involved?)
7. Evaluation policy (i.e. the connection between assessments on the one hand and the methods that define the educational objectives on the other)

The above goals are related to four other planning goals, one of which is foreign or second language learning. This particular goal addresses the questions as to what foreign/second languages are taught and why they are taught. However, the implementation of language programmes is considerably complicated because the form goals are not addressed in a systematic manner together with the planning goals (*ibid.*).

It has been pointed out that one of the challenges faced by language-in-education policy makers is to delimit and make available options that are relevant to individuals' interests and needs. Furthermore, policy decisions concerning teachers, the courses of study, and the resources available to the teachers and learners are determining factors for the success in meeting the set goals (Kaplan and Baldauf, 2005: 1014).

A detailed discussion of each of the issues that comprises language-in-education planning and policy research is beyond the scope of this thesis (for an overview see Baldauf, 2005; Kaplan and Baldauf, 2005). However, in this review of the literature I will focus on those aspects within the area of foreign or second language teaching and learning that pertain to this investigation.

2.3.1 RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING

Traditionally, research on language policy and planning has focused on the macro decision-making and how national, local and institutional policies impact on educational institutions (Ramanathan and Morgan, 2007: 447). It is only recently that interest has grown in researching language-in-education policy from a bottom-up perspective. In other words, there is increasing research being done into how policies are being interpreted and negotiated, reflecting local limitations and possibilities or policies that focus on classroom teachers as central agents of

implementation (see Silver and Skuja-Steele, 2005; Wedell, 2008; Nunan, 2003; Zappa-Hollman, 2007; Li, 1998). Unfortunately, there have been no studies focusing on how language-in-education policies are being understood and implemented in the Mexican state schools, where EFL has been a compulsory subject in the curricula for over four decades. Therefore, some studies conducted in the area of TESOL that have addressed various issues concerning decision-making in EF language-in-education policy and planning will be explored. Research that has focused on aspects of EFL teaching and learning which have led to success or failure in foreign language-in-education from local perspectives, being more relevant to the current study, will then be looked at in more detail. These will be examined in the remainder of this section.

2.3.2 LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION PLANNING AND ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

Research has shown that merely an early start does not guarantee learners any long-term advantage in terms of the learners' proficiency but that there are other interrelated factors that should be considered (see Burstall *et al.*, 1974; Marinova-Todd *et al.*, 2000; Hu, 2005). There is no question that a widespread view of English as a global language has led policy makers to include 'English for Everyone as a core component of their school curricula' (Wedell, 2008). Several studies have shown that EFL has become a compulsory subject in school curricula in many countries around the world (see Nunan, 2003; Terborg *et al.*, 2007) and Mexico is no exception. Furthermore, mandatory EFL learning is being introduced at ever-earlier grades in primary schools (King and Haboud, 2007; Martin, 2007; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Even in countries where there exists an 'ideological bias against English', people in general, rich and poor, want to learn it since a knowledge of English is perceived as a 'tool for finding better jobs, emigrating, and socializing' (McGuire, 1996: 606).

Nunan's study (2003) including seven countries in the Asia-Pacific region (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam) revealed that there has been a shift to introduce EFL as a compulsory school subject at earlier stages. Similar results have been found in many other parts of the world. For example, in Sweden, the learning of EFL has not only taken over German, which used to be the dominant foreign language taught until the end of World War II, but EFL has also been a compulsory subject for all school pupils for many

decades (Kaplan and Baldauf, 2005: 1025). In North Korea, Russian was the only, and obligatory, foreign language that was studied until 1964 when EFL was introduced in the secondary school curriculum on 'a 50/50 basis with Russian' (ibid.: 1031). In the early 80's, English indisputably became the foreign language learnt by the vast majority of the students. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (2005), the collapse of the USSR led policy makers to remove Russian completely from the school curriculum and since 1992 EFL has been 'the only mandatory foreign language taught' (ibid.: 1031).

In most Latin American countries, English is the dominant foreign language taught in schools in both public and private sectors. For example, in Ecuador, foreign language instruction, especially EFL, is commonly found in primary and secondary schools. English is a mandatory subject in many secondary schools and in private institutions EFL is being incorporated in their curricula not only as a subject but as the means of instruction at ever-earlier grades of education (King and Haboud, 2007). In Cuba, EFL is being introduced as an obligatory school subject at ever-earlier grades of primary school. As Martin asserts, English has become 'the uncontested principal foreign language of Cuba' (2007: 555). In the countries of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua) EFL classes are offered in middle and upper level public schools (McGuire, 1996).

In the Mexican educational context, although official documents state that English or French is compulsory in secondary and preparatory education, in reality the only foreign language taught in public schools throughout the country is EFL. The only exception is the preparatory school attached to the UNAM (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*) where several FLs are offered to students in preparatory education, although EFL is the most widely chosen option (Terborg, *et al.*, 2007). More recently, EFL learning has become compulsory during, at least, the first year of university studies in most state universities in the country. In Mexico, language-in-education policy makers advocate 'English for Everyone' (Wedell, 2008) in public educational contexts where learning a foreign language is obligatory. Moreover, policy-makers are at present considering the introduction of compulsory EFL learning in the last two years of primary education, even though no research has been conducted that reports the impact that EF language-in-education policy and planning has had in other levels of schooling where EFL has long been a compulsory subject – secondary and preparatory – from the perspectives of the main stakeholders of the teaching and learning process, namely teachers and students. As Cohen and Loewenberg (1990: 234) have rightly commented:

‘Little is known about how teachers perceive instructional policies, how they interpret them, and how different kinds of policies influence teaching and learning. Many policies and programs have been aimed at classrooms, but what is known about those policies stops at the classroom door, for policy research has seldom investigated the effects of policies on the actual work of teaching and learning’.

Therefore, this study aims at contributing to bridge the existing gap in EF language-in-education from the bottom up in the context of the Mexican education system. That is, this study asks the teachers and students themselves, as they are the ones putting EFL policy into practice in the classroom.

To conclude this section, it is important to highlight that there is no doubt that the prevailing rhetoric in public educational systems throughout the world is that, given the undeniable status of English as a global language (Crystal, 2003), EFL has become, if not yet the only, the most widely taught foreign language in school curricula both in public and in private institutions. However, as has been previously mentioned, EFL teaching and learning in public schools has been unsuccessful for the most part. There are various issues that account for this failure. A number of studies have revealed that there are various factors contributing to the difficulty in achieving more satisfactory outcomes in EFL teaching and learning in public schools. However, although some issues found to be detrimental for the EFL teaching and learning process are applicable to many different situations found in different countries, each context has its own particularities that have to be taken into account if EFL teaching and learning is to be improved in public schools (Zappa-Hollam, 2007; Li, 1998; Wedell, 2008; Hu, 2005). Several studies have reported that there are important factors that have long been disregarded by policy-makers in many countries, contributing to the poor outcomes achieved in EFL teaching and learning in the public sector. These factors will be explored in the following sections.

2.3.3 ACCESS TO ENGLISH IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Studies have shown that the issue of access to English instruction revolves, most of the time, around the dichotomy of the quality of EFL learning and teaching in the public sector versus that in private institutions. The implication being that, on the whole, the quality of EFL instruction found in state school classrooms is not

adequate to achieve effective EFL teaching and learning. The often unfavourable conditions found in public school classrooms have resulted in poor learning outcomes. Empirical evidence suggests that in most countries throughout the world where EFL is taught there seems to be a justified belief that EFL is hardly ever learnt in public school settings.

In his study involving seven countries in the Asia-Pacific Region, Nunan (2003) found that because of the admittedly poor quality of English teaching in the public sector his informants stated that 'no one learns English in schools' (ibid.: 606). Similarly, there is evidence that suggests that in some Central American countries, resentment expressed by those who have been in public school centres not so much on the compulsory study of EFL as on the feeling of having spent EFL learning time in poorly taught classes (McGuire, 1996). In such poor learning circumstances, students represent themselves as 'handicapped' in comparison with those students who can afford to attend well-staffed and well-equipped private EFL institutions (ibid.). However, this also seems to be true in the Ukraine where EFL teaching in the public sector is 'quite in line with modern advances in the field . . . public needs coincide with effective governmental language planning and policy and . . . both are reinforced with advanced teaching technology' (Tarnopolsky, 1996: 618). Even though there is no statistical data in the Ukraine on learning outcomes, it is recognised that in practice the learning outcomes for the majority of the students are often very poor: 'the situation is so well known and language teaching failures are so common that they are the subject of popular jokes' (ibid.).

Other research findings have also shown that parents who can afford to provide their children with access to better EFL lessons seek alternatives outside the public sector (Nunan, 2003). For instance, Pousada (1996) reported that in Puerto Rico, public schools have become 'the domain of the working poor, the welfare recipients . . . In such a system, excellence in language teaching cannot be guaranteed' (ibid: 504).

The two most common strategies used by parents who want their children to learn EFL are to supplement their children's EFL learning at school with additional private classes or remove them from public schooling and enrol them in private institutions (Wedell 2008: 632). These studies are relevant and shed light on the understanding of the phenomenon under study in this thesis, since some of the issues discussed in those countries are akin to the situation of EFL teaching and learning that has prevailed for a long time in the Mexican context. Although it must be acknowledged that there exists no published literature available to docu-

ment this situation based on systematic and rigorous research, there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that the findings on the quality of EFL learning within the public sector described above mirror the widely shared perception that EFL teaching and learning in public schools is simply not working. An example of this is two ads shown on national television. One is sponsored by a well-known private chain EFL institution. The second one is sponsored by a political party. The former offers the audience the opportunity to learn EFL with the 'experts' (i.e. them) where you can indeed learn English well and not the poorly spoken English or 'Spanglish' that, it is suggested, is learnt in the public sector. The latter presents a situation in which two secondary or preparatory students cannot help their recent unemployed father to learn the EFL needed to find a new job. One of the children says she has just been taught the basics. The other child says that in his school 'no pasamos de *mother y father*' (we do not go beyond mother and father).

Although these are just commercial and political propaganda, the underlying assumption in the first case is that EFL cannot be learnt in the public sector. In the other example promises are made to change the failure in learning EFL in the public educational system in order to gain votes! Even more importantly is that, taken together, these two examples highlight, albeit implicitly, the disjunction between the policy-makers' rhetoric concerning the importance of EFL learning in the public sector and the apparent lack of interest in finding out how this poor learning can be improved by investing in research involving all parties concerned in the teaching and learning of EFL in the Mexican context.

Wedell's (2008) observations above are relevant to the current study as this is also a common practice in the context of Mexican education. However, there is not yet published research which examines, from the perspectives of students and teachers, how EFL instruction in public schools is affected by having students who study EFL only in the public sector together with students who are provided with extra EFL private lessons. In other words, little is known to date about how this practice impinges on EFL teaching and learning in the Mexican context. This study aims to contribute to bridge this important gap (see chapters four, five, six and seven).

Having mixed-level groups in schools that provide teachers with no support to deal with students whose only opportunity to learn EFL is in the public classroom and at the same time deal with students whose parents provide them with EFL lessons in private institutions imposes considerable demands on teachers (Crawford, 2001). In the Mexican context, a study conducted in 2005 showed that despite the fact that pilot lessons have been in place for over 12 years in primary

schools in the state of Morelos, policy-makers assume no prior knowledge of EFL for students beginning secondary school and are 'not open to changes despite changing local conditions' (Chepetla, 2005 in Terborg *et al.*, 2007: 158).

2.3.4 ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE-IN- EDUCATION: THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Many studies carried out in the field of language policy and planning have shown that EFL teachers openly admit to feeling unable to cope with the top-down approach to EFL curricula-design, sometimes imposed overnight, by policy makers. For example, a good representation of what seems to be happening in other parts of the world in EFL teaching in the public sector is provided by Wedell's description of what is occurring in Chilean state schools:

... the teaching and learning of English within the Chilean state schools system needs to be improved so that the students leaving school can function in English. Grammar continues to dominate ELT in all areas: initial training, curricula and consequently classroom teaching and learning. A hitherto large proportions of teachers of English within the system who lack appropriate levels of English themselves [...] exacerbate the problem. (2008: 631)

Research has shown that many EFL teachers working in the public sector do not feel confident about their proficiency in the foreign language they are teaching. In the seven countries surveyed in the Asian Pacific region, the teachers' EFL proficiency 'is not sufficient to provide learners with the rich input needed for successful language acquisition' (Nunan, 2003: 607). Nunan's findings resonate with the vast majority of the studies reviewed in this section.

A further important issue that seems to be disregarded or taken for granted and which seems to have contributed to the lack of success in EFL learning is the EFL policy-makers' failure to identify beforehand what support 'classroom teachers need, when, and for how long, if they are to be helped to make the required adjustments' (Wedell, 2003: 439). It has been noted that teachers need to be supported with continuing EFL proficiency courses but they also need to understand the theories behind the methodologies they are asked to implement in their classrooms.

Some scholars have recognised the necessity to do more research on teachers' perspectives in implementing top-down decisions concerning methodolo-

gies, as 'teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of a CLT innovation in a particular context are crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of that innovation' (Kelly, 1980; Markee, 1997; cited in Li, 1998). Furthermore, research has also shown that teachers do not simply translate policy into classroom practice but their practice is guided, if not determined, by many factors, namely, support in the form of the curricula, guides to implementation and teaching materials made available to them; the teachers' beliefs and ideologies; and how the teaching context impinges on practice (Jennings, 1996 in Haque and Cray, 2007).

Contextual factors influencing, often constraining, what and how teachers can teach were identified by the 25 LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) teachers interviewed in Haque and Cray's (2007) study. These LINC teachers were working in a variety of settings and they were teaching a wide range of language levels: from low beginner to intermediate. These researchers found numerous constraints imposed on LINC teachers: isolation, lack of resources (only basic and inadequate equipment and furnishings), lack of job security, lack of professional development, continuous intake, multilevel classrooms, low pay, and problems with professional accreditation' (ibid.: 637). They concluded that offering teachers ad hoc solutions (workshops, new teaching materials and resources, or even new version of the curricula) to deal with the constraints posed by their contextual realities is to provide them with limited assistance. What is needed, they state, is to address LINC policy and its implementation before addressing those constraints that teachers face.

Similar results were found in studies conducted in Thailand in the 1990s involving public school teachers who reported that they felt inadequately prepared to teach EFL adopting a learner-centred approach. Among the several challenges and constraints cited by teachers contributing to this inadequacy, they mentioned that they had insufficient information concerning (a) research on language teaching and learning, (b) transferring theory into practice, (c) designing communicative curricula, (d) identifying students' needs, (e) diagnosing learning problems, (f) using techniques such as role play and language games, and (g) constructing communicative tests. Thai teachers also admitted that 'they avoided using the target language (EFL) in their classes because of their own low proficiency, language anxiety, and learners' focus on studying English grammar for exam purposes' (Unyakiat 1991 in Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009: 155).

In a recent study in Thailand Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, (2009) sought to investigate EFL reform policy and its implementation in classrooms. The data were gathered through classroom observations, discussions with teachers and

supervisors at different levels of the education system, post-observation stimulated recall sessions with the teachers, and 'a concluding interview with each one to allow them to express their understanding of the reform and concerns about professional development and instructional support' (ibid. 157). Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2009) report that their study revealed some of the same issues reported in research conducted in other Asian contexts such as the gap between 'rhetoric and reality' (Nunan, 2003). They say that other additional obstacles for EFL policy implementation in classrooms were the lack of sufficient teacher training, inadequate resources, insufficient mentoring support, and the cost of further education for in-service teachers. Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (ibid.) state that despite that fact that the teachers played a major role in the reform, 'they were an untapped resource in the decision making process'. They concluded that a number of key issues have to be taken into account to improve reform implementation in EFL classrooms such as continuous feedback from the classroom to policymakers and ongoing professional development support in the form of 'cascade training' (see Wedell, 2005).

An investigation focusing on teachers' perspectives on policy change and instruction, the findings of which are particularly relevant to the current research, was conducted by Zappa-Hollman (2007). Her study sought to identify the issues faced by EFL teachers working in public schools in Argentina from the perspectives of the teachers themselves. Semi-structured questionnaires and follow-up email communication were used to gather data from 32 K-12 teachers working in schools from the Capital Federal District and in six different provinces. The data were analysed following qualitative thematic data analysis. Official documents, published materials in press and related studies were also consulted. Her findings were classified into three themes: a) lack of adequately trained EFL teachers; b) disjunctions between theory and practice; and c) confronting problems of discipline and violence.

Concerning the lack of adequate training, Zappa-Hollman found that although the teacher-participants were required to possess a suitable teaching qualification to teach EFL in state schools, it was often the case that EFL positions within the state system were taken up by teachers who either 'lack an EFL teaching degree' or lack 'the necessary English language skills and /or pedagogical knowledge' (ibid.: 621). Teachers claimed that it was possible to find EFL teachers whose foreign language teacher training 'came mainly from a four-hour session that showed them how to use a language kit (i.e., a manual and an accompanying video) sent to the schools by the national education authorities' (ibid.: 622). Notwithstanding that,

the Ministry of Education in Argentina created a national professional development network to provide training courses and workshops for EFL teachers, though because budgetary resources were insufficient the plan was not successful, having been implemented in an inconsistent mode.

With regard to the disjunctions between theory and practice, Zappa-Hollan reports that, despite that fact that 30 out of the 32 teacher-participants held an undergraduate EFL teaching degree and that 23 had more than 5 years of experience in teaching EFL, 'they were all critical about their own professional training' (ibid.: 622). Teachers in her study acknowledged that although they were proficient in the EFL and had taken 'rigorous professional training', the majority of the participants considered that there was a clear mismatch between their pre-service courses and their subsequent teaching experiences in classrooms. The main weakness of the teacher training courses, according to the teachers, was that 'they didn't take into account Argentina's reality and context' (ibid.). That is, such courses did not address how to tackle or indicate how to cater for specific learners' needs in poor areas of the country which had an important bearing on students' motivation and ability to learn EFL (i.e. students' socio-economic backgrounds, illiteracy among some students' parents).

However, teachers working in less marginal contexts also found it frustrating that their efforts to foster communication in the target language were not achieving the expected outcomes, largely due to aspects encountered in their classrooms: large classes (35 students per class), lack of adequate teaching and learning resources (e.g. textbooks, authentic materials, audiovisual materials and equipment), and reduced length and frequency of EFL teaching periods. As a result of all the problems encountered in their classrooms, teachers acknowledged that they concentrated more on literacy-based activities rather than on developing the learners' spoken communicative ability or developing the four skills as required by the programme. Interestingly, some teachers reported that they had reverted to classroom practices that they thought would help the learners, even though these strategies contradicted the theories inculcated in them in their EFL training courses. One teacher commented that despite the popularity of the communicative approach, she preferred to rely on what she called 'a meaningful approach' which consisted in involving the students in small translation tasks using the students' mother tongue — Spanish. This raises a very interesting question as to what extent this teacher was responding to the learners' interests, likes, and/or needs or if she was just resorting to what she felt comfortable doing or could do given her proficiency in EFL or given the constraints posed by her working conditions.

This disjunction or mismatch between what has been planned by policy makers and what is actually implemented in classrooms is relevant to the current investigation as some of the issues mentioned by the teachers in Zappa-Hollman's study were also found in the data collected for this thesis (see chapter five). However, this study presents a broader and more detailed picture of this mismatch, inasmuch as not only were teachers included, but students and school authorities as well.

Zappa-Hollan found that the teachers' main concern about issues of discipline and violence arose from the fact that they felt that they did not feel 'qualified' to handle disobedient and uncooperative students who challenged classroom norms and made constant noise to disrupt the class. Teachers also mentioned that issues such as students' lack of interest and apathy interfered with EFL instruction (*ibid.*:623). With some variations, this was also an important issue found in my investigation. However, my study goes a step further since students were also consulted and hence it was possible to identify some issues contributing to the students' lack of interest in EFL lessons in public schools from their own perspectives (see chapter five and six).

Zappa-Hollman acknowledges that the limited number of participants and the exploratory nature of her investigation make it difficult to generalise her findings to the larger population to Argentina. She asserts, however, that the issues brought up in her study are consistent with findings in other related studies conducted in Argentina (Delgado, 2002 cited in Zappa-Hollman). She concluded that in order to achieve real quality in EFL instruction in the Argentinean context, the state policy should be re-examined to establish more realistic goals given the contextual realities of the teachers. She also states that teachers should be provided with adequate professional training and resources deemed necessary for their specific teaching contexts. Otherwise, access to quality public education will not go beyond policy rhetoric.

To sum up thus far, it has been acknowledged that, in order to improve EFL instruction in school settings, language-in-education policy makers must pay careful attention to what EFL teachers have to say about the particularities of their own teaching contexts. It has also been acknowledged that other key players in the EFL teaching and learning process have to be carefully listened to if we are to improve their learning experiences. The next section will present studies conducted in the field of TESOL or MFL which have focused on teachers and learners.

2.4. RESEARCH ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

Although changes are frequently introduced in education systems, learners are seldom consulted and remain largely unheard in the change process. 'If education is to become more personalised, then the views of learners must be heard' (Rudd, *et al.*, 2006: 6). It has been recognized that consulting students is of vital importance when aiming at school improvement in the field of education (see, Flutter, and Rudduck; 2004; Rudduck, *et al.*, 1996) and the benefits of involving them in foreign language curriculum planning has been recognised (Payne, 2007).

In EFL classrooms, students' views on the teaching and learning process seem to have been ignored for the most part since 'very many teachers seem to find it difficult to accept their learners as people with a positive contribution to make to the instructional process' (Allwright, 1984: 167). As this study advocates that listening to the students' voices should be central to gain an understanding of how they experience the different issues intertwined which affect the teaching and learning process in school settings, I will review studies that have been undertaken in the field of education and in the English as a Foreign Language in which students have been central to research. The importance of listening to what students have to say concerning their learning experiences has been noted by Smyth (2006) who states that:

'When students feel that their lives, experiences, cultures, and aspirations are ignored, trivialized, or denigrated by school and the curriculum, they develop hostility to the institution of schooling. They feel that schooling is simply not worth the emotional and psychological investment necessary to warrant their serious involvement'. (Smyth, 2006: 279)

In the same manner, on discussing the impact of school transfer on curriculum continuity Gorwood (1986: 52) rightly stated that 'in the context of transition, research into continuity *must focus on pupils for they are the only ones who can experience continuity - or the lack of it*' (my emphasis). It may as well be argued that in order to understand whether students make progress or not in foreign language learning, they are the ones who are in the best position to answer this. However, it has been noted that 'although student beliefs about language learning would seem to have obvious relevance to the understanding of student expectations of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes, they have remained relatively unexplored' (Horwitz, 1988: 283). As the current study

advocates a more holistic understanding of the process of moving from one level of education to the next regarding EFL teaching and learning, this section will mostly review research studies in which students' and teachers' perceptions of EFL have been explored. I will also present in more detail the only study carried out to date in Mexico where secondary and secondary and preparatory schools students were the subjects of the investigation (see 2.4.4)

2.4.1 DEFINING LEARNER PERCEPTIONS OR BELIEFS

Learner beliefs, according to Richardson (1996, in Peacock, 2001), are 'psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true'. While there are different understandings of learner beliefs, research studies do not really give a clear definition of learner beliefs about language learning and they generally seek to identify learners' preconceived notions about what is involved in learning a foreign language in order to predict expectation conflicts that may contribute to students' frustration, anxiety, lack of motivation, and in some cases ending foreign language study, and to help to facilitate the language learning and teaching process.

2.4.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING OUT ABOUT LEARNERS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING.

Wittrock (1986) asserted that knowledge of students' perceptions and conceptions is the first step towards more effective instruction. In a similar manner, several scholars have emphasized the importance of investigating what preconceived ideas or beliefs the students bring with them as these held beliefs will influence language learning and language teaching practices (Borg, 1998, 1999, 2003; Peacock, 2001). For instance, learners have their own beliefs about what and how they should study. As Dakin (1973) stated, 'though the teacher may control the experiences the learner is exposed to, it is the learner who selects what is learnt from them' (cited in Block, 1994). Furthermore, '[i]f beliefs about language learning are prevalent in the culture at-large, then foreign language teachers must consider that students bring these beliefs with them into the classroom' (Horwitz, 1988: 283). Therefore, understanding these perceptions or beliefs is of crucial importance to foreign language teachers as this knowledge may help them understand how

beliefs influence the learners' effectiveness in the classroom, or how these perceptions are likely to affect positively or negatively learners' foreign language learning (Nunan, 1995, 1998; McDonough, 1995: 121). It has also been noted that 'teacher and student's lessons are inevitably *different*, and are very likely to be in conflict' (Holliday, 1994: 143). Therefore, it is not only important to understand when teachers' and students' perceptions coincide but it is equally important to understand the mismatch between students' and teachers' perceptions about learning as these conflicts or gaps are likely to hinder the learning process (Block, 1996).

2.4.3 MISMATCH BETWEEN LEARNERS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Teacher and learner perceptions of language classroom activities and aims are frequently reported as different (Barkhuizen, 1998; Hawkey, 2006; Block, 1994, 1996; Kumaravadivelu, 1991). In the field of foreign language learning several studies have shown that this lack of congruity between students' and their teachers' perceptions presents a serious challenge because it may cause tension and hinder the language learning process (Block, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 1991). Research focusing on students' beliefs or perceptions of different aspects of foreign or second language learning has shown that this sort of knowledge is of vital importance in order to anticipate expectation conflicts arising from mismatches between students and teachers which in turn may lead to dissatisfaction with the language learning process. Kern (1995: 71) stated that the knowledge of learners' beliefs about language learning is important in order to predict student frustration, lack of motivation and even quitting foreign language study and, Horwitz (1988: 283) found that before beginning their language course at university, most students already have preconceived ideas of different aspects of language learning which 'seem to have obvious relevance to their understanding of student expectations of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes'.

Like all teachers, language educators have considerable influence on the ways in which their students make sense of their learning and qualify their successes and failures. Certainly, both the implicit and explicit messages that teachers convey in their classrooms affect our students' developing notions of themselves as language learners, as well as their progress in the language (Williams and Burden, 1999: 200).

While several studies have tried to investigate students' perceptions of classroom activities and language learning in general, it has been noted that it

is necessary to draw a distinction between research conducted in second language learning settings and in foreign language learning contexts (see Tomlinson, 2005; Finch 2008). In the former, we have to account for the fact that language learning takes place in the target language environment and that the learners come from different cultural backgrounds. These factors affect the choice of learning strategies and teaching methods, as well as students' goals, motivations and expectations from language learning (Nunan 1988: 95). Yates and Williams (2003: 193) noted that in contrast to the EFL classroom, where often the traditional approach dominates, the ESL classroom provides a larger scope for interaction and is characterised by learners' interest in developing speaking skills.

A comparative study of ESL and EFL learners was conducted by Saito and Ebsworth (2004). These researchers set out to explore how college-level Japanese English language learners in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) and English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) contexts viewed their English teachers and classroom activities. Adopting a mixed-method approach, Saito and Ebsworth analysed 100 questionnaires which comprised both quantitative and qualitative questions. Their findings revealed that most Japanese students positively viewed teachers who were open, respectful of other cultures, and willing to adjust classroom content to meet students' needs. Among the differences between ESL and EFL students were ESL students' greater comfort with active participation in class, more time spent in class, physical proximity to teachers, and appreciation of student-centered behavior. On the other hand, EFL students appreciated teachers who provided native language support and avoided possible loss of face entailed by challenging and unexpected questions.

Sri Puji (2004) conducted a study with students learning English as a foreign language in Indonesian secondary schools. The data were gathered by applying Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire to 210 students from different levels of achievement (high, middle, and low) to find out their preferred learning styles in EFL in classrooms. Interviews were also conducted with six students from different academic backgrounds and genders 'to gain a more holistic picture of the students' preferred learning styles' (ibid.). She found that whereas teachers' teaching styles were teacher-centred, the students' preferred style of learning was kinesthetic which is considered to be more learner-centred. Sri Puji concluded that this mismatch between teachers' and students' styles in the teaching and learning process has to be considered seriously by teachers if EFL learning in Indonesian secondary schools is to be enhanced.

Finch (2008) asserts that most research into attitudes and learning preferences of Korean second-language learners has been carried out in ESL environments, yielding a particular profile of the Korean learner abroad. He argues that for learners who remain in their mother country such profiles are inadequate descriptors of what and how Asian EFL students learn (*ibid.*: 206) in real EFL Korean classrooms. Therefore, his study set out to develop a longitudinal learning profile of a particular group of EFL students in Korea. Finch's research was carried out in a National University in the Republic of Korea. 224 students participated in this study, most of whom were studying to become teachers of secondary English at the Department of English Education. The data were gathered by using learners' journals (including reflections about the use of a journal, the learning environment, and reflections on alternative assessment). Pre and post-course questionnaires were also used.

Finch found that the participants in his study showed a general movement away from traditional views of language learning and teaching. They also demonstrated a high awareness of learning needs and learning strategies. Students expressed a growing comfort in and with the language classroom and were mostly visual learners conscious of the importance of confidence and motivation, strong in intrapersonal intelligence and weak in interpersonal intelligence. They showed an ability to reflect meaningfully and autonomously on their learning. Finally, the pre/post questionnaire showed evidence of positive attitude change. Finch stated that his findings would seem to confirm Littlewood's (2000) suggestion that educational contexts are more responsible for Asian learning styles than the learners themselves. He added that this in turn leads to the conclusion that performance skills and preferences of students depend on or are greatly influenced by the learning environment. Views of students on their learning environment will play an important part in the present study, as will their views of approaches to learning English.

In this respect, what follows has similarities with the work of Porto (2007), who looked at how students experience foreign language classes from their own perspectives, though the data in that study were collected by using learning diaries written for nine months rather than through interviews and observation. The participants were 95 Argentinean mostly female, middle-class, Spanish-speaking college students between 19 and 21 years of age taking an EFL course at the National University of La Plata in Argentina. Porto identified a number of assertions related to students' perceptions of their EFL lesson: one) students revealed critical attitudes toward the lessons; two) learners had strong views about the

conditions that facilitated learning; three) the relevance of the topics for discussion determined learner engagement with them; and four) different factors (e.g. motivation) affected student engagement with the lessons. Porto highlighted the importance of providing learners with opportunities for reflection and critical thinking in foreign language learning contexts, especially in contexts where students are seldom asked to be critical and reflect on their learning process. The researcher concluded that the findings of her study suggest that the exploration and public sharing of different understandings on the part of EFL teachers and their students of what learning and teaching involve may foster tolerance, eradicate stereotyped views about learning and teaching, and improve teacher-student relationships.

A recent study investigating students' perceptions of foreign language learning was carried out in Australia in the field of LOTE. This study also highlighted the importance of the relationship between learners and their social learning environments. Saint Léger and Storch (2009) investigated the learners' perceptions of their speaking abilities and of their contribution in whole and small class oral class activities and how such perceptions influenced their willingness to use the FL for communicative purposes. The students were advanced students of French as a foreign language in an Australian university and were all native speakers of English. Several sources of data were employed: students' self-assessment questionnaires (on their immediate learning environment and their speaking skills), a subject evaluation questionnaire completed anonymously by all enrolled students, focus group interviews and the teacher's assessment on class participation. Saint Léger and Storch (*ibid.*: 280) state that the findings showed the complex and dynamic nature of the interplay between self-confidence, student anxiety and perception of the learning environment. It was noted that, in general, as learners' self-confidence increased over time, so did their willingness to use the FL in class. The students' perception of the speaking activities and of themselves as learners in the foreign language classroom affected their willingness to communicate in a range of ways. For instance, the learners' desire to communicate with peers in small groups was not uniform and was affected by affiliation motives. In the light of these findings, the authors concluded that both cognitive and affective aspects are socially grounded and cannot be dissociated from the social setting in which learning takes place.

Because it has been acknowledged that learning environments are as crucial as the learners themselves, it is important to learn from the research conducted in our own contexts, if possible, or at least from research carried out in settings which

share some of the characteristics of the Mexican state school classrooms. Unfortunately, there seems to be no published research reporting from a qualitative perspective the lived experiences of teachers and students in EFL learning in Mexican schools. Therefore, in the next section I will present the only published study that focuses on EFL learning in state schools. However, it is important to note that his study adopted a different approach to research from the current study

2.4.4 RESEARCH ON EFL IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN MEXICO

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the only published detailed research report available to date concerning EFL in secondary and preparatory education in Mexico is a quantitative study. González Robles *et al.* (2004) conducted a large-scale investigation in the metropolitan area of Mexico City commissioned by the *Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior* (ANUIES). They sought to identify the students' linguistic competence in English (Competencia Lingüística en Inglés - CLI) on entering Higher Education Institutions (HEIS) (*ibid.*: 33) after having studied EFL compulsory for six years (three years in secondary school and three in preparatory school). The method of data gathering used was an adapted version of the Nelson English Language Tests (NELT) comprising 64 multiple-choice items. The test aimed to identify three different levels of linguistic competence in English: basic, intermediate and advanced. It was administered to a total of 4,690 students of whom 2,697, representing 57.5% of the total sample, had studied only in public schools, 1,306 in both public and private schools, and 687 only in private schools. This study provides information in the form of global results (all students) and results according to the type of secondary and preparatory attended by students. I will concentrate on the findings regarding students who attended only public schools as these results are the most relevant to the current investigation. It is worth noting that all the items comprising the test aimed at testing grammatical knowledge (pp. 137-146) even though the approach to teaching and learning as stipulated in the official documents to EFL in Mexican secondary schools should be CLT.

Gonzalez Robles *et al.* (2004) found that the vast majority of students who had attended public schools failed the test (95.9%). They further classify their findings into the three levels of competence achieved by the students. They report that those students who attended both public secondary and preparatory schools achieved a higher score in the basic level and as the degree of difficulty increased,

their averages decreased. That is, whereas 14.3% passed the basic level of linguistic knowledge, the other 85.7% failed. In the intermediate level 96.8% failed. In the advanced category of CLI only 2.3% of the students were placed as having achieved this level of linguistic competence, whereas the vast majority failed this level. They even report that there were 190 students who answered zero items correctly.

They conclude that results present a disheartening image of EFL teaching and learning in English in general in the Mexican context and more importantly, in the public sector. This, they assert, represents an unavoidable challenge that needs careful and considerable attention which cannot be postponed (*ibid.*: 129). Although I concur with this observation, there are some important points that are worth noting deriving from the study by Gonzalez *et al.* First, it is important to have research reports focusing on EFL in secondary and preparatory public schools since, as I have already noted earlier in this thesis, there is almost no published research available. However, I firmly believe that these sorts of studies, which rely exclusively on statistical data, present a shallow picture of what the actual EFL situation is like in public schools and therefore their findings are limited compared with studies that adopt a naturalistic approach to inquiry. As a result, these researchers failed to identify some of the reasons that account for such poor results since they did not ask the most directly involved people in the EFL teaching and learning process what their experiences were like in real classrooms. Finally, it is not enough to identify that there is a major problem in EFL teaching and learning in the Mexican public education system; what is needed is research designed to identify those issues that are preventing both teachers and learners from achieving more satisfactory results as perceived from their own experiences. This is the aim of the current study.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter I presented relevant studies in the three areas of research that underpin this investigation. Due to the fact that studies of students' process of transfer or transition in TESOL are not available, I reviewed some studies on transfer in mainstream education that have been carried out in Great Britain, the USA, and Australia. In these countries there exists a long research tradition addressing different issues associated with academic transfers and transition in mainstream education, especially in levels of compulsory education. Studies addressing key issues in the process of students' transfers in LOTE and MFL learning and teach-

ing were reviewed in more detail as these are more relevant to the current study, although it must be borne in mind that there are important contextual differences which should not be overlooked.

As EFL teaching and learning is decided by the education authorities in charge of language-in-education planning and policy, it was important to look at research in this area. Again, as there is no research available reporting EFL planning and policy and how it has been implemented in secondary and preparatory schools in the Mexican context, related studies carried out in other parts of the world that shed light on our understanding of important issues that impinge on foreign language policy and its implementation were presented. As Nunan has rightly pointed out:

‘Because TESOL professionals hold a central place in English language policy, they need to understand the impact of English as a global language on the educational practices and medium of instruction in educational systems around the world. Currently, governments and ministries of education are framing policies and implementing practices in the language area without adequately considering the implications of such policies and practices on the lives of the teachers and students they affect (Szulc-Kurpaska, 1996). It would therefore be imprudent for TESOL professionals to remain unaware of such policies’. (Nunan, 2003: 591)

Finally, since this study aims at understanding the lived EFL experiences of the participants in real classrooms, it was necessary to report the findings of studies conducted in the field of TESOL or MFL learning from the main stakeholders’ perspectives in an attempt to gain understanding to the particularities of the EFL situation in the Mexican education system. These will now be explored using a qualitative approach.

3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

*As a researcher with very limited experience in qualitative research, one of the most daunting experiences I had to undergo was to come to grips with the concepts and the terminology employed in this type of research. This represented a major hurdle since different scholars use the same term to describe different or even contradictory concepts. By the same token, it was very common to find, in the vast literature on research methodology, that seasoned practitioners use different terms to refer to the same concepts. Therefore, in the next sections I provide some generally accepted definitions of the research paradigm, research approach and tradition adopted in the current study. I also discuss why I preferred these over other approaches available (3.2). Further, I present the data collection and issues involved in the fieldwork done for this investigation (3.3 and 3.4). Finally, the process of data analysis is provided in section 3.5. I hope that by providing in detail and clearly each decision I made in each step of the research methodology and the procedures followed to data analysis these will provide the *authentication* (Edge and Richards, 1998) of this study.*

3.2 RESEARCH ORIENTATION

In this section I provide definitions of the terms research paradigm, qualitative approach and the research tradition adopted in this study to best answer the research questions posed.

This study positions itself within the constructivist paradigm since I believe that there is not a unique experience akin to everyone undergoing the process of EFL transition from secondary to preparatory school. Rather, this experience is constructed through the interaction among the participants in this study with their environment at this specific period of time. Carrying out my study from a constructivist paradigm provided me with *understanding* of what this lived experience was like from the perspectives of the participants in this study. This was the main aim of the current investigation. The next section provides a brief description of constructivism followed by an explanation that accounts for this choice over the critical theory perspective.

3.2.1 CONSTRUCTIVISM OR CRITICAL THEORY?

Ontologically and epistemologically, being a constructivist brings with it a certain perspective on the way that researchers go about finding things out and representing them. Constructivists argue that there is not a single reality out there waiting to be discovered. Rather, they assume, that there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality in a state of flux and that these change over time.

Qualitative researchers adopting an interpretative or constructivist paradigm are interested in *understanding* what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. In other words, constructivist researchers are interested in learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them. The researcher and the researched interact to influence one another (Lincoln and Guba 1985, 2000; Schwandt, 2000: 189-213; Merriam 2002: 3-15).

Critical social theorists are concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000: 281). Therefore, critical qualitative research poses questions about the influence of these issues and how power relations advance the interest of one group while

oppressing others, and the nature of truth and the construction of knowledge (Merriam, 2000:10).

Drawing, in particular, from Habermas' (1972) theory of knowledge, the ultimate goal of this critical orientation is to free people from the oppression and to empower them so that they are able to change their social contexts and themselves. For this reason, some but not all forms of critical research have a strong participatory, action component that is consistent with the political, consciousness-raising pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1981) and the communicative ethic that emerges from the critical theory of Habermas (Collins, 2003:79). Participatory action research (PAR) focuses on the political empowerment of people through group participation in the search for and acquisition of knowledge and subsequent action to change the *status quo* (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Merriam and Simpson, 1995; Porter, 2003, Collins, 2003).

From a critical perspective, education is considered to be a social institution designed for social and cultural reproduction and transformation. Knowledge generated through this orientation is an 'ideological critique of power, privilege, and oppression in areas of educational practice'. From a constructivist perspective, however, education is viewed as a process and school as a lived experience. Knowledge is to be gained by understanding the meaning of the process or experience from an inductive, hypothesis-or theory-generating mode of inquiry (Merriam, 2001:4).

In summary, these two paradigms have in common the search for meaning and understanding but researchers study phenomena in different ways, from different stances, and with different ends in view.

It could be argued that since this study seeks to gain understanding of something that is problematic within education and therefore is ultimately bound to power structures and hierarchies within the educational system, a critical approach that would challenge those power structures would be a more suitable paradigm. However, I have at least three reasons that explain why the adoption of a critical perspective would not be appropriate for this study:

1. My research questions are concerned with understanding the phenomenon of transition from the participants' construction of this lived experience. Critical educational research focuses more on the socio-political-cultural context than on individuals (Merriam, 2002:9) which is not the main concern of this study.
2. To assume that the problem addressed in this study is the result of oppression or social inequality is to establish an explanatory framework that may exclude or de-emphasise other aspects of the situation. Although such

factors will not be ignored if there is evidence that they are relevant, the methodological and analytical orientation of this project will not prioritise them. Questions in interviews, for example, will not be informed by a priori assumption about social realities, and participants' understandings will be examined with an open mind while giving due consideration to their constructions and representation.

3. Some forms of critical educational research have much to say about the importance of the emancipation of teachers and very little about to say about the students. They fail to give sufficient recognition to the conflictual nature of schooling (Walford, 2001: 109).

Although there is an evaluative dimension to this research, its main aim is to develop a picture of the EFL teachers' and learners' experiences in state school classrooms from their own perspectives. In giving voice to these participants and representing their concerns, the project moves to a position that is critical of the power structures which perpetuate inequalities in the system, denying agency and access to those who are responsible for implementing policies at the grassroots level and those for whom the policies are ostensibly designed. In this respect, the findings are in line with those which might be expected of a critical approach, even though the paradigmatic orientation informing data collection and analysis is constructivist rather than critical. Since the current study is a qualitative one, the next section deals with the terminology and discussion of qualitative research.

3.2.2 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state that in order to define what qualitative research means at present a complex historical context has to be taken into account. Nonetheless, they argue that an initial generic definition can be offered:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense

of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 4-5)

Of particular relevance for practitioners in the field of TESOL, there are seven core traditions in qualitative research: ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, life history, action research, conversation analysis and case study (Richards, 2003: 13-28; Crewswell, 1998).

The tradition chosen to find out how students and teachers perceive the transition from secondary to preparatory school in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico regarding English lessons was case study. The reasons for this are discussed in section 3.2.4 but as point of orientation the following description of this study is offered:

This is a descriptive case study within the field of education and more specifically in the field of TESOL. This case study is multi-method in its approach to data collection and analysis.

3.2.3 CASE STUDY

What is case study?' is a good example of a question easy to ask and difficult to answer. (Bassey, 1999:22)

3.2.3.1 FEATURES OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Merriam explains that for the inexperienced researcher, case study is a 'sort of catch-all category' using this term when the research is not an experiment, a survey or includes statistics (2001:18-9). For Hammersley and Gomm (2000: 2-4) all research is, in one way, case study. They argue that it is precisely the contrast between this form of inquiry and the other two kinds of social research -the experiment and the social survey- that offer the current accepted meaning of the term case study. Thus, the contrasting characteristics are:

1. focus on a small number of cases- sometimes just one
2. data gathered and analysed about a large number of features of each case
3. study of naturally occurring cases
4. priority of qualitative data over quantitative (i.e. detailed description over statistics)

5. aim of research may be on understanding the case under study itself rather than on theoretical inference or empirical generalisation.

The current study meets all of the criteria mentioned above. First, it focuses on a small number of students, from a few schools, rather than on all or a large number of them who have undergone the transition from secondary to preparatory level regarding their English language lessons. Second, concentrating on a small number of students will allow data collection and analysis to focus on a large number of features of the case. Third, unlike experiments where researchers *create* the case(s) studied, this is a study of a case *constructed* out of naturally occurring social situation (ibid.:3). The methods and the process employed for the collection of data (see 3.3 and 3.4) and process of analysis (section 3.5) for the current study are those associated with qualitative case studies. These will provide a rich, detailed or ‘thick’ description of this case. Finally, the issue of generalisation will be dealt with in section 3.2.4.4.

3.2.3.2 TYPES OF CASE STUDIES

Within the tradition of case study research there are various types of case studies which differ according to what and how the researcher is trying to achieve. These will be described in this section.

Most researchers in the social sciences agree upon three or four different types of case studies (see Table 3.1 below).

Table 3. 1 Typology of Case Studies

Stenhouse 1985	Yin 1994	Stake 1995	Bassey 1999	Merriam 2001
Ethnographic	Exploratory	Instrumental	Theory-seeking and Theory- testing	Interpretive
Action Reseach	Descriptive	Intrinsic	Story-telling and picture-drawing	Descriptive
Evaluative	Explanatory	Collective	Evaluative	Evaluative
Educational				Multiple

Within educational case study research, Stenhouse (1985) refers to four styles:

1. Ethnographic - involving single in-depth study by means of participant observation and interview.
2. Action research - focus on bringing about change in the case under study.
3. Evaluative - concerns the evaluation of programmes; condensed fieldwork usually replaces the more lengthy ethnographic approach
4. Educational - designed to enhance the understanding of action in education.

Because of the in-depth nature of the first two types of case study described above, they are likely to be single case studies; the other two — evaluative and educational case study — can involve a single case or can be incorporated into multi-site methods. The latter is particularly prominent in policy research (Sturman in Keeves, 1997: 63). The case study in this research is ethnographic because it is an in-depth study where I spent some time in the research sites which gave me the opportunity to get to know and establish rapport with the participants before interviewing them.

Stake (1995: 3-4; 2000:437) identifies three types of case study: instrumental, intrinsic and collective. He refers to intrinsic case study when it is undertaken to achieve a better understanding of the particular case being studied. An intrinsic case study is undertaken because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest to the researcher. By instrumental case study he refers to research carried out mainly to provide insight into an issue or to draw a generalization. In an instrumental study the case is chosen to advance our understanding of something else. In collective case study researchers may jointly study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. In other words, it is an instrumental study but extended to several cases. Finally, because researchers have several interests, particular and general, he adds, there is no line that distinguishes intrinsic case study from instrumental. Rather 'a zone of combined purposes separates them' (Stake, 2000: 437). In this instance the case is instrumental as it is expected to gain insight into the participants' lived experiences of the EFL transfer from secondary to preparatory school.

The three types of educational case studies conceived by Bassey (1999:58) are:

1. Theory-seeking and theory-testing – particular studies of general issues whose aim is to lead to fuzzy propositions or generalisations and to convey these to interested audience.
2. Story-telling and picture-drawing – narrative stories and descriptive accounts of events, projects, programmes, institutions or educational systems which, after careful analysis, deserve to be told to interested audiences.
3. Evaluative – research into educational programmes, systems, projects or events whose objective is to determine their worthwhileness, judged by analysis by researchers, and to convey this to interested audiences.

For Merriam (2001:38-40) a *descriptive* case study in education is undertaken to present a detailed account of the phenomenon under study. Descriptive case studies are 'atheoretical' since they are neither guided by a priori generalisations nor motivated to formulate general hypotheses. Their utility lies in providing information about areas of education where there is little or a lack of research. An *interpretive* case study contains rich, thick description. These descriptive data are employed to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support or challenge a priori theoretical assumptions to the data gathering. If there is no theory, or the existing one does not explain the phenomenon adequately, hypotheses cannot be developed to structure a research investigation. Researchers in interpretive case studies gather as much information about the problem as possible with the intent of analysing, interpreting or theorising about the phenomenon. *Evaluative* case studies are concerned with description, explanation, and judgments. Above all else, this type of case weighs 'information to produce judgments. Judging is the final and ultimate act of evaluation' (ibid.:39). *Multiple* case studies also known as collective case studies, cross-case, multi-case or multi-site or comparative case study, involve collecting and analysing data from several cases. In fact, the inclusion of multiple cases is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalisability of findings in research based on case study. This case study is essentially descriptive because it is undertaken in an attempt to bridge the existing gap in research in the field of TESOL where students' EFL transfers from secondary to preparatory school have received no attention so far. Neither has research focusing on student transfers received attention in the field of education in the Mexican context.

To summarise, this research is an instrumental ethnographic case study, descriptive in nature and with a focus on developing a detailed picture of how

the main stakeholders in EFL teaching and learning in Mexican state schools perceive the transfer process of students moving from secondary to preparatory education. And although there is no intervention or any elements of participatory action research (PAR) it can be argued that this case study is critical in its nature.

3.2.3.3 CASE STUDY AND GENERALISATION

For decades, discussions on the issue of external validity or generalisation have featured prominently in debates on the nature of qualitative inquiry. One recurrent criticism of case study research concerns the impossibility to generalise from a single case. Underlying this statement there is the common view about generalisation derived from positivist-oriented research. However, because constructivist qualitative research draws from different assumptions about reality, the concept of generalisation needs to be conceived differently from the way it is conceived in quantitative research. Researchers working within the interpretive or constructivist paradigm have advanced ways of understanding the concept of generalisability that are more in accordance with the worldview of qualitative inquiry (see, for example, Cronbach, 1975; Lincoln and Guba 1985, 1990; Stake, 1978,1995; Patton, 1990; Schofield,1990; Bassey, 1999, 2001 2003; Gomm *et al.*, 2000; Williams, 2002).

Stake's concept of *naturalistic generalisations* is particularly relevant to case study researchers. For Stake there seem to be two kinds of generalisations. One kind is the 'rationalistic, propositional, law-like generalizations' which are often associated with scientific research. The other type of generalisation- naturalistic- are developed through vicarious experience. He argues for the value of case study research stating that:

it is reasonable to conclude that one of the more effective means of adding to understanding for all readers will be by approximating, through the words and illustrations of our reports, the natural experiences acquired in ordinary personal involvement. (Stake, 2000:19)

Edge and Richards (1998: 338) state that for researchers in TESOL working within a constructivist paradigm, issues of generalisation, validity and reliability become even more complicated due to 'the absence of a properly established qualitative tradition' in this field and the prejudice that still exists against this type of research.

Therefore, they argue, researchers should be able to articulate a *warrant* for their research outcomes and that this 'should be appropriate for the claims they make' (ibid.353). They suggest that in order to contend with this situation, researchers must develop their own position by addressing three important issues:

- a. Position — the research paradigm and tradition in which the researcher locates herself
- b. Voice — the space given to the participants to 'speak their own thoughts' in terms which are meaningful to them (ibid.: 340)
- c. Representation — the forms of discourse used by the researcher that best expresses what she has to say.

In this thesis, these three issues have been carefully considered. My position concerning paradigmatic and tradition choices, I hope, have been clearly stated which show the *legitimacy* of this study. The procedures of data collection and analysis together with the availability of the data demonstrate the *authenticity* of the claims made in this study (ibid.). Finally, the gathering of data was carried out within the context where the situation under study was occurring and over a limited period of time (see sections 3.3 and 3.4), which means that any attempt to generalise on the basis of it would depend on ignoring the contextual factors that lend it its distinctive character. Instead, what I aspire to is to share the findings derived from this research expecting that these resonate in the broad context of TESOL. Finally, as many practitioners of case studies have rightly pointed out, the transferable generalizations, if any, depend entirely on the readers and not on the researcher.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

In order to answer my research questions, like all qualitative researchers, I spent some periods of time engaged in a series of interrelated activities in the process of collecting data (Creswell, 1985). These included the following:

- planning and readjusting fieldwork;
- locating the school/participants;
- gaining access and making rapport;
- purposefully sampling;
- collecting data;
- recording information;
- resolving field issues; and
- storing data.

Creswell highlights the importance for the researcher to consider the phases in gathering data which, he argues, 'extend beyond the typical reference point of conducting interviews or making observation' (ibid.: 110). This remark seems to be addressing the issue already noted by other researchers that aspects of fieldwork have been neglected i.e. detailed accounts of how gaining entry and access to research participants were obtained (see 3.3.3). For the sake of clarity, the issues of planning fieldwork, locating the sites, entry and access, sampling and representation of the research are dealt with in this section, while interviews, transcripts, field notes, documents, and problems with data collection are addressed in section 3.4.

3.3.1 DEFINING FIELDWORK

For fieldwork to count as such it does not necessarily have to be a full-time or long term activity (Adler and Adler, 1987). However, fieldworkers should share firsthand, as far as possible, 'the environment problems, background, language, rituals, and social relations of a more-or-less bounded and specified group of people' (Van Maanen, 1988:3). The thrust behind this, he says, is that 'by means of sharing, a rich, concrete, complex, and hence truthful account of the social world being studied is possible'. In this view, fieldwork is then a means to an end.

My role as a fieldworker and the fieldwork done for this investigation are in line with Adler and Adler's (1987) and Van Maanen's (1988) concepts of what fieldwork entails and what is asked of a fieldworker. However, the fact that I am a Mexican dealing with Mexican participants did not make my work in the field more straightforward and easier than if it had been otherwise (see 3.4.4).

There were several reasons why I could not spend a prolonged period of time doing my first phase of fieldwork for the current study. First, I needed to collect data from participants when they were just finishing their secondary education, i.e when they were at the beginning of the transfer process. Second, I was told that the last few months before June, were too busy for both students and administrative staff since during this time students would have been taking all their final exams and both teachers and students would also be involved in external assessment (SEV). Third, due to my particular situation of being a full time PhD student living in England and doing a bit of a teaching I could only spent a short period of time in my country for the first phase of data collection. The plan and the activities that comprise these two fieldwork phases are described in the subsequent sections.

3.3.2 PLANNING FIELDWORK

Two phases of fieldwork were carried out for the current study. The first phase involved a three-week period in June 2004 and the second one a six-week period during February-March in 2005. These two phases for fieldwork were carefully chosen as the first one allowed me to visit the schools and interview the participants during their last three weeks of secondary education thus allowing them to provide fresh accounts of their experience of EFL instruction during their last year of secondary education. The second phase allowed sufficient time for the student-participants to have undergone the transfer experience and have already completed their first semester of EFL learning in their new educational context. Hence, they were also in the position to provide accounts of how they had experienced their new environment in general and their EFL lessons more specifically while this was still fresh in their minds. I also devoted a good time of this second phase collecting documents and relevant literature for this research (see 3.4.4).

As already mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, I had had a previous experience in doing fieldwork in some preparatory schools in Xalapa. However, 'when engaging in fieldwork, we observe something that has never exactly occurred before and would not be an object of study now were we not doing it. Our work is *always* unique in time and place' (Wolcott, 1995:230-232, italics in the original). Even though this study involved preparatory school students, this was indeed my first time doing fieldwork in secondary schools. I was well aware that in order to collect good data in this new field, I required a well organised plan for this new *adventure*, to use Wolcott's term (*ibid.*).

Being myself a firm believer that each event, situation and the people interacting in them are unique in time and space, I decided to draw from the lessons learnt from my past experience in conducting fieldwork in preparatory schools but at the same time I knew I had to be prepared to readjust my plans if it was necessary (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3 in section 3.3.3).

My previous experience proved to be useful insofar as some of the things I had to do to gain entry in to preparatory schools (Basurto *et al.*, 2001.) had to be handled in a very different way in secondary schools. It was not only a matter of different contexts but of my being in a very different situation. Apart from the personal situation described in 3.3.1 there were other important considerations that I had to take into account. First, I had been living outside my country for a year. I had no contacts – or so I thought – in that particular context i.e.

secondary schools and *real* communication could only be achieved until the moment I was physically in Xalapa. It could be argued that nowadays you need not to be *in situ* to do research. A considerable number of researchers are able to contact gatekeepers, gather all their data, or contact their participants by using technological facilities such as phone or email (see Jones, 1999; Mann and Stewart, 2000; Seymour, 2001; Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). However, my previous experience in fieldwork together with my experience trying to contact other Mexican researchers and colleagues from England by telephone or email has reinforced my views about the preference for face-to-face contact that still prevails in the Mexican society. Because of the relatively expensive cost of telephone and internet facilities in Mexico people are much more used to face-to-face contact. Thus, the researcher needs to be aware of this when collecting data. Further, in Mexico there still seems to be a lot of reluctance or suspicion towards people who have no time or the will to deal with important issues in person. They want to see the person not papers or messages on a screen. Not even hearing the voice over the phone will sometimes suffice. Hence, at least to gain entry you need to do this face-to-face if you do not want to end up writing numerous emails or making phone calls which will remain unanswered altogether. Finally, transport was also an issue to be considered when planning the activities needed to collect my data. I did not have my own car but I had to rely on public transport. Anyone living or having lived in Mexico can understand, very clearly, the time constraints and the problems associated with depending on public transport for a researcher visiting schools in different parts of the a relatively big town².

All these issues were interconnected not only on the planning stage but they were also relevant to all other data collection activities throughout the process of my fieldwork. Had I not taken them into consideration they could have hindered my fieldwork experience in general and the collection of data needed for the current research.

² Buses do not run following a reliable schedule. Taxis have to be caught in busy streets or you can ring a radio taxi which are more expensive. My house in Xalapa is located in a street where neither taxis nor buses run nearby. The options available to move around the city at that time was either to run the risk of wasting a lot of valuable time waiting for a bus or ring a radio taxi. Even so, you are very likely to be told that there will be a taxi outside your door in 5 or 10 minutes when these 10 minutes may well be 20 or even 30 minutes in Mexican time.

3.3.3 LOCATING THE SITE, GAINING ENTRY AND ACCESS

The issues which arise when choosing a fieldwork site overlap with the question of access and entry which are the main focus of this section.

Field research takes place in social situations in which the researcher is actively involved in observing and recording life of the people as it occurs. However, in these circumstances selection is inevitable as field researchers need to define their field of study and to narrow the focus of their work. In these terms, researchers must continually decide when, where, what and whom to observe and interview. It is these aspects of field research that are crucial throughout the research process (Burgess, 1984: 53).

As previously mentioned, the focus of the current study lies in the perceptions students have of the transition from secondary to preparatory education in the context of English Language learning. Thus, the current study focuses on a 'naturally bounded, geographically located group' (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993:63). There are three types of secondary schools in the educational system in Mexico, two of which were used as research sites: General Secondary Schools (*Secundarias Generales*) and Technical Secondary Schools (*Secundarias Técnicas*). The scope of this research did not allow the inclusion of the Televised Secondary Schools (*Telesecundarias*) since, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the student population and academic staff in this type of school are very different from the other two types of secondary schools. Furthermore, EFL lessons may not be part of the curriculum (see chapter one). While Table 3.3 below shows the research sites visited and the total of participants that co-operated in the first phase of my fieldwork, Figure 3.1 provides information of the participants in each secondary school (a brief description of the research sites and the participants is provided in 3.3.4).

Table 3. 2 First Phase of Fieldwork in June 200

Research Sites	Boys	Girl	EFL Teachers	Admin Staff	Total Participants
3	16	20	5	2	43

Table 3. 3 Participants in each Secondary School

School	Boys	Girls	EFL Teachers	Admin Staff	Total
SecTec A	4	8	1	Academic Co-ordinator	14
SecGen B	7	7	2	Headmaster	17
SecTec C	5	5	2		12
Total	16	20	5	2	43

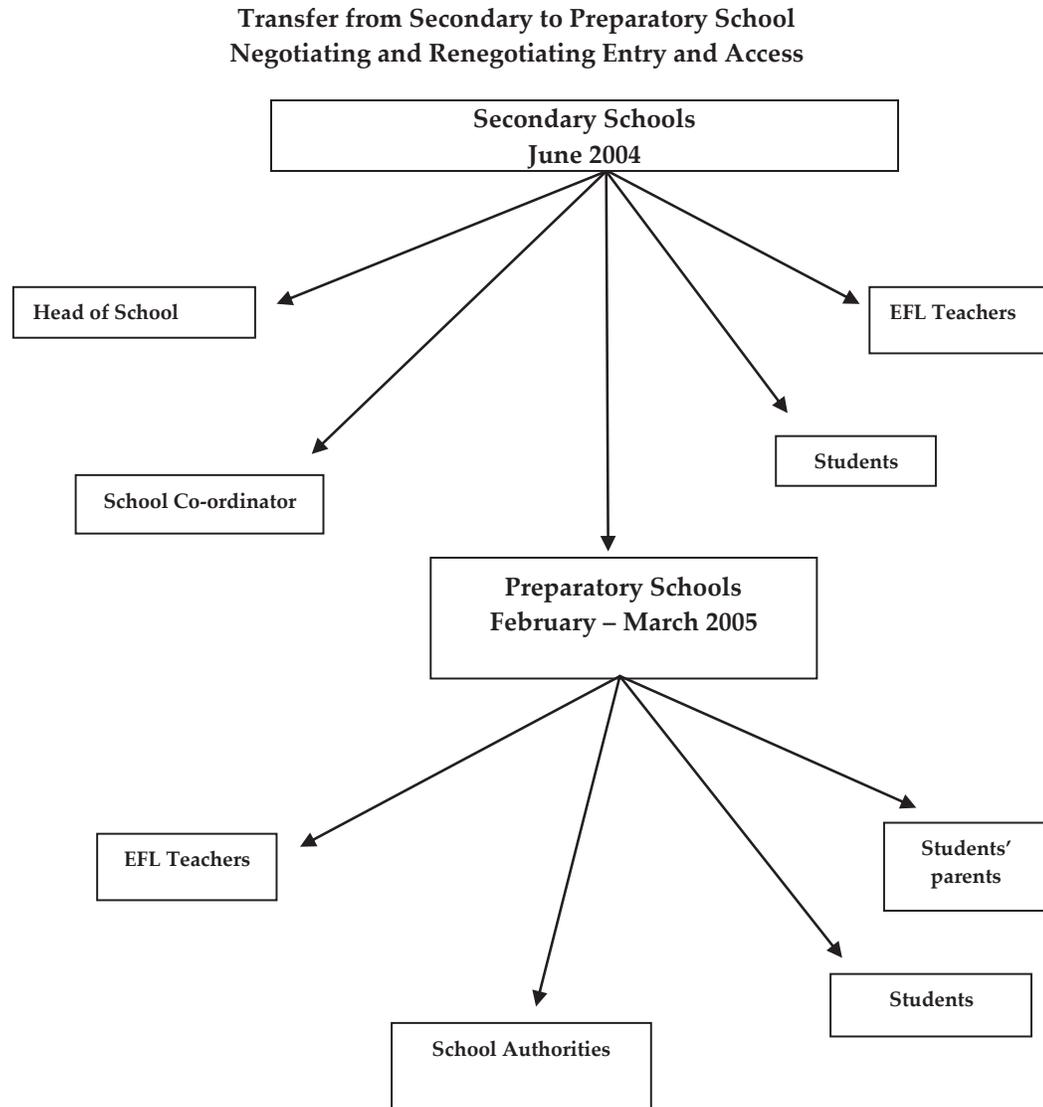
Perhaps one of the most daunting and time-consuming aspects of my first phase of fieldwork was to gain entry in to the research sites. Gaining entry refers to the whole procedure researchers have to go through in order to be allowed into the settings where they want to conduct their research.

In order to carry out fieldwork in educational settings, the first consideration is to make sure permission is going to be granted from the corresponding authorities, commonly referred to as the *gatekeepers* (Becker, 1970 in Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:20), to enter the schools. If you are not given the consent from the gatekeepers to get in to the site of your interest, you simply cannot carry out your research.

Viewing gaining entry in educational settings as a 'one-off activity that prefaces the real work' (Burgess, 1991:43) is very limited. Rather, access is something that has to be negotiated and renegotiated throughout the research process. As access is based upon the relationship between researcher and the researched, this influences 'not only the physical accessibility but also the development of the design, collection, analysis, and dissemination phases of the investigation' (ibid.: 52).

Burgess' claims above become even truer in research that focuses on students moving to a different educational level like in this study. For example, I not only had to renegotiate the access to the same participants with different 'gatekeepers' (see Figure 3.1) but I had to go through the process of gaining entry to some of the new physical spaces where the interviews were carried out (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.1 Negotiating and Renegotiating Entry and Access



Although a lot of fieldwork has been carried out in different settings including schools, first-hand detailed accounts of the process of how access was obtained are very scarce in the literature of qualitative research in educational contexts (Delamont, 2002: 97-109) and even more scarce in TESOL contexts (Richards, 2003: 120-

129). Even worse, some texts on research carried out in schools may mislead new researchers into thinking that negotiating entry is a simple and straightforward matter as this important aspect of fieldwork has been either played down, taken for granted or ignored completely (Burgess, 1984:8-9; 1995:31-52). Unfortunately, this is particularly true of the few studies carried out in secondary or preparatory schools in Mexico in which ethnographic strategies were used. For example, in some of them the aspect of entry has merited the briefest of the comments (Guerero Salinas, 2000:7) or has been neglected altogether (Herr and Anderson, 1997; Guerra Ramírez, 2000; Díaz Pontones, 2001).

The negotiation of entry to educational settings, Ball says (1993:34), has to be carried out through formal channels. State schools in Mexico are no exception: they are highly stratified settings in which there is what Dingwall (1980:878) has called a 'hierarchy of consent'. Even when researchers have managed to be 'physically' inside the research site, this does not guarantee access to the information you are seeking (Whyte, 1997:16).

Although the terms entry and access are very often used interchangeably, a very useful consideration to bear in mind is that *entry* does not mean *access* (Ball, 1993:34) or at least access in an ethical way where respondents or participants should be the only ones to decide whether to participate or not. When I was doing interviews, I realised that some of the students and even some teachers had been 'asked' to participate by the co-ordinator or their teachers, although of course, this 'asking' had the force of an instruction. Because of this, I explained as many times and as emphatically as necessary that I would like to interview only those participants who had *freely decided to participate* and that they should not feel obliged. Here is an example taken from my field notes to illustrate this point:

In summary, researchers cannot and should not overlook the fact that dealing with people is a very sensitive and delicate matter. Two important issues I've learnt from my field work carried out for this study worth bearing in mind are:

No matter how many 'official documents' of consent to entry a research site you have been granted, the only thing you can be sure of is that you have been allowed to get *into* the site but not *along with* the people in it; some people feel threatened when they are observed or interviewed because they may think the researcher's interest is to judge them and not to understand them, especially if they are in a position (co-ordinator) in which they are likely to be held account for the success but most importantly for the failure, of their work.

Table 3. 4 Example of Field Note

<p style="text-align: right;">16.06.04</p> <p>This morning when I was talking to the group of students at the SectEC A, I noticed that one of them looked particularly uneasy or uncomfortable. He kept on moving on his chair as I was explaining the purpose of my interviewing and asking for their permission to record the interviews. As I was explaining, this student never kept eye contact with me or asked any questions as the others had done. FORTUNATELY, I asked him if he'd rather not be interviewed because</p>	<p>when I did so, he immediately shook his head "no". I explained to him that I did NOT want to interview anyone unless they really wanted to participate. He left the room as soon as I made this clear ONCE AGAIN!!!</p> <p>Lesson learnt: I have to pay close attention how participants react to my explanation before interviews (their body language?) I need to be VERY sensitive to any signs!!! There's so much going on at the same time!!!</p>
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3.3.4 SAMPLING ISSUES: SNOWBALL AND EMERGENT SAMPLING

This section focuses on sampling issues in general and on a mix of snowball (or network) and opportunistic (or emergent) in particular (Patton, 2003: 243-4), which was the approach that I used for the current study. I will show how snowball and opportunistic sampling works within the Mexican system that I have already talked about and will then illustrate the implication of this for project planning and development.

Sampling in qualitative research refers to the researchers' selection of the research sites, time periods, people and events for their study. In other words, the task of the researcher is to be constantly making choices as where, when, what and whom to observe and interview. Researchers have to address practical issues of data collection once they have a clear picture of the sort of information required. They should approach these issues informed by the aims of their research and should answer the question of what sort of information is relevant for their studies (Richards, 2003: 248-9). There are various sampling strategies available to the

qualitative researcher. These have been dealt with in depth by Miles and Huberman (1994:27-34) and other scholars (see Patton, 2002: 230-244; Flick, 2002:61-72; Rossman and Rallis, 2003:136-8).

In order to study how students perceive the transition from one level of education to the next in Xalapa, Mexico, there are a great number of schools available that can be visited and people in them that can be interviewed. However, since the goal of this study is not to generalise the results from a statistical sampling to all students undergoing this transition, a probabilistic (random) sample is neither appropriate nor justifiable. Since this is a qualitative case study, a non-probabilistic or purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was considered the most appropriate method to use.

Within purposeful sampling there is a wide range of types of strategies that can be used. For example, Miles and Huberman (ibid.) present what seems to be the most thoroughly comprehensive typology of sampling strategies in qualitative inquiry. Their typology contains 16 different sampling types. Some of the more common strategies mentioned by writers of social and educational research are *typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, judgement and opportunistic, snowball or network, theoretical sampling* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), *criterion, extreme or deviant case sampling*.

Snowball, net or chain sampling, in its simplest formulation, consists of identifying respondents who are then used to refer researchers to other respondents:

Network selection is a strategy in which each successive participant or group is named by a preceding group or individual. The researcher thus collects a selection of respondents groups or individuals on the basis of participant referrals. (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993:73-4)

Because of the particular situation in Mexico, where personal contact is so important, the most productive way of sampling tends to be a combination of snowball sampling, where one person puts you in touch with another, together with opportunistic or emergent sampling when fieldwork is involved. For Patton (2002: 240) opportunistic or emergent sampling is very likely to occur since “fieldwork often involves on-the-spot decisions about sampling to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities *after* fieldwork has begun” (see Table 3.9).

To illustrate this point, here are two examples from my field notes of how snowball sampling works in practice within the Mexican context. While Table 3.5 shows how I had initially considered to go about sampling, gaining entry and

dealing with the gatekeepers in order to collect my data before my trip to Mexico, Table 3.6 shows how I actually approached the process after talking about my plan with a Mexican friend just a few days before my trip. This conversation with my friend changed radically my initial plan which proved to be very useful since he knew an EFL teacher working in one of the secondary schools that served as a research site.

Table 3. 5 Planning Fieldwork

Fieldwork Plan (May 2004)

1. Design a questionnaire to find out which secondary school students in *Prepa* came from.
2. Ask for the co-operation of contacts identified and kept in previous fieldwork (*prepa* schools).
3. Apply questionnaire to *prepa* students to see what schools' names crop up most frequently.
4. Decide from those schools which ones are suitable for my research
5. See if I have any contacts in those schools.
6. If not, design an emergent plan to identify and approach the gatekeepers.
7. Go straight to the gatekeepers in the secondary schools selected.

Table 3. 6 Gaining Entry in Mexican Schools

Gaining entry: The Network
 Carlos (my Mexican friend) → María (ex-student Language School and Especializacion) 2nd Grade Secondary School teacher in a secondary school → Academic Co-ordinator (ex-student: Language School, UV) → 3rd grade English teacher and students → Maria's teaching assistant → another teaching assistant in a different secondary school → 3rd grade English teacher → 2nd grade English teacher → She mentioned that the Director of the school used to be an English teacher then I introduced myself and asked for permission to do the interviews (students and himself) and be going in and out of the school during my stay in Xalapa (June 2004) → I met one of my former student in the street who mentioned that another former student of mine was working in a different secondary school → Nadia (3rd grade English teacher) → Gabriela (2nd grade English Teacher) → 2nds grade ?students.

What this shows is very important since it highlights what qualitative research is all about: a process of adjusting all along the way. And it is something perfectly legitimate but the researcher needs to be aware of all this and of all the consequences. For example, most EFL teachers who participated in this study were not my former students themselves but EFL teachers I met through my former stu-

dents. This sometimes helped to gain *entry* to the schools and gain the permission from the administrative staff in a faster and more easily way. However, this was also a very sensitive aspect to handle since EFL teachers in secondary or preparatory school who studied at the Language School of the University of Veracruz, may be regarded as teachers who regard themselves as better prepared for the job than those other EFL teachers who studied somewhere else. I do not want to imply that this is the case, far from it. But, there may be rivalry among teachers and if the researcher represent herself as an UV academic staff doing research in a context where she does not 'belong' may bring serious consequences or at least may find difficult to have *access* to the teachers and their students. The next section provides a brief description of the research sites and participants.

RESEARCH SITES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

The SecTec A is situated in the area bordering one of the most sought after neighbourhoods in the city. This secondary school is one of the two most popular choices for students entering this type of secondary education. Not all students attending this school live in this area of the city, but according to the academic co-ordinator most students attending this school come at least from middle class families. Consequently, the students' socio-economic background has implications for the EFL teachers since they are very likely to teach students who moved from a private primary school where they already took EFL or attended and/or are still attending EFL lessons in private institutions. The EFL teacher who participated in this study is in charge of 10 groups: six 3rd grades and four groups who are in their 1st grade. Thus, this EFL teacher is in charge of all the groups who are finishing their last grade of compulsory education and almost all groups of students who are beginning secondary education.

The SecGen B is located close to two of the main arteries that run along the city. It is not very far from the town centre. The composition of the area is quite diverse: there is a hospital, some drugstores, small grocery shops, cafés, and houses near this school. It can be said that the population in this area ranges from low- middle class to upper-middle class. In comparison to the other two schools this is a bigger school with more spacious classrooms and more open spaces for the students to play. The two EFL teachers who participated in this project are at

the opposite stages of their teaching careers: one is about to retire and the other has just been teaching in this school for not over three years although she used to do her teaching practices here and to cover some absence leaves from time to time while still studying her BA in EFL teaching.

SecTec C is situated in an area of the city where most people are low-middle class or poor. Unlike the other two schools, it can be a bit complicated to get there if you do not live in that part of the city. The streets and roads are not in good conditions to walk or drive there. However, there are buses that run near the school and most of the students who attend this school live nearby. They can walk or take the bus to school. Most teachers working in this school drive there. The two EFL teachers who participated in this study do not live in that area of the city but drive to school. Again, the socio-economic background of the students and the location of the school have an important bearing on the teaching/learning EFL. For example, the EFL teachers told me that a good number of students who attend this school have to study and work at the same time to contribute to support the home living expenses. It goes without saying that that this fact has implications for learning in general and for EFL in particular. Even though I have not data to support this claim, it is very likely that the parents of students attending this school have no knowledge of English at all and their own proficiency in the L1 may be limited. This may have considerable impact on the EFL learning and teaching. However, more research is urgently needed to see to what extent the family background of the students impinge on the learning and the teaching process of EFL (but see Neville-Barton, 2002; Wallace, 2005; Xuesong, 2006). It might be that students with less economic resources may find the EFL learning process more difficult than those who have their own resources at home.

Despite the fact that the secondary schools are located in three very distinct areas of the city they share the same organisational structure: two shifts (morning and afternoon), same number of groups (18, three for each grade), and more or less same number of students in each group (40-47). The SecTec A and SecTec C are more or less of the same size whereas the SecGen B is much bigger than the other two. The three of them have a paved square in the middle just as you enter the schools. This space is where the official acts take place (e.g. the greeting to the flag every Monday and singing the National Anthem). It is also a space for the students to gather and chat or 'chill out' during their 20-minute break or the short breaks that students managed to take between lessons. Administrative offices in these schools are situated just opposite the paved squares.

THE INHABITANTS

All state schools in Mexico are mixed in terms of gender. The student-participants' age ranged from 14 to 16 in secondary school and they were between 15 and 17 at the end of their first semester of preparatory education.

The EFL teachers' ages ranged from 24 to 55. The five EFL teachers in secondary schools and the two EFL teachers in preparatory schools all studied a BA in EFL at the University of Veracruz (UV). Two of them had also studied the *Especialización* (diploma) in EFL Teaching many years after completing their BAs. Their experience in teaching in those educational levels ranged from three years to over 30 years. Three of them were considering retiring in a couple of years. All of them were female except for one teacher in a preparatory school.

Two EFL teachers in secondary schools were teaching both shifts. The rest of the teachers working in secondary or preparatory school were also teaching English in other institutions. Most of them were teaching 40 hours per week.

The secondary school co-ordinator also studied her BA in EFL at the UV. At the time when she was interviewed she had been working for the state secondary sector for 22 years: six years as an EFL teacher and the rest as an administrator.

The secondary school headmaster studied at the *Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Tlaxcala* also known as *Escuela Normal Superior*. He started teaching EFL in a technical secondary school in 1976. Three years later he moved to a general secondary school where he taught EFL for about 13 years before he became part of the administrative staff. It is worth noting that in schools teachers who are appointed to administrative posts stop teaching and are exclusively involved in administrative work.

3.3.5 REPRESENTING MY RESEARCH

The closest interaction between researcher and participants is during the process of data collection. 'Such interactions inevitably generate situations involving ethical issues' (Oliver, 2003: 45). Although ethical issues permeate the whole research process, 'ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to data collection and in the dissemination of the findings' (Merriam, 2002:29).

It has been pointed out that ethical dilemmas are an 'unavoidable consequence, or an occupational hazard of fieldwork'. They are experiences that the researcher needs to know about. However, 'they need not to be seen as obstruction to data

collection; they can be experienced as opportunities for celebration since they force self-awareness and give promise of change' (de Laine, 2000:2-4).

In the Mexican educational context, doing fieldwork in schools where administrative, academic staff, and students are not used to participating in this type of research requires that the researcher makes sure, as far as this is possible, that consent is informed. That is to say, that every single participant agrees freely and with full understanding of the research to be part of the project (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003:142).

When I had just started doing the first interviews, I realised that some of the students and even some teachers had been *asked* to participate by the co-ordinator or their teachers. Thus, I explained as many times as necessary that I would like to interview only those participants, after my explanation, who had freely decided to participate. To ensure that I had gained access to informed participants I explained to each of them, students, teachers and administrative authorities in each school, that I was doing research as part of my PhD studies. I explained over and over that I was interested in listening to their experiences regarding English language learning and teaching provided they felt free to share these with the researcher.

Something that I have realised is that in the vast literature on qualitative inquiry there still seems to be different points of view on what and how much should be explained to participants. Many researchers represent this in terms of how much to reveal (Richards, 2003:122-3). However, my experience in fieldwork in both secondary and preparatory schools in Mexico is that it seems more necessary or more important to explain and make clear to participants what the research is *not* about. For example, in my previous experience in doing fieldwork in preparatory schools, when I was gaining entry in to schools (Basurto *et al.*, 2001), I had to explain over and over that I was *not* an inspector working for the SEC. Similarly, I had to make clear that I was *not* doing interviews or observing classes to evaluate or give feedback to teachers. It was equally important to explain to students that I was *not* in their schools to teach them or evaluate their EFL teachers. Once again, for this study, in the secondary and preparatory schools that I visited I had to explain and make sure that I was *not* working for the educational authorities. Also, some of the teachers' and students' attitudes towards being interviewed changed from reluctance to acceptance once they learnt that the interviews would be conducted in Spanish and *not* in English. All these aspects were more important for the EFL teachers and the students than, for example, having the transcripts for them to read and decide whether to change or remove some parts of the interviews.

Finally, when researchers talk about fieldwork they tend to talk about issues of access, representation of the research, ethics and so on. However, an aspect that perhaps has not been given as much emphasis as it could be or it has been taken for granted is the issue of respect: establishing mutual respect from the outset and maintaining it throughout the research process. Therefore, I would like to propose the following points arising from my reflections after doing fieldwork. Further, what I would like to suggest is that *respect* most of all is about respect for the situation you find yourself in, so that all these things do not relate to research in general, they relate to the interpretation of research in this particular context, the Mexican context. The researcher not only has to be aware of the issues discussed in this section but, to interpret them in a way that is sensitive to local norms and expectations.

Table 3. 7 RESPECT

Receptiveness and Reciprocity are essential
Entry does not equate access to informed participation
Sensitivity is required so that each context, situation, person, is regarded as unique and the researcher acts accordingly
Patience is important because your informant's time is not YOUR time. You have to be ready to wait, wait, and wait until they are ready to cooperate in an informed and comfortable way
Ethical issues have to be observed throughout the process
Communication not interrogation should characterise the approach
Trust has to be built before rapport can be established

3.4 ISSUES IN DATA COLLECTION

Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective . . . By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different sources to validate and cross-check findings. (Patton, 1990:244)

Case study research usually involves all three strategies of interviewing, observing, and analysing documents. However, seldom are these three strategies used equally (Merriam,2001: 137). Interviews are probably the most common form

of data collection in qualitative case studies in education and documents might be used supported by observation and recording (Richards, *ibid.*). In numerous studies, interviewing is the only source of data (Merriam, 2001:70). Moreover, interviewing is used to find out about those things we cannot observe directly such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions, or how people interpret the world around them. 'The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspectives' (Patton, 1990: 196).

As this study seeks to gain a deep understanding of how students experience or perceive the transition from secondary to preparatory education regarding English lessons, it was thought that this could only be achieved by giving the participants the opportunity to express their own perceptions of the phenomenon under study. Hence, interviews which involved both 'asking questions and listening intently to the answers' (Bassegy, 1999: 81) were chosen as the main research method to collect data although, other techniques such as documents and field notes were also important sources of information. All these sources of data collection are explored in the remaining sections of this chapter.

3.4.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviewing isn't just a matter of finding the right people to talk to and asking them the right questions. (Richards, 2003:49)

Although interviewing is at the heart of the process of data gathering in most qualitative studies in education and in the social sciences (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998; Arskey and Knight, 1999; Wengraf, 2001; Holstein and Gubrium, 2002, 2003), conducting interviews for this study posed a real challenge for me. I found Richards' opening quote a good example of my own experience in conducting interviews for this study. For example, I had found the participants and although I had prepared an interview guide with the topics or subject areas within which I could freely 'explore, probe, and ask questions that elucidate' (Patton, 2002:342) my research questions, I realised that each interviewee opened up new ways of understanding that interviewing demands of the researcher a lot of skill, patience and flexibility. Interviewing required far more than having participants and questions to be asked. For example, regarding the use of language, it was not the same conducting interviews with adolescents as with adults. Similarly, in the first interview most boys found it more difficult to articulate their opinions than the girls. It took me more

time to get them talking. I had to repeat the same questions using different words. However, in the follow-up interview both girls and boys found it easier to express their opinions and these second interviews were longer than the first ones. Further, even though the interviews with teachers and administrative staff lasted for over an hour, it took me more time to get to interview them. Being aware that they are very busy people, interviews with them were arranged on their preferred date and place. However, when it was the time they kept on postponing. I 'felt' that they were doing so not because they were too busy to be interviewed or because they did not want to participate but because they needed the time to feel they were ready to talk to me. In other words, they felt a bit threatened as this was not a common experience for them. Finally, it was very interesting to find out that once we had finished the 'talk' they remarked that they had enjoyed the experience and the opportunity to talk about their jobs with me. They even commented that they did not realise that they had been talking to me for over an hour. Unfortunately, they made valuable comments about the experience of being interviewed once I had already turned off my tape recorder but this was an opportunity to realise the important role that field notes and the research diary (3.4.3) have to capture valuable information, reflections, lessons, insights that can be used to gain more understanding of the participants' lived experiences and other contextual factors as well.

The main reason for the use of interviews as the main method of data collection in the current study is that learners' and teachers' perceptions and experiences concerning issues of continuity in the transition from secondary to preparatory schools with regard to English lessons cannot be observed. However, through interviews, I was able to ask participants questions about these issues. Thus, qualitative interviewing not only allowed me to enter into the participants' perspectives but it was assumed that 'the perspectives of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit' (Patton, 1990:278). Furthermore, the essence of interviewing, Mishler says, is that it is an occasion of two persons speaking to each other in a form of discourse 'shaped and organized by asking and answering questions'. He adds that interviews are the 'joint product of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other' (1986: vii).

Since this study positions itself within a constructivist paradigm, semi-structured interviews were approached as interactions jointly constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee or what Silverman's call 'interviews-as-local-accomplishment', in which social worlds are created in situ (2001: 104). Statements of what students and teacher thought or how they perceived the phenomenon under study could be obtained through interviews or 'talking and listening attentive to them'.

Interviews were conducted during the two phases of fieldwork. Although most interviews were carried out with one participant at a time, again I had to be flexible and adapt to the way in which the interviews were carried out. I had thought of doing all the interviews with one participant at a time. However, a few students and two teachers asked to be interviewed in groups (Frey and Fontana, 1991; Oates, 2000; Wilkinson, 2004). This proved to be beneficial as these participants seemed to need the company of their fellow students or teacher to feel more at ease when talking. It also proved to be a positive experience as on few occasions the participants seemed to be engaged in a shared ‘conversation’ where they were trying to help one another to convey their thoughts.

Figure 3.2 Interview Data

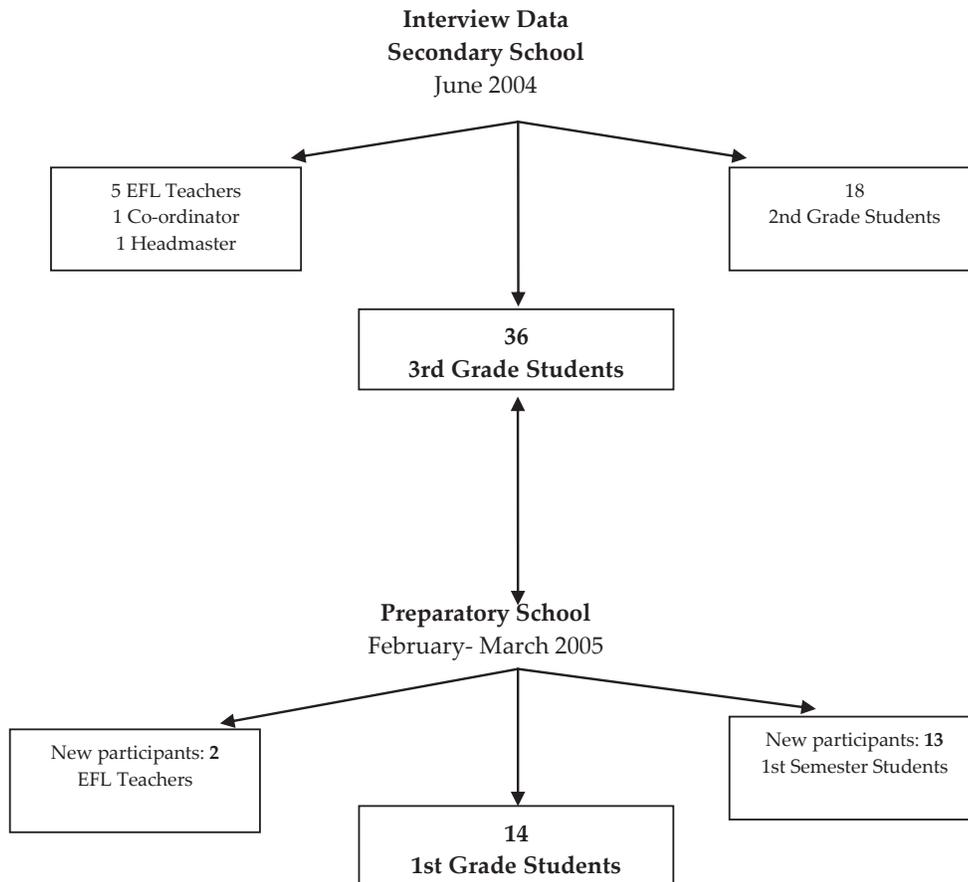


Figure 3.2 above shows the number of interviewees that participated during the two phases of fieldwork. However, not all interviews were used for analysis. For example, during June 2004, I interviewed 18 students who were studying their second year of secondary education as a strategy in case the participants in third grade decided not to participate in the follow up interview or in case I lost track of them or just in case things turned out to be not as planned during my first trip to Xalapa, Mexico. Having the second graders' interviews would provide me with the opportunity to have already contacted some students in the schools in which I had already gained entry and visited for three weeks. These students were very likely to be found in the same schools when studying their final grade of secondary education. Fortunately, even though I was able to interview only 14 of the students who had been already interviewed when they were finishing secondary education, I found other preparatory students who agreed to take part in the second phase and who then responded, in hindsight, to the questions included in the first interview, after which we did the follow up interview (see the guides for the student interviews in appendix A and the guides for teacher interviews in appendix B).

I asked them if they would agree to be interviewed and explained that these interviews would be recorded using a mini CD tape recorder with built-in speaker and microphone. I also assured them that their names would remain anonymous. They would be given full transcripts of their recordings, if they wished, so that they could decide whether or not the information could be used or if some things needed to be clarified. I conducted all interviews in Spanish since the students' level of EFL did not allow otherwise. Concerning the interviews with the EFL teachers, these were also carried out in Spanish because they preferred so. This involved a lot of work since the translation of the extracts from interviews used in the analysis chapters (five - seven) were also done by me (see the complete list of interviewees in appendix C). The approach to transcribing interviews is explained in the next section.

3.4.2 TRANSCRIPTS

As already mentioned, recorded interviews played a fundamental part in the process of data collection for this study and the process of developing adequate transcripts produced a number of insights:

1. transcribing is a continuous process which is best to begin as soon as it is possible

2. transcription represents the first step to any adequate analysis of interview data
3. it is of vital importance to produce transcripts that can serve as a basis for analysis
4. transcripts are not substitutes for the recording itself but a working representation of it

There is a vast literature providing advice as how to approach to the process of transcription. This ranges from fairly simple to really detailed depending on what tradition the researcher is working and the role of transcripts in issues of reliability and validity (Seidman, 1998:98 - 9; Peräkylä, 2004:283-304; Kavale, ch.9; Wengraf, 2001, ch.10, Mishler, 1986, 1991).

What seems to be uncontroversial among practitioners conducting research based on qualitative interviewing is that transcription is a skill that can be acquired through long enough training or practice. Although transcribing is a tedious and time consuming activity regardless of the detailed needed, it seems to be widely recognised that 'only a transcript allows the sort of focused attention on the minutiae of talk that promotes insight into technique and content' (Richards, 2003: 81).

All interviews were transcribed verbatim following using a three-column template for all the transcripts (ibid.: 82). The first column on the left contains line numbers for ease of reference; the talk was typed in the column in the middle and the column on the right served to jot down my observations, insights and later on for the line by line labeling which served for the coding for further analysis. An extract from a transcript is presented in Table 3.8

Table 3. 8 Extract from a Transcript

0320 N	¿Te gustaría seguir estudiando inglés en la preparatoria? Ajá.	Expectations regarding EFL learning in prepa. More use of EFL in the classroom/ pronunciation
0321 E	¿Tienes algunas expectativas en cuanto a tus clases de inglés en la prepa?	
0322 N	Pues espero que sean como (.) este como la da la maestra G. PERO que pongan este (.) cómo se PRONUNCIA y más práctica en inglés.	
0323 E		No idea of the EFL programme for prepa- Why is this so?? Uncertainty about EFL learning/teaching in prepa
0324	¿Tienes alguna idea de lo qué van a estar haciendo en la prepa en las clases de inglés?	
0325 N		
0326	Pues va a ser una sorpresa porque no sé qué vamos a hacer ahí.	
0327 E		

3.4.3 FIELD NOTES

Of paramount importance in the research process in general and more specifically during fieldwork, was to keep track of hunches, observations, reflections, questions arising before, during and after interviews. This could only be achieved by keeping a research diary. In this section I would like to present some of my field notes and entries from my research diary.

Fieldwork is a 'potentially unsettling experience' in which both my negative experiences proved to be as powerful as the positive ones (Wolcott, 1995: 231-2). They are two sides of the same coin and they complement one another. Two examples are given in Table 3.9 to illustrate this complementary power of positive/negative experiences taken from my research diary. The first shows how everyday events can provide insights for fieldwork and suggests that in some respects the 'field' may be wider than anticipated; the second reveals how events in the field can affect the psychological state of the researcher.

Table 3.9 Lessons from the Field

<u>Negative experience</u>	<u>Positive experience</u>
6 June 2004	11 June 2004
<p>Got home to find out that there is no gas which means no hot food, no hot water, cold showers!! Called the gas company first thing in the morning- 7am. They said the Pipa would be on its way to my place in 30 mins. Called again at 9, then at 10 at 11. They assured me the Pipa was coming soon. Called at 2pm- same answer . . . 3.30 . . . 5pm . . . They finally arrived at 6.20 pm! I am home again!!! Will I have to wait this long to get an interview??? Patience!!!!</p> <p>Lesson learnt: do not forget that time is a very culture-related concept! It varies in each socio-cultural context.</p>	<p>I feel lucky! Can't believe that the co-ordinator in SecTec.A and the Headmaster in SecGral B are both former English language teachers and both have accepted to be interviewed!!!! It'll be really interesting to listen to people who have experienced both: the teaching of English and admin work! I can't wait to these interviews! Cross my fingers they do not ring up to cancel!</p> <p>Lesson learnt: Fieldwork can be full of serendipitous events, be ready to take full advantage of them if possible!</p>

In retrospect, I can honestly say that living in a foreign country where language, food, weather, people, and even working conditions are so different from the ones I had had for such long time, have helped me in different ways to try harder to understand what I am observing and experiencing. My tolerance and patience have been forged on the anvil of both doing fieldwork and living in a foreign country where so many different cultures coexist.

The fact that my fieldwork was going to be carried out in my country, with people whose language I share, did not make me think that it would be easier or more straightforward. On the contrary, this time I was well aware that the lived experiences mentioned before, would necessarily have an impact on my fieldwork. Scheyvens and Storey (2003: 19) make the case for awareness of this issue:

... the foreign student doing home-based research is likely- or may be bound- to take something of the philosophical and methodological baggage picked from the foreign institution and supervisors with whom they are working. Just as the distinction between 'foreign' and 'home-based' research is far from watertight, research can never be free of 'external' influences however 'local' it may appear

I think that my both experiences of doing fieldwork and those of living abroad have been of paramount importance to hone skills needed for further fieldwork. Throughout the whole process of fieldwork, my 'tolerance for ambiguity' (Wolcott, 1995: 92) was put to the test. I had to adapt to ensuing events even before I was on the site.

3.4.4 DOCUMENTS

Another very important source of data in this study was documents. 'Material culture' as anthropologists have traditionally called records, documents, artifacts, and archives 'constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programmes' (Patton, 2002: 293). Some authors make the distinction between documents and records (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 in Hodder, 2003: 156). The former refers to texts prepared to attest some formal transaction i.e. marriage certificates, driving licenses, building contracts, and banking statements. The latter are texts such as diaries, memos, letters, field notes, and so on which are prepared for personal rather than official reasons. Documents are regarded as being closer to speech thus they require more contextualized inter-

pretation. On the other hand, records, closer to writing, ‘may have local uses that become very distant from officially sanctioned meanings’ (ibid.). Although this distinction is an important one, I decided to adopt Duffy’s definition of the term ‘documents’ for practical reasons. For Duffy (2005: 125) ‘document’ is the general term for an impression left on a physical object by a human being: photographs, videos, slides, and other non-written sources. He further states that ‘the most common kinds of documents in educational research are written as printed or manuscript sources’ (ibid.).

According to Prior (2003) there are an unlimited number of official and public documents, records, and materials that can be used as sources of data. These include official or institutional documents, newspaper articles, agency records, government reports, World Wide Web pages, amongst many others. Table 3.10 shows the documents used as data for documentary analysis (see chapter four) in this study.

Table 3. 10 Documents

-
- Secondary and Preparatory EFL Syllabi
 - EFL Textbooks
 - World Wide Web Pages: SEP, SEC, CENEVAL
 - Newspapers: national and local
 - EFL Teachers documents: official timetables, students’ attendance lists
-

It is often assumed that most official records and public documents are readily available to researchers. However, my personal experience in trying to obtain official documents for the current study proved to be even more time consuming than the process of gaining entry and access to research sites and participants. I had to attend three meetings and spent hours waiting outside the offices of the local educational authorities before I was given the EFL syllabus and textbooks for preparatory education. I obtained the EFL syllabus for secondary education in the SEP official website. I was also given some documents by EFL teachers that proved to be of vital importance. For example, their class timetables which helped me understand key issues of their lived experiences as EFL teachers in these educational contexts.

Although the process of collecting documents was neither easy nor straightforward at all since there is no single archive holding all the necessary informa-

tion, by using these documents together with the other sources of data described above I was in a better position to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study from different perspectives.

To sum up, the study of documents is thus of importance for qualitative researchers who wish to explore multiple and conflicting voices, differing and interacting interpretations (Hodder, 2003: 1599). Materials that are thought to be useless by those looking for 'objective' facts are valuable to the qualitative researcher precisely because of their subjective nature (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984: 120-1). The qualitative analysis of documents opened up many new sources of understanding and was of vital importance in this study not only to triangulate and validate other sources of data but to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (see chapters four and five).

3.4.5 PROBLEMS IN DATA COLLECTION

Some of the problems faced during my two phases of fieldwork have already been outlined in the sections above. However, in this section I would like to concentrate briefly on two aspects of data collection that were particularly problematic and which I had not foreseen. These field issues are bound to happen, in my opinion, to investigators carrying out research focusing on educational transfers. Furthermore, these problems may be more acute if their studies focus in students transferring from one compulsory level of education to the next which is non compulsory in the Mexican context. These two field issues were: keeping track of the student-participants and renegotiating entry and access to sites and research participants. It is worth noting that these two issues overlapped and although every possible effort was made to ensure that the same student-participants cooperated in the follow up interviews this was not always possible (see Figure 3.2 in section 3.4.1).

3.4.5.1 *KEEPING TRACK OF PARTICIPANTS AND RENEGOTIATING ENTRY AND ACCESS*

As already mentioned, during the first phase of data collection in June 2004, I was able to gain entry and access to three secondary schools and where I spent most of the school time from Mondays to Fridays for three weeks coming and going

between one secondary school and another. I felt that the time devoted to this phase of data collection was intense but at the same time rewarding since I was able to interview a good number of participants. Being aware that I would need to interview the same student-participants after a period of about seven months, I developed a simple way of keeping the necessary information to be able to keep track of them. In a reporter's notebook I wrote repeatedly a format with questions aiming at having as much necessary information as possible so that I could maintain contact with them and would be able to find them for my second work in the field (see Table 3.11). Once I had finished doing the interviews I transferred this information to a file in my personal computer, saved a copy in at least two removable memories and made a hard copy for my file of my research participants.

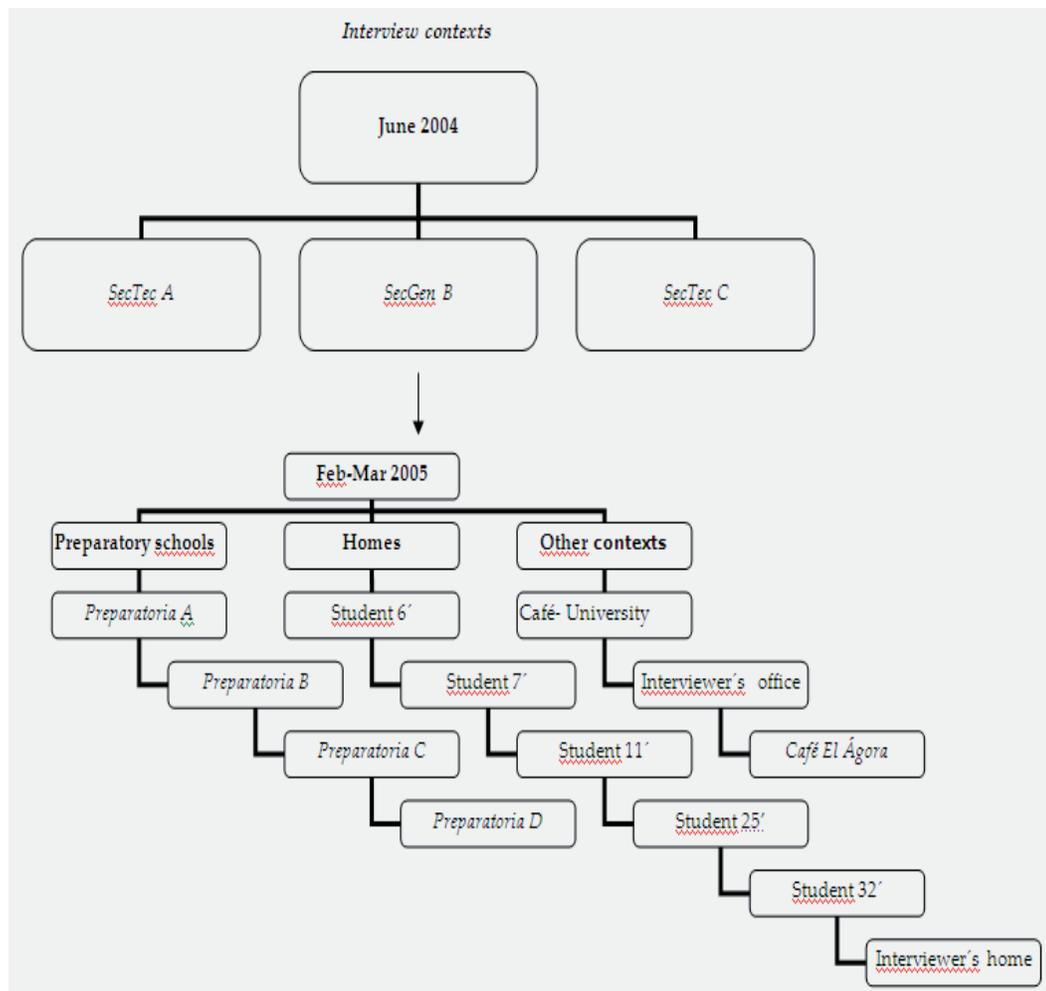
Table 3. 11 Keeping Track of Participants

Name: Juan Sánchez Martínez
Address: Beethoven 11, Colonia Indeco Ánimas
Tel: 812-92-89
Grade: 3rd
Pepra? Yes/No
Which?: Prepa Juárez/Prepa Oficial/don't know yet
Email: detectivesalvaje@hotmail.com
Next interview?: Yes/No

The fact that I had stored all student participants' information made me think that I was going to be able to find them and set up the follow up interviews before my arrival in Xalapa for my second phase of fieldwork in February 2005 this did not just happen as I had planned. First, before arriving in Xalapa, some students had already changed their email addresses. It seems that this is a common practice among some adolescents. Consequently, I could not arrange the date and time for the second interview until I arrived in Xalapa. Second, although they had freely agreed to do the follow up interviews and some of them had even confirmed their wish to continue participating in this investigation, they kept on postponing the date and time of the interview by providing a good number of excuses: a lot of homework, out of school activities: sports, EFL or other school subjects private lessons, or that they just had arranged to see some of their friends. Third, some of

them did not pass the entrance exam so they dropped school or would have to wait until next year to re-sit the CENEVAL exam. Conversely, they passed the exam but their results were not good enough to enter either of the preparatory schools they had mentioned as their choices. For example, sometimes I visited a preparatory school to find out that only one of my student-participant was indeed studying there and not the seven or eight I was expecting. Finally, some students preferred to be interviewed not in their schools but in other contexts (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Interview Contexts



All this meant that I spent about ten days without having done one single interview, which was a very frustrating and stressful situation since I felt that valuable time was being wasted. I therefore eventually decided to include new participants in the preparatory schools where I had already been given entry to interview EFL teachers and my previous student-participants. Whereas during my first work in the field represented to spend my time going to three different schools, the second phase involved visiting a great number of diverse places. It goes without saying that I had to negotiate my access to participants with a greater number of gatekeepers: school authorities, EFL teachers, and parents. Fortunately, this time I could spend almost two months in the field and not three weeks as in the previous phase. Had I not allowed this time, there might have been serious consequences for my research project.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

There is no single way to analyse qualitative data; equally it is essential to find ways of using the data to think with. (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 2)

Data collection and the process of analysis happened simultaneously, albeit at different degrees of intensity. Merriam describes this succinctly:

The process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic. But this is not to say the analysis is finished when all the data have been collected. Quite the opposite. Analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses, and once all the data are in. (Merriam, 2001: 155)

It can be said that data analysis necessarily began while gathering my data during the first phase of fieldwork. This initial process analysis began when I started writing my hunches, reflections, intuitions, and insights while I was listening to the interviews as carefully and reiteratively as possible at the end of my first day in the field. However, as more interviews were done and then transcribed the process of data analysis became more intense. The process of interview data analysis is described in the next section.

3.5.1 CODING AND CATEGORIES

The process of analysis in qualitative research is a complex and a laborious one. The challenge of qualitative analysis, Patton argues, is to make sense of an impressive amount of data (2003). Nowadays, there are more tools that qualitative researchers can use to make more manageable the data being analysed. Time-wise, for example, different software programmes such as NVivo help qualitative researchers to organise their data thus helping them to save a considerable amount of time (for a discussion of the use of computers to analyse qualitative data see Seale, 2005 in Silverman, 2005, chapter 13). However, there are two main reasons why I decided not to use a software programme in this study:

1. Although the use of technical tools is not one of my strengths, I tried to learn how to use NVivo but with not very rewarding results. I felt that since I had already started doing my analysis without NVivo the time I was devoting to this task was representing a disadvantage rather than a help. For example, it was taking me a lot of time to change all the format of the transcripts to that required for the use of the software. Further, as all the interviews were carried out in Spanish, when I was using the software programme I realised that some characters such as the initial question mark, accents, etc. were not 'recognised' by the software or were changed to something different. Consequently, I was devoting a considerable amount of time to 'correcting' all the changes made by NVivo. Therefore, I abandoned my learning of this software after a couple of months.
2. Based on pure personal preference, I considered that for a novice researcher like myself, to adopt an approach to data analysis without the help of any software would prove to be more educative. The process of data analysis is highly intuitive and the real learning can only take place in the doing (Merriam, 2001: 156).

The approach adopted for the initial coding of the interviews was mainly the one proposed by Richards (2003: 273). One interview was coded at a time. The categories and sub-categories presented in the appendix D are based on the analysis of the interview data. The procedure for coding and categorising each interview was as follows:

1. Labels were assigned by working on a line-by-line basis. These labels were written on the right column of the transcript.
2. Then the same process was repeated with each interview. This labelling process was done fairly quickly by jotting down the first reaction to what

was being read. The labels at this stage were assigned without any categorisation in mind yet.

3. As I was working in this labelling process on my own, I decided to have two set of copies for each interview. Then, after labelling the interviews, I did the same with the second set without looking at the labels assigned to the first set. Although this was a very time-consuming process, this helped me check the validity of the coding.
4. Once I had labelled all the interviews. I started to organise the labels – one participant at a time – into groups that seemed to share common themes by using highlighters of different colours for each group.
5. On post quarto size- white sheets, the initial attempt to categorise began by sorting out the labels that seemed to share common themes. This first attempt of categorisation was recorded on a tree diagram.
6. Reflections, hunches, insights, and questions arising from this process were constantly jotted down. Throughout the process of analysis I also kept memos of ‘ideas to reflect on’ in a notebook and then saved in a file in my computer. All this helped me check cross-examine the categories from interview data with other sources of data to watch for similarities and patterns but also for contradictory evidence.
7. The same process was repeated with each of the participants’ interviews. Some new categories were added, some were re-organised; others were discarded.
8. After all the interviews were analysed, the same process was repeated leaving some days between the first and the second attempt. The reason for this was that I am working on my own. Thus, there was not a possibility to compare with other investigators and see if there were still some changes to be made regarding the grouping of the categories and the themes. This repetition also served to ensure that if no further modifications were needed then categories and the themes were saturated and stable.
9. Then, the extracts for each category were put into separate files by using Microsoft Word.
10. Finally, the extracts with salient issues concerning the interviewees’ experience of transition were read repeatedly to choose those that best illustrate the findings.

The categories and themes or subcategories arising from the process of interview data analysis are shown in appendix D (pp. 377-386) together with samples of the steps followed in the process mentioned above. Qualitative analysis trans-

forms data into findings' (Patton, 2002: 432). These are presented in chapters four - seven of this thesis.

4

THE VOICE OF THE DOCUMENTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present what *should* happen in the teaching and learning of EFL in secondary and preparatory state education according to what is stated in official documents. In order to do this, the data analysed and discussed in this chapter were gathered from different sources: official documents from both the National Secretariat of Education (SEP) and the Secretariat of Education and Culture in the state of Veracruz (SEC). Official statements or announcements published in newspapers and official websites were also used, thereby allowing a richer picture of the current EFL teaching and learning situation in the state public sector. Furthermore, it is hoped that the data discussed in this chapter will serve as the bedrock to the analysis and discussion of the interview data that will be presented in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. In Section 4.2 of this chapter, I provide an overview of EFL within the Mexican educational system focusing on the two educational levels that this study concerns. While in section 4.3 I present what is stipulated regarding EFL teaching/learning in secondary school, in section 4.4 I describe the prerequisite that students have to undergo as part of transfer process from secondary to preparatory education. What the official documents state for preparatory schools is presented in section 4.5. Finally, a summary of the analysis and discussion is offered in 4.6.

4.2 EFL WITHIN THE MEXICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW

4.2.1 EFL IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The teaching and learning of EFL has had a long tradition in Mexico. In the state of Veracruz, EFL within the state educational system can be traced back to 1873, when according to the *Legislación Educativa de Veracruz* (General Law of Education of the State of Veracruz, (henceforth LEV), in order to become a lawyer being fluent in English, French and Latin was a prerequisite (LEVa: 188).

At the beginning of the 20th century, French was the language that was most taught. However, Decker's assessment applies to the situation that has obtained for over 60 years: 'the teaching of the English language surpasses by far the teaching of all foreign languages together and extends widely throughout Mexican educational institutions' (Decker, 1972: 94). Moreover, English has been the *only* foreign language taught in all the state secondary schools in the country for decades (Gómez Maqueo, 1978: 20).

4.2.2 EFL IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

EFL in Primary School, as already mentioned, is not an obligatory subject in state primary education. However, it is worth noting that EFL together with computer lessons is one of the commodities offered in the primary schools in the private sector. This provides further evidence of the importance placed on EFL learning within education in Mexico. A further aspect that is worth highlighting is the fact that, according to a report published in July 2004 by the British Council in Mexico, '*Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés en Escuelas Primarias Públicas*' (EIIIPP), EFL has been taught unofficially in a good number of state primary schools throughout the country since 1992.

4.2.2.1 THE EIIIPP PROJECT IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MEXICO

The EIIIPP conducted by the British Council reported that the first project to introduce EFL in primary public education was launched in 1992 in the state of Morelos. Afterwards, three more states in Mexico joined this project. The state

of Veracruz, especially in primary schools in the capital city, Xalapa, joined this project in 2003. Today, about half of the states in Mexico have implemented 'pilot' EFL lessons. In the state of Veracruz, 'EFL pilot' lessons have been taught in 21 out of 4,005 (0.5%) primary schools. The report states that 42 teachers and their 1,100 students in 5th and/or 6th grade have been taking EFL lessons since 2003 (the full report is available at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/es/Mexico-english-elt-ppelt.doc>). It seems that giving children the opportunity to start their EFL lessons earlier is well accepted by most parties involved: children, parents, and the state educational authorities. However, as EFL is not yet officially part of the curriculum of primary education, the knowledge of EFL acquired through these pilot lessons is not recognised in the next level of education. The impact of this is discussed in chapters five, six and seven.

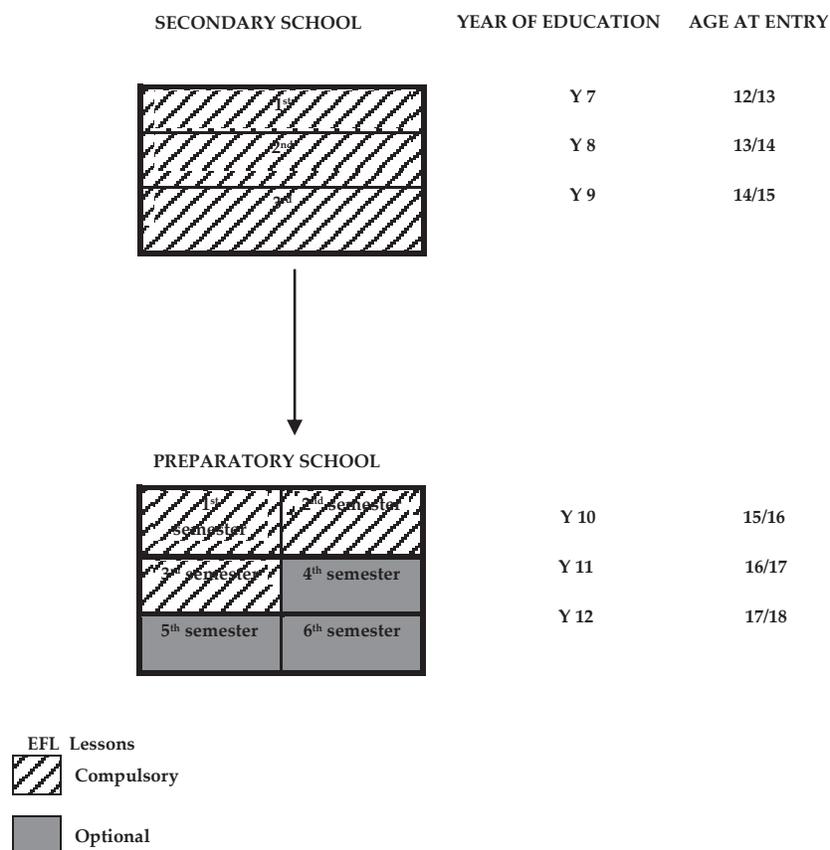
4.2.3 EFL IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The secondary schools for both adolescents and adults follow almost the same curriculum. However, EFL is not part of the curriculum for adult education. During the three years of secondary education, a foreign language is taught: English or French. However, in order to avoid problems of space, equipment and staff recruitment, only one foreign language is taught in each state secondary school. As mentioned earlier, EFL is the only foreign language offered in all state secondary schools throughout the state of Veracruz (Port@l SEP).

EFL is taught during the three years that comprise secondary education. For each course, three hours per week have been allocated. As stipulated by the SEP and the SEC, students have to attend school compulsory for 200 days per year. (http://www.sep.gob.mx/wb2/sep/sep_Bol1540607). This means that students have roughly 120 hours of EFL instruction per each academic year of secondary education. In other words, by the end of secondary education, students have had between 300 and 360 contact hours of EFL instruction.

By statute, it is in state secondary schools that the teaching and learning of EFL begins. However, according to my data this is not the case for a good number of the participants in this study (see chapters five and six). On completing this level of education, students who proceed to the next level will have to take compulsory EFL lessons at least during the first half of their studies in preparatory school (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 EFL Transfer from Secondary to Preparatory Education



4.2.4 EFL IN PREPARATORY STATE SCHOOLS

The provision of EFL in this level of education varies considerably from school to school. As this level of education is not yet compulsory, the planning and policy for EFL is carried out by the educational authorities in each state of Mexico. Briefly, three hours of EFL instruction are offered in most preparatory state schools. However, as recently as 2005, EFL was introduced as a compulsory subject in all six semesters for students attending technical preparatory schools. To date, in some general preparatory schools students can opt to take EFL as an elective during the second half of their preparatory education (semesters 4th to 6th). The remainder of the chapter will present what the official documents stipulate concerning the delivery of EFL in sec-

ondary and preparatory education, placing particular emphasis in the focus of this study: important issues in the process of the students transferring from 3rd grade of secondary to first semester of preparatory education (see Figure 4.1).

4.3 EFL IN THEORY: THE VOICE OF THE DOCUMENTS

The main linguistic concern of the two educational levels of schooling previous to secondary education (see Table 1.1) where the practice of EFL teaching and learning begins within the Mexican educational system, is the development of the literacy skills — oral and written — of the Spanish language (L1). In secondary education, while emphasis on the study and improvement of the knowledge of the L1 continues, it is assumed that students will draw on this knowledge of their L1 and use it to start expanding their linguistic repertoire by learning a foreign language (EFL in this case) if they are to function better in their subsequent academic and professional careers.

Mexican educational authorities state that owing to the constant changes in the social, scientific, cultural, and technological fields, to become proficient in the current primary foreign language for international communication, i.e. English (Graddol, 2006), has become an entitlement for Mexican students. In addition, it is thought that the fact that Mexico has established more and closer relations with other nations where Spanish is not the native language, especially the USA and Canada, makes it necessary for students to learn the “global” foreign language (Crystal, 2003; Nunan, 2003, 2005). These provide the main thrust for the introduction of the provision of EFL compulsory learning in secondary education (SEP 1993) in Mexican state schools. Thus, the purpose of teaching EFL in secondary educations as stated in the official document is shown in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4. 1 The Purpose of EFL Teaching in Secondary Education

Purpose of Teaching English in Secondary Education
<i>The purpose of studying a foreign language (English) in secondary education is for students to participate in certain social practices of contact with native and non-native speakers of English. In other words, through the production and interpretation of a variety of spoken and written texts — of a quotidian, academic and literary nature —, students will be able to satisfy basic communication needs in a range of familiar situations.</i>
SEP, 2006b: 13

In order for the student-participants in the current study to be able to *participate* and *satisfy their basic communicative* needs in EFL both with native and non-native speakers of English, they had to study EFL according to the national 1993 EFL programme. This is presented in the next section.

4.3.1 THE NATIONAL SYLLABUS FOR EFL IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

The participants in the current research study had been following the national syllabus for English as a foreign language implemented in 1993³ for secondary education (PPE 1993⁴). This study programme ‘constituted an important step forward regarding the way language teaching was conceived in basic education. Attention shifted from structure and translation, and began to concentrate more heavily on communication’ (SEP, 2006: 7)⁵. Therefore, students and teachers were expected to leave behind the practice of concentrating on teaching/learning about the language (i.e. grammar rules) and to start teaching/learning EFL through the communicative language approach (CLT). The translated version of the official PPE 93 for EFL in secondary education is presented in Table 4.2 below⁶. It is interesting and worth noting the issues highlighted in bold in the original document: *structures, communication, main actors of the educational process, adapted, their needs and real interests, motivated, communicative competence* among others. It seems that the authorities wanted to make sure that the target audience i.e. EFL teachers, be aware of the most important issues or changes introduced in the 1993 EFL programme and act upon them accordingly.

3 In August 2006 a new National Curriculum for Secondary education was introduced and with it, a new EFL programme.

4 Planes y Programas de Estudio.

5 In English in the new PPE for EFL.

6 I have maintained, as far as possible, the format and the structure of the original document (bolds in the original). All translations from Spanish into English have been done by the researcher unless stated otherwise.

Table 4. 2 The Official 1993 EFL PPE for Secondary Education

TIME DISTRIBUTION		
First Grade (Year 7)	Second Grade (Year 8)	Third Grade (Year 9)
3 hours/week	3 hours/week	3 hours/week
APPROACH: COMMUNICATIVE – FUNCTIONAL		
<p>Changes the focus from what language is (structures) to what is done with language (communication) providing the contents to be taught, the roles of the students and teachers, the type of materials and the procedures and techniques to be used. This new approach is based on different theories grouped into two main categories:</p>		
<p>1. Language Learning Theories: (Cognitive aspect and affective aspect).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students are the main actors of the educational process. Therefore, all learning contents have to be adapted, as far as possible, to their needs and real interests so that they are motivated in taking an active role of their own learning. Contents are structured based on functions of language: what language is used for and where, when and who uses language; that is, the situational context of the language. ➤ Emphasis on relationships: teacher-student, student-student, student-context. ➤ Students are affective beings who can express their thoughts, ideas and feelings; they have their own needs, interests and capacities. <p>1. Theories of language description: How language works (communicative competence, language register, functional grammar).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of communicative competence; structure-form (grammar and vocabulary) are subordinated to the function-use of language. The situation, the roles of the participants determine the grammatical structures and the vocabulary to be used. ➤ Contents are presented based on the functions of language (greeting, introducing, asking for information, etc.). ➤ Teachers are facilitators of learning and organizers of class activities; propose communicative situations and provide the necessary resources. ➤ Makes use of authentic materials such as: advertisements, menus, songs, radio programmes, poems, magazines, newspapers, etc. to support the EFL learning. 		
AIMS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use English as the means of communication. • To develop communicative competence, considering both dimensions: linguistic and paralinguistic (gestures, body language, cultural proxemics) aspects of language. <p>To enable students to gain the L2 knowledge to understand and express ideas, feelings, experiences as opposed to consider the English subject just an object of study.</p>		
ORGANISATION		
Contents have been organised in three units per grade:		
FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
I. Introductions.	I. Shopping.	I. Stories and experiences.
II. People and places.	II. Instructions and warnings.	II. Travels.
III. Facts, actions and invitations.	III. Narratives.	III. Relevant events.

All units have the same structure and are designed to develop the four skills in an integrated way:

1. Listening comprehension
2. Oral expression.
3. Reading Comprehension.
4. Written expression.

Each unit presents in detail the topic, the language functions, different contexts of communication, examples of linguistic production, vocabulary and strategies for reading comprehension.

METHODOLOGY

The structure of the study programmes **prioritises** the following:

1. What are you trying to do with the language? What is your purpose in using it? What do you want to communicate?

This use of the language (purpose or intention) is called **linguistic function**.

1. Who participates in the communication? Where and when does communication take place?
 - a. Age, status, gender, education and occupation of both speaker and listener, and the relationship between them, i.e. the “role” that each participant plays in the interaction.
 - b. Place and time determine the linguistic register to be used.

This constitutes the **situational context**.

All the above determine the vocabulary and the structures to be used to achieve an effective communication. Besides, this will allow the gradual development of the receptive (reading and listening comprehension) and productive skills (oral and written expressions).

In sum, it is important to highlight the most salient issues stated in the national EFL programme for secondary education. Statutorily, EFL teaching and learning during the three-year secondary education should be about:

- having three hours of EFL lessons per week;
- adopting the CLT- Functional Approach;
- viewing the learners as the “main actors of the educational process”
- adapting programme contents to learners’ needs and real interests;
- motivating learners to participate actively in the learning process;
- using the L2 (English) as the means of communication in the classroom;
- including the use of authentic materials;
- shifting from the traditional teacher’s role to the role of organiser or facilitator of learning;
- equipping learners with the necessary receptive and productive L2 knowledge to express and understand ideas, feelings, experiences, thus encouraging them to see the EFL subject not only as an *object of study* but also as *a means of communication*.

Thus far, what is stated in the official documents is in accord with what students expected and stated they would have liked to be doing in their EFL lessons in the state secondary school (see chapter six). The secondary programme even

states — among other aspects — that students not be encouraged to regard the EFL subject as an object of study but instead they should be made aware of and encouraged to apply EFL in real situations, as far as this is possible. However, the careful analysis of the interview data in the current research has revealed that students have drawn an important distinction between the way they perceive the language itself and EFL the state school subject (see chapter six). It is now necessary to focus on what is specifically expected of both teachers and students in the final year of secondary school as this is the ‘beginning’ of the process of transfer to preparatory school.

4.3.2 EFL THIRD GRADE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL (YEAR 9)

The official document for the final grade of secondary education (Year 9 of compulsory basic education) provides the contents, the methodology, and the teachers’ and students’ roles. It even suggests the months for the execution of contents of the syllabus. As can be appreciated in Table 4.3 (section 4.3.1), the topics to be covered in third grade are:

- Stories and Experiences
- Travels
- Relevant events

Table 4.2 presents an abridged version of the official document but it serves to provide a flavour of how the official document describes in detail what both teachers and the students should concentrate on and do in order to cover the topics above in this final year.

Table 4. 3 Abridged EFL Syllabus for Third Grade in Secondary Education

Unit 1: Stories and Experiences Sept/ Oct/Nov/December	Unit 2: Travels Jan/Feb/March	Unit 3: Relevant Events March/April/May/June
<p>1. Functions of language - Express past actions that are relevant in the present; ask and give details about them.</p> <p>2. Alternative contexts of communication - Oral or written expression of childhood memories. - making of a TV and/or radio programme, with interviews and reportages of present popular character to learn about his/her experiences (an astronaut, a scientist, a writer, etcetera).</p> <p>3. Examples of linguistic productions: - It was a very interesting experience - My grandparents have lived in Oaxaca since 19.../for ten years.</p> <p>4. Consolidation of: - Aspects from the first and second grade</p> <p>5. Vocabulary - Past participles of verbs related to the functions - Vocabulary according to the situations and vocabulary from first and second grade as needed</p> <p>6. Strategies for Reading Comprehension: See the table with reading comprehension strategies at the end of contents. Note: Reading comprehension is introduced, revised and practiced in all 3 grades: * First, * * Second, *** Third</p> <p>Strategies: * Skimming (browsing) * Prediction * Identify key words * Recognising cognates (transparent words) * Relationship: referent-referred ** Identifying the function of verbs ** Recognising connectors and inferring their use ** Obtaining specific information *** Inferring vocabulary *** Identifying the role of some punctuation signs</p>	<p>1. Functions of language -Express superlative; ask & answer prices while travelling; complaints.</p> <p>2. Alternative contexts of communication -Plan a trip, choose one based on price, quality of services, etc. -Using authentic recordings get info about schedules, prices, kinds of transport -Role-play: at a travel agency, airport, restaurant</p> <p>3. Example of linguistic productions: The best Mexican food; Excuse me, how much is the single/return/round trip ticket to Manchester?</p> <p>4. Consolidation of: the ___est / the most _____. the best / will/ going to</p> <p>5. Vocabulary -By plane/by bus/by train. -Single/return/round trip ticket; vocabulary according to the situations.</p> <p>6. Strategies for Reading Comprehension: See the table with reading comprehension strategies at the end of contents. Techniques: * Locate key words in formats, tables, etcetera ** Locate in the text some verbs and its subjects ** Identify in the text words and expressions that link words, sentences or paragraphs. ** Organise information by recognising the role of connectors in a text *** Deduce the meaning of key words, using the context *** Relate some punctuation signs with their role in the text *** Obtain information needed to fill in tables, diagrams, etcetera (basic trans-codification) *** Write summaries, notes etc.</p>	<p>1. Strategies for Reading Comprehension -Guessing vocabulary from context; identify role of punctuation in a text.</p> <p>2. Alternative of global tasks With the information obtained from the texts and using the reading comprehension strategies to make: -Wall newspapers; debates; round tables; discussion panels; role play in English -Make crafts, articles, dishes, etcetera</p> <p>3. Examples of techniques for reading comprehension Apart from the thus here practised: -Deduce meaning of unknown words from context/Relate some punctuation signs with their role in a text/Obtain necessary information to fill in the gaps in tables, diagrams, graphs.</p> <p>4. Types of texts Manuals, descriptive and narratives</p> <p>5. Consolidation of: Everything thus far studied</p> <p>6. Vocabulary Based on texts selected. Non-linguistic elements * Numbers (dates, figures, etcetera) * Cognates (transparent words) * False cognates (library) * Proper nouns, personal pronouns, possessive and demonstrative adjectives * Word repetition * Connectors (and, but, or, because) ** Idioms ** Words or phrases to express addition, contrast, sequence, etcetera (and, or, but, before, after, first, then, finally) *** Affixes: most commonly used prefixes and suffixes (invisible, misunderstand, actively, friendship); punctuation signs</p>

Students are expected, in the same manner as in the two previous grades, to use the foreign language throughout the final year of secondary education. They should be encouraged to be actively using EFL in 'life-like' situations. For example, they are expected to devote a good part of each lesson to learning and practising the foreign language by using role-play in the classroom simulating everyday situations such as at a restaurant, at a travel agency, at the bus station and the like. It is also stated that students should work in small groups or individually by acting out in debates, round tables, etc. It is also stated, in the official syllabus, that students are to be encouraged to engage in conversations with their classmates in which they share experiences of their childhood among other 'relevant' topics.

EFL teachers, as stated in the official syllabus, should use various authentic materials such as advertisements, songs, magazines, poems, and radio programmes to support the learning of EFL in a more relevant and motivating way. These authentic materials can be used as input for the students' written and oral tasks afterwards. As in the first two years of secondary school, it is also emphasised that the target language be used as the means of communication in the classroom.

With regard to the EFL teachers' role it is stipulated that they have to become the organisers and facilitators of learning. With this change in the role of the teacher it is expected that students will be given the opportunity to have a more active role in the learning process.

It is also stated that teachers have to develop their students' both linguistic and non-linguistic competence in the foreign language. This, it is stated, will enable students, whenever necessary, to interact using the L2 with native speakers of the foreign language. This seems to represent a huge demand on teachers if we consider the number of different cultures whose native language is English and therefore all the different and very particular ways of interacting in those cultures. It seems reasonable to assume that EFL teachers will be trained and equipped in all these issues so that they, in turn, can help their students to achieve this 'native-like', although basic, linguistic and non-linguistic competence. However, according to my interview data from EFL teachers, this is not the case (see chapter seven).

On close examination of the syllabus for the final grade of secondary education, it is clear that especially during the last four months of their final year teachers and students are expected to devote most of the lessons to two activities: reviewing what they have learnt thus far and focusing heavily on reading comprehension skills. In other words, students are expected to spend most of their time revising, developing and extending their reading comprehension skills by using authentic reading texts. These authentic texts are then expected to serve as

input to move again to the practice of the spoken discourse where students can engage actively to talk about the texts by using a wide range of different speaking techniques.

The heavy emphasis on reading comprehension during the last months of this level of education, as stipulated in the national official EFL syllabus, seems to have been used as the foundation for what the corresponding state educational authorities in the SEC used to design the EFL study programme for the next educational level: preparatory school (see 4.5).

Before concentrating on what has been stipulated concerning EFL teaching and learning in the first semester of preparatory school, which is the end of the ‘transfer’ process that is the focus of this investigation, it is necessary to pay close attention to a very significant aspect or an academic *rite of passage* that the students have to undergo before they can begin their studies in preparatory school. This is, as it were, the ‘bridge’ that connects the two ends of the transfer process: it determines whether students can proceed to continue their education beyond secondary school. This process is described in the next section.

4.4 THE TRANSFER PROCESS FROM SECONDARY TO PREPARATORY SCHOOL

On successful completion of secondary education students who want to proceed to the next level of education – Preparatory school or *Bachillerato* — have to comply with the procedure as stated by the SEC⁷. In brief, they have to:

1. Present the required documents; pay \$260 MN for the entrance exam; and be less than 18 years of age.
2. Sit the *Examen Nacional de Ingreso I* (place and date are assigned in alphabetical order: first letter of candidates’ first surname).
3. Enrol as indicated.

If we are to understand what happens in the EFL teaching and learning on both sides of the transfer process, then a closer examination of requisite 2 above is essential in order to start to unravel the complexity of the provision of EFL in general within the Mexican education system and in particular of the two educational settings that are the focus of the current study.

⁷ For the complete procedure that candidates have to follow to apply for preparatory schools see: http://www.sev.gob.mx/servicios/convocatorias/dgbyet/convocatoria_xalapa.html

4.4.1 THE NATIONAL ENTRANCE EXAM I

The *Examen Nacional de Ingreso* commonly referred to as **EXANI-I** was first established as a prerequisite entrance exam in 1996 by the SEP. At that time it was taken by the over a quarter of million of students wanting to begin their studies of preparatory education in the metropolitan area of Mexico City (Aboites, 1999). Nowadays, the EXANI-I is widely administered throughout the country to students applying for a place in preparatory education (Upper -Middle School or Years 10-12) in the public sector.

The EXANI-I is designed, sold and marked by the National Centre for Evaluation (CENEVAL), a civil organization that has among its members academics and education authorities in the country from educational organisations from both sectors: governmental and private, such as the ANUIES (*Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Institutos de Educación Superior*), the SEP, the UNAM, and the Technology of Monterrey among others.

The EXANI-I comprises 128 questions grouped in two skills sections (verbal and mathematical), and eight knowledge areas (Spanish, history, geography, civics and ethics, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology). The general structure of the entrance exam for preparatory schools is presented in Table 4.4.⁸

As can be appreciated, there is not a section to assess the students' EFL knowledge acquired during the 360 hours of instruction on completing their secondary schooling as stipulated in the official documents. Why is that? What is the significance of this 'exclusion'? Have the educational authorities rendered the EFL teaching and learning 'invisible'? If so, how does this impact on both teachers and students in the process of transferring from secondary to preparatory education? The issues arising from this omission will be addressed in chapter six by presenting the participants' views on this, but it is first necessary to hear what the voice of the official documents says about EFL and the practice of evaluation in the process of transfer from secondary to preparatory schools.

8 English translation from the original CENEVAL document 2007 in Spanish.

Table 4. 4 The EXANI-I

STRUCTURE OF THE EXANI-I					
AREA	ITEMS PER AREA	%	SECTIONS	PER SECTIONS	
BASIC INTELLECTUALS SKILLS	32	25	VERBAL SKILL	READING COMPREHENSION	7
				SYNONYMS	3
				ANTONYMS	3
				ANALOGIES	3
			MATHEMATICAL SKILL	NUMERAL SUCCESSIONS	4
				SPATIAL SERIES	4
				SPATIAL IMAGINATION	4
				REASONING PROBLEMS	4
DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE	96	75	SPANISH	12	
			HISTORY	12	
			GEOGRAPHY	12	
			CIVICS AND ETHICS	12	
			MATHEMATICS	12	
			PHYSICS	12	
			CHEMISTRY	12	
			BIOLOGY	12	
TOTAL ITEMS	128	100		128	

4.4.2 THE OFFICIAL VOICE: EFL IN THE TRANSFER PROCESS - THE EXANI-I

Although the EXANI-I has been a prerequisite for entry to preparatory education for over a decade, it was as recently as 2002 that a new section to assess the students' EFL knowledge acquired in secondary education was introduced. The EFL section is an 'optional module which can be requested and used by the institutions interested in having an accurate diagnosis of this area of knowledge' (CENEVAL, 2007)⁹. The EFL section in the EXANI-I comprises 16 items. The time given to answer the EXANI-I is three hours and 20 minutes. However, it is stipulated that *if*

⁹ <http://portal.ceneval.edu.mx/portalceneval/index.php?q=info.fichas.ficha1>

the section on EFL is included then 20 extra minutes must be given to the candidates to answer those 16 EFL items. That is, if this *final* EFL section is decided to be included, the candidates will have a total of three hours and 40 minutes to answer the whole exam in one session (*Guía EXANI-I*, 2007: 14).

There is also a Study Guide designed by the CENEVAL for students who want to practice and have a ‘flavour’ of what the entrance exam is like. This 120-page guide is free and can be downloaded as a pdf. document from the CENEVAL web page. The Study Guide for the EXANI-I¹⁰ provides thorough and detail information about the entrance exam for the prospective candidates in six sections. These are the following:

- I. General Information
- II. Question Types in EXANI-I
- III. Practice Test
- IV. Exam Study Guide
- V. General recommendations to take the exam
- VI. EXANI-I Committee

There are two aspects in this guide which are particularly interesting and revealing for the current investigation. First, in one of the sub-sections in section I, the study guide states the knowledge and skills to be evaluated:

‘The aspects to be evaluated are selected and refined with the support of subject specialists of the subjects that are taught in secondary and in upper middle schools to focus on those basic aspects in the secondary study programme which are, at the same time, a requisite to enter the upper middle education level’ (ibid.: 9)

Second, a reassuring message is sent to the students:

The EXANI-I only evaluates the knowledge and skills that are indispensable for you to progress in the Upper middle level and which you should have learnt as a result of the constant work in the secondary school. (ibid.:10 my emphasis).

In this 120-page guide there is none of the advice or comments for students on EFL that is to be found for all the rest of the subjects in the curriculum of secondary

¹⁰ <http://www.ceneval.edu.mx/portalceneval/docs/o/GuiaEXANI1.pdf>

education. As it is stated that the EFL section can be provided at the request of the institutions applying the EXANI-I, I thought that there might also be a separate EFL section for the study guide. Therefore, I sent an email requesting access to the EFL guide section for the 2004 EXANI-I that the student-participants in this study had to take on applying for preparatory schools in Xalapa. The reply was concise and straightforward: 'We do not have a study guide for the English section'. The educational authorities have clearly considered it unnecessary to provide any sort of guidance on EFL for students taking the EXANI-I. Why is that? What is the impact of this omission on both students and EFL teachers? The participants in this study have their own perceptions on this issue. These will be presented in chapter five.

The results obtained in the EXANI-I determine which preparatory school students will be assigned to. The better the grade, the better the opportunities students have to be admitted to study preparatory education in the school of their parents' or their own preference. Thus, the most prestigious state preparatory schools in Xalapa will offer a place to those students who obtain the maximum overall average in this exam and who also have a high total average in secondary education. It is worth noting that over half of the students-participants in this study were admitted to 'the three most sought after'¹¹ preparatory schools in Xalapa for the quality of their teaching. Furthermore, the student-participants who noted that the EFL section was omitted or students who reported that they were asked not to answer the English section were students who were studying in the two more demanding preparatory schools in Xalapa (see chapter six).

4.5 THE EFL STATE SYLLABUS IN PREPARATORY EDUCATION

As mentioned earlier, the EFL programme for this level of education is not nationwide but designed by the corresponding educational authorities in each of the different states in Mexico. In the state of Veracruz, and more specifically in Xalapa, where this study was carried out, EFL is part of the Language and Communication Studies (*Área de Lenguaje y Comunicación*) of the curriculum for preparatory school. The Language and Communication Area comprises four workshops on reading and writing in Spanish during the first four semesters, two semester-

¹¹ http://www.sev.gob.mx/servicios/convocatorias/dgbyet/convocatoria_xalapa.html

courses of literature, one semester of theory of communication and three semesters of compulsory EFL lessons. As in secondary education, it is stipulated that students have to take three hours per week of '*Lengua Adicional al Español*' — Additional language to Spanish — (D.G.E.M, 1990:6), EFL in this case, during the three semesters where English is a compulsory subject.

The focus of EFL teaching and learning since 1991 has been reading comprehension in most preparatory schools. EFL textbooks were accordingly written, edited, and distributed to all preparatory school students by the SEC. Unlike the textbooks used in secondary schools, Mexican authors compiled authentic texts taken from different sources and designed the exercises for each reading passage.

The curriculum for preparatory education states that the main aim of the teaching and learning of EFL is 'to enable students to understand written texts in the foreign language (English) which are or will be required in their further studies. The students will be helped to understand these texts by using the grammar and vocabulary with which they will be provided' (SEV/D.G.E.M.S y S, 2002: 5)¹². The rationale for concentrating on reading comprehension is the acknowledgement that students need to be provided with an integral education which allows them to take full advantage of current cultural and technological developments: 'taking into account that the most updated information in the different fields of knowledge is published in English, it is of vital importance to prepare students in the comprehensions of such texts' (Escobar, A. and E. Mota, 2004: 7). This study programme was first implemented in 1990 and represented a shift from translation to reading comprehension. By 2004 when the data from participants in preparatory education were collected, this syllabus had been used and unchanged for 14 years!

As mentioned before, as in the case of secondary schools, it is stated that three hours per week be devoted to EFL learning in the first semester of preparatory school. The syllabus for first semester is divided into three units:

1. Comprehension of the general idea in a text (gist/skimming)
2. Obtaining specific information (Scanning)
3. Integral comprehension of a basic text

An important aspect of the preparatory syllabus worth highlighting is that, unlike the secondary programme, the syllabus for EFL in preparatory school provides

¹² Secretaría de Educación y Cultura/ Dirección General de Enseñanza Media Superior y Superior.

the guidelines for student assessment. In a nutshell, it is stated that three different types of assessment must be used and for different purposes¹³:

1. **Diagnostic assessment:** at the beginning of the semester to find out the group's current knowledge and skills so that the teacher can plan and develop the teaching/learning sessions based on sound knowledge and not on guessing what the students already know.
2. **Formative assessment:** carried out continuously by using quizzes, participation, observations, and not only by using tests/exams. The purpose of this type of assessment is to provide students with feedback on their work, and, like the first type, should not be used for grading purposes.
3. **Summative assessment:** at the end of each unit and should be congruent with the objectives of each level. This type of assessment will be used to determine whether the students can be promoted to the next level. Class participation, small-group assignments, and objective exams — multiple choice, matching, short answers — should be used.

In terms of assessment, as stated in the official documents, it is reasonable to assume that the designers of the EFL syllabus for preparatory education have given careful consideration to develop a system that not only evaluates how much the students have learnt to assign a grade or promote students to the next level but, most importantly, it seems that there is a *genuine* concern for the encouragement for EFL teachers to find out about the students' weaknesses and strengths and act accordingly in order to enhance the EFL learning experience as far as it is possible. But are EFL teachers fully aware of this implicit intention? If so, are they capable of designing and administering these three different types of evaluations? Are their working conditions the appropriate ones for the implications that the design and administration of these three different types of assessments carry with them? The answers to these questions will be taken up later on in chapter five and seven which present EFL teachers' views on their working conditions and on students' assessment.

The official state EFL syllabus for the first semester of preparatory school presents in detail the three units that comprise the first course of EFL in preparatory education. It is a long document which includes not only all the contents to focus on but the reading strategies, advice on the resources that can be used or exploited and examples to illustrate the focus of study. Therefore, due to constraints of space, to provide an idea of how each unit in the first semester is

¹³ Programa de Estudios de Bachillerato. Lengua Adicional al Español I. SEC p.12

presented, a small sample was chosen and translated from *Programas de Estudio. Lengua Adicional al Español I*. (SEC, 2002: 2). This is given in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5 Sample of EFL Syllabus for First Semester of Preparatory Education

Contents	Strategies	Resources	Examples
- Suffix "ing"	- Analyse in a context the different functions and meaning of "ing" in different words.	- Authentic texts in English	- Female sterilization consists of two steps: (1) reaching the fallopian tubes (2) blocking or occluding the tubes
-Connectors: contrast	Guess from the context the function of: but, on the other hand, although, by contrast, on the contrary, however	- Textbook - Blackboard - Notebook	- If students can be taught in a joyful way, they will not resist learning. On the contrary , they will be inspired and motivated to seek out knowledge.

According to the official documents it is expected that students will be practising and expanding their knowledge of those reading techniques which were the focus of the last months of secondary education. (see Table 4.3). For example, Table 4.5 above shows that students will be engaged in learning or practising how the suffix 'ing' work in a text and the function that connectors have in a written text. This provides evidence that, at least, a smooth EFL transition for students has been planned i.e. from reviewing some familiar content to moving to the introduction of new elements between secondary and preparatory education.

4.6 SUMMARY: THE TRANSITIONAL ELEMENTS IN THEORY

According to the official documents, EFL learning in secondary education will enable learners to¹⁴:

¹⁴ Plan and Study Programme 1993. Basic Education SECONDARY. SEP. CONALITEG, 1994. p. 139

- develop learning strategies which allow them to reflect on and know the techniques that suit best their own ways of learning;
- interact with the group, the school, and the community, developing respect for the ideas of others and the responsibility for work;
- recognise their own cultural values gained through the use of the foreign language and the knowledge of cultural values in other nations;
- participate actively in their own learning and suggest new communicative situations so that their creativity be enhanced;
- obtain the linguistic bases that will allow them to progress in the proficiency of the foreign language in subsequent foreign language learning levels;

And the EFL learning in preparatory level will equip learners to:

- apply the strategies and skills used in the L1 to comprehend authentic texts in English.
- take advantage of all their knowledge and imagination to approach the reading process in an active way.
- be able to recognise specific and general information in a written text
- integrate all the different information in a text so that they are able to transfer this information adequately.
- gain the confidence to read authentic simple texts in English.

A reading of official documents produces the impression of clear curricular continuity between EFL learning in secondary and preparatory school. What is planned and expected of the EFL learning in secondary school, especially at the end of this level of education, should serve as the foundation for what is to come in EFL learning in preparatory school. Moreover, there is a sense of increasingly challenging and diverse learning tasks for students to engage in: debates, round tables, expressing their opinions, feelings. There are even suggestions for new tasks and approaches addressed to their EFL teachers so that learning can be enhanced and motivating for the learners.

In terms of the developmental stage that the students of this age are inevitably undergoing, it seems reasonable to assume that the purposes for EFL learning in both levels of education have taken this into account. For example, in secondary education by equipping the learners with the necessary knowledge of L2 to communicate confidently, albeit in a basic way, with both native and non native speakers, there seems to be a response to the students' view of English *the language* (see chapter six) as a means to know people and learn things that otherwise would be beyond them.

Similarly, through the study of EFL, learners are also expected to develop the necessary awareness and the skills to decide what and how it is best for them to learn. This seems to imply that there is a recognition that at this age students want to become more independent from teachers and/or parents and start to discover new things on their own. Finally, if these students have decided to study at preparatory school — which is the previous stage to university studies — it seems reasonable to assume that the preparatory EFL programme is considering those needs that are very likely to be imposed on the learners by the demands of their future academic trajectories (reading texts in English in their further studies).

But is the voice of the documents (or the voice of the system) in tune with what goes on in the EFL state classroom as experienced by the main actors of the teaching and learning EFL process in these two levels of schooling? Is this stated EFL policy in both levels of education in tune with what students moving from secondary to preparatory school expect from the EFL learning process? In order to answer these questions it is necessary to hear the voices of the main stakeholders in the EFL teaching and learning experience in real classrooms. As mentioned earlier in this thesis (section 2.1), there is a lack of published studies available that report what teachers and students have to say about their everyday experiences in the field of EFL in the Mexican context. With this in mind, chapters 5-7 will focus on their voices rather than making connections with the relevant literature. However, studies reviewed in chapter 2 will be revisited in chapter 8 in the light of the analysis in the intervening chapter.

5

THE EFL CLASSROOM: OTHER VOICES, OTHER TRUTHS

The fact that the language classroom is specifically designed for the purpose of facilitating language learning should constitute sufficient justification for studying what goes in there. (Nunan, D. 1990:5)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I presented what the official documents stipulate should happen concerning EFL learning and teaching in state secondary and preparatory schools. I also showed some of the official requirements that the students have to undergo when transferring from secondary to the next level of schooling. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to reveal how this stated policy is realised or rather how it is experienced by the main stakeholders of the EFL learning and teaching process: the students, the EFL teachers, and, to a lesser degree, the school authorities. The data presented and discussed in this chapter were gathered from three different groups of participants thereby allowing an in-depth picture of what goes on in real state school classrooms in the Mexican context. Section 5.2 provides two vignettes/snapshots of how a typical EFL lesson is spent in secondary and preparatory school as reported by the students who participated in the

current investigation. The perceptions that both the students and teachers have of the lack of EFL assessment during the transfer process is dealt with in section 5.3. This is an important aspect that highlights the mismatch between the rhetoric of the educational authorities regarding the importance of EFL learning as part of the students' education and what happens in practice. Although space limits mean that it is not possible to deal with each and all the themes arising from the interview data that clearly show the incongruity between the voice of the documents and the voice of the people in real EFL classrooms, section 5.4 presents and discusses the most salient issues that have been overlooked or neglected altogether by the national and state educational authorities and which have had an important effect for the participants' lived dissatisfaction and the stagnation in the EFL teaching and learning process within the Mexican state school system. Finally, section 5.5 provides a summary of the findings.

5.2 EFL LESSONS IN STATE SCHOOLS: THE STUDENTS' VOICES

Although this study did not allow obtaining any class observation data, it is worth noting that, when asked to describe a typical EFL lesson in their third grade of secondary school, and after completing their first semester of preparatory education, all students concurred in their descriptions irrespective of the type of schools attended i.e. technical or general. They reported that EFL lessons in state schools follow the same pattern with occasional minor variations. On the whole, the students responded that most EFL lessons are spent on following a rather mechanical routine during secondary and preparatory education which is not in accordance with what the official documents stipulate should happen. The following vignettes, although not based on direct lesson observation, do represent remarkably consistent accounts obtained in the interview data provided by the respondents. Even more importantly, the interviews carried out for the current investigation suggested that typical classroom routines and patterns have not changed from those which emerged in the more than 40 lesson observations carried out in the 2000 research project in preparatory schools (see Ramírez Romero, 2007: 304-305; see also an example of an observation sheet of the 2000 research project in appendix F). For this reason, lesson observation was not used as a form of data collection in the study; instead, priority was given to interviews and the voice of the stakeholder.

5.2.1 A TYPICAL EFL LESSON IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The bell rings. The EFL teachers arrive at the classroom a few minutes later. They go straight to their desk which is on a wooden platform while they greet the class in English: ‘good morning’ or ‘good afternoon’. From the elevated platform, teachers, most of the time, can keep an eye on the 40 or 45 students sitting in rows. The students, on the other hand, cannot see, let alone work with, their classmates except for the ones next to them on each side. The students’ chair-desks are hardly ever moved around since there is not enough room.

Lessons start with the calling of the roll. By this time around 10 minutes have been used up. This is immediately followed by one of two activities: teachers either put on a ‘*lámina*’ (wall chart) on the board for students to copy its contents in their notebooks or teachers explain a grammar point and then ask students to do exercises from page x to z: ‘now you do from page 90 to 97’. 20 or 25 minutes have passed.

Homework checking begins. One at a time, students are called to approach the teachers’ desk while the rest of the group remains on the set activity. The teachers tick each page where students have written the tasks assigned and sign the final page. According to the students, EFL teachers hardly ever have the time to write any feedback or point out if there is something wrong. Nor do they explain why anything is wrong. The teachers’ signatures are proof that students have done the assignments and testimony of one the forms of student ‘participations’ that are part of their grades. While this activity is being carried out, the teachers are also constantly silencing the students or reminding them to keep on the activity assigned. If not, they threaten, points can be deducted from grades. 35 minutes have gone by.

The next activity is class participation. Teachers ask at random — using their student lists — or if students are ‘lucky’ the exercises are ‘chain’ answered thus allowing the students to predict which question they have to answer. If the answer is correct, they get an extra point for class participation. 50 minutes have passed. The lesson is over. The next class will follow a very similar pattern.

5.2.2 A TYPICAL EFL LESSON IN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

The bell rings. Some students are finishing doing the homework in the classroom. A few minutes later the EFL teachers turn up. Teachers walk straight to their desks

and take out their teaching materials: SEC textbook or photocopies with grammar exercises. Attendance checking begins: the 47 or 55 students sitting in rows answer in a loud voice confirming they are present. 10 minutes have been used up.

Next, students are asked to take out their textbooks or the photocopies they were given at the beginning of the semester or at the end of the previous lesson. If homework was assigned, the revision is carried out by calling upon individual students to provide the answer aloud. If the answer is correct they get 'participation', if not, they get a '*tache*' (bad mark) on the teachers' list. 20 minutes have gone by.

The most recurring activity in EFL lessons is for students to answer, individually, a good number of pages in their reading comprehension textbooks. Conversely, those students who are not following the SEC textbooks are asked to copy from the board what was written there by the teacher — always a grammar point. For example, they are asked to write 15 sentences using the past of verb 'to be' in its three forms: affirmative, interrogative, and negative.

The last 30 minutes of the class are spent on teachers nominating individual students to read aloud a few sentences in one of the reading comprehension texts in English. This is followed by the teachers calling upon individual students to translate 'word by word' a segment of the text that has just been read aloud. If the translation provided by the student matches that of their teachers' then they get 'participation' which will be useful for their final grades. If not, they get a '*tache*'¹⁵.

On rare occasions, for the sake of variety, students are asked to listen to a tape and fill in the gaps in a written text with the missing words. After the task has been completed, the same type of participation is asked: read aloud the answers. Five minutes before the bell rings: homework, if any, is assigned for next lesson. The 50-minute lesson is over. The next lesson will not differ greatly from today's.

The students' lived EFL learning experiences in their final year of secondary education and at the end of their first semester in their next educational level described above show clearly the tedium and the stagnation that seem to have contributed to the widespread view of failure in EFL teaching and learning in the state school milieus. Even most importantly, the vignettes above depict how both teachers and students are for the most part engaged in a type of EFL teaching and learning that is incongruent with what is assumed to happen in the official documents (see chapter four). The incongruity between the stated policy and the accepted practice raises a lot of pressing questions: When is the EFL used as

¹⁵ A cross meaning lack of or incorrect participation. They may be used to deduct points from the students' grades.

the means of communication in the classroom? How are students in real practice assessed? What is the 'real' class time available for teaching and learning the language? How is this time used? Why is it used in the way it is being used? Why is this rather disengaged and mechanical type of teaching/learning taking place on both sides of the students' transfer process? Why does the students' role seem to be rather passive when the voice of the documents asks for students to be the 'main actors of the educational process' thus implying a student's active role in the learning process? These are but a few questions that are raised when we listen to the voices of the people inside the state school classrooms. The incongruity between the policy and practice becomes apparent when the voices of the people who are directly affected by the EFL stated syllabi are paid attention to in trying to seek understanding of what the actual people's lived experiences are inside real EFL settings in the Mexican context.

One key aspect that starts throwing light on the understanding of what seems to be the accepted failure of EFL teaching and learning in the Mexican educational system is to be found in the assessment process that students have to undergo during their transfer from secondary to preparatory education. This important issue is discussed in the next section.

5.3 EFL ASSESSMENT IN THE TRANSFER FROM SECONDARY TO PREPARATORY SCHOOLS: WHERE HAVE ALL THOSE EFL HOURS GONE?

As already discussed in chapter four, students have to sit an entrance exam in order to proceed to preparatory education. For ease of reading I include again the important message that is sent to students taking this exam (see 4.4.2):

The EXANI-I only evaluates the **knowledge** and skills that are **indispensable** for you **to progress** in the Upper middle level and which you should have learnt as a result of the constant work in the secondary school.

Knowledge, indispensable and *to progress* are key words in the message sent to the students who have to take the entrance exam to preparatory education. If they have already taken around 360 hours of EFL instruction according to the official documents (see Table 4.2) it is sensible to assume that the *knowledge* acquired during those hours is *indispensable* to continue making *progress* in their learn-

ing of EFL in the next educational level. However, the interview data revealed a striking contrast between the rhetoric of the educational authorities regarding the importance allocated to EFL learning within the Mexican educational system and what happens in practice.

5.3.1 THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

Some students stated that the entrance exam for preparatory school — the EXANI-I — either did not include a section to assess the EFL knowledge acquired in secondary school or, even more revealing, that it was included but they were asked not to answer it. The following extract illustrates clearly what other students also report:

CARLOS¹⁶:

- Nora: This preparatory school that you are attending, how is it considered? What's its academic level?
- Carlos: I think it's the best in Xalapa because the CENEVAL ranked it in the first place in the whole country.
- Nora: And did you have to take the CENEVAL exam to apply to this *prepa*?
- Carlos: Uhum, yes
- Nora: Is this an exam of general knowledge acquired in secondary school?
- Carlos: Uhum yes it's about ALL we learnt in secondary and it's a prerequisite to apply for a place in the *prepa*
- Nora: This exam, does it have questions about EFL? Does it have a section on English?
- Carlos: Mmm ye (.) I mean the exam DOES have a section on EFL but on the day of the exam we were told NOT to answer it

¹⁶ Quotes and extracts are presented in the translation into English for ease of reading, including, in brackets, the initial of the participant's pseudonym, the month and the year when the interview was conducted. Then, after colons, the line numbers where they can be found in the transcripts. Thus, C stands for Carlos; 03.05 indicate that the interview was carried out in March, 2005 and that that particular extract can be found in lines 030 to 061 of the transcript. The original quotes in Spanish are provided in **appendix E** indicating the page in which they appear in the thesis.

- Nora: But, could you see it?
 Carlos: Oh yes
 Nora: Do you remember what was it like? What kind of questions did it have? Was it in Spanish or in English?
 Carlos: Some (.) and there was also a text in English and there were questions about the text but they told us not to answer them
 Nora: Why? Why didn't you have to answer it? Did they explain to you why not?
 Carlos: No, they didn't explain to us why ((laughter)) [c. 03.05: 030-061].

KARLA, LORENA, AND ROGELIO:

Three other student-participants — *Karla*, *Lorena*, and *Rogelio* — who were attending different preparatory schools from *Carlos* also recalled that when they sat the entrance exam, the English section that was in it was 'cancelled'. *Karla* explains that when 'we already had the exam in our hands they said: do not answer the English section because we are not going to take it into account' (K.03.05: 755-758).

Lorena said that she remembered that, apart from a text, there were some 'things like very BASIC: colours, pronouns, numbers and vocabulary and questions with 'like' to ask your likings with 'Do you like' and nouns and stuff like that' (L.03.05: 764-765). She further recalled that the accompanying booklet with the answer sheets they were given together with the exam 'only had the exact number of spaces to complete until the last section in the exam which was either civics or geography'. She added that, even though she could see the English section, she realised that there was not an answer sheet for the EFL section. Her conclusion was that 'it is obvious that they had foreseen for us not to answer it' (L.03.05: 774-785).

Rogelio's experience of the entrance exam for preparatory education is similar to the other student-participants. When I asked him what he made of this 'omission' or exclusion of the EFL section in the entrance exam for preparatory education his perception was that:

because English I don't think there's interest [in it] they just take it to fill in the programme but NOT because they are interested in students really learning it it's just simply to fill in the programme and that's why they do not take it SERIOUSLY I think that UNCONCIOUSLY they have it present that students DON'T know English really, they know or they THINK that they [students] have no knowledge of

English and then well many[students] when they were told “DO NOT ANSWER the English section” it was like a “phewwww ooohh good”, it was like a sort of RELIEF ,”oh, that’s GREAT!” [R.03.05: 794-804].

The interview extract and the quotes above are fairly representative of what is found across my interview data. These perceptions were found among students who were attending two out of the three preparatory schools ranked as the ‘most high profile’ preparatory schools in Xalapa. This is worth noting because if the most competitive and demanding schools in Xalapa seemed not to be interested in finding out about the students’ level of EFL acquired during secondary education, this raises the question of whether the educational authorities were aware of the failure in EFL teaching and learning in secondary school and decided to render those 360 hours of EFL instruction *not* indispensable for students to make progress in EFL learning in preparatory school.

Furthermore, if students can proceed to study preparatory school regardless of their EFL level acquired in the previous level is it because the educational authorities *think* that EFL learning in secondary school is not successful and they have therefore decided to give students a ‘clean slate’ despite the curriculum continuity stated in their documents? The message they are actually conveying seems to be ‘start again from scratch’ (Bolster *et al.*, 2004: 38) in preparatory schools.

5.3.2 THE EFL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION

Gerardo, one of the two preparatory school EFL teacher-participants said that he did not know much about the entrance exam that students have to take to enter preparatory school as EFL teachers were not involved nor did they know exactly what was evaluated and what this exam was about at all. However, he admitted that he had had heard from his students that this had been the second year that this ‘omission or cancellation’ of the EFL section had occurred:

Yes, I knew that in this exam, I think this is the second time that this happens that students don’t have to answer the English section (.) but to tell you the truth I haven’t asked what’s the reason [MG.03.05: 322-324].

It is remarkable how both the EFL teacher and the students did not have an answer as to why the EFL section was not included or rather why this EFL section was

ignored in the entrance exam. Quantitatively, time allocated to EFL instruction is quite considerable and similar to time allocated to other subjects such as civics, geography, history, etc. which were evaluated. Gerardo concluded that:

They say “[English]’s very important, it’s very important” but in fact the educational system don’t treat English as important as physics, chemistry, mathematics, Spanish, etc. [MG.03.05:324-326].

To summarise thus far, for both students and teachers alike the omission of EFL assessment is meaningful. They both realise that there is a mismatch between what the system states about the important role that EFL instruction has within the Mexican educational system and what actually happens in practice. This incongruity led the participants to conclude that the system had either rendered the EFL instruction just a subject to ‘fill in’ the curricula of the two educational levels that this study concerns or that the people in charge of EFL planning do know that it is important to teach and learn English but they just do not know how to ‘handle’ it. But why did the system decide not to evaluate the students’ level of EFL in the process of transfer from secondary to preparatory education as it did with all the other subjects that make up the curriculum of secondary education? After all, as I showed in chapter four, according to the voice of the documents, on completion of secondary education, students have received 360 hours of EFL instruction. The number of hours invested in studying EFL in secondary school is not only quantitatively considerable but what they have learnt there is expected to serve as the foundations to continue making progress in the next level of education in which EFL is a compulsory subject as well. However, the lack of EFL assessment in the transfer from secondary to preparatory education raises serious questions about the status of English in the secondary school system.

In order to understand the complex picture that emerged from my data it is necessary to explore, from the main stakeholders’ perceptions, other issues that overlap and are intertwined on both sides of the transfer process which throw light on the perceived failure in the EFL learning and teaching in state schools. These are presented in the subsequent sections.

5.4 KEY ISSUES IN EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE MEXICAN CONTEXT: VOICES FROM INSIDE REAL CLASSROOMS

On the rare occasions that authorities in charge of the EFL planning and policy in state school education publicly acknowledge the *'rezago'* or the backlog that exists concerning the teaching of EFL in the public sector, the solution to this that they inevitably propose is to reform the EFL programme and 'train' the EFL teachers so that they will be able to deliver the new programme. This means that in order to improve the longstanding failure in EFL teaching and learning in Mexican public schools, according to them, what is needed is to design an innovative EFL syllabus to keep abreast of the international developments in EFL teaching and learning in other parts of the world, without any consideration of local realities. Furthermore, they conclude that the *main* problem contributing to deficiencies in the teaching of English in secondary schools is the lack of teacher training' (SEP, 2007 my emphasis).¹⁷ It cannot be denied that teacher training courses are urgently needed and wished for by EFL teachers as stated by the teacher-participants in the current study on both educational levels. However, according to my interview data this is but one of many issues that have been long neglected by the educational authorities. If we are to seek a greater understanding of why the situations presented above seem to prevail in EFL teaching and learning on both side of the students' transfer process from one level of education to the next in public education - as opposed to what is stated in the official documents - it is necessary to listen to and pay careful attention to some other key issues that interplay in EFL teaching and learning in the Mexican context as expressed by the students, teachers and school authorities that contributed to this research.

5.4.1 TIME FOR EFL INSTRUCTION IN STATE SCHOOLS

One of the key issues perceived as hampering the EFL teaching and learning process in state schools is that of real time available for the provision of the foreign language. All participants in this study concurred that the time allocated to EFL instruction in both levels of education is insufficient. The following quotes echo the vast majority of the participants' views.

¹⁷ Reforma 11 June 2007. "Urge capacitación a maestros de inglés". <http://www.reforma.com.mx>

TEACHER LOLITA:

Lolita has been an EFL teacher in secondary school for over 20 years. Her view regarding the time allocate to EFL instructions is expressed as follows:

Look for example [the students] have Spanish lessons all weekdays. It's 5 hours of Spanish and in English we have 3 times a week, I think that English lessons should be 1 hour everyday (.) we have asked for that change but they have NEVER paid attention to our petition [ML.06.04: 343-351].

THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS:

Similarly, the students in secondary and preparatory school expressed the view that the number of lessons and the time for EFL lessons are not sufficient. Fernanda, a secondary school student, expressed a common desire:

I'd like that there were more hours and more [EFL] lessons [FS.06.04:03].

Felipe, a preparatory school student, when asked to ascertain what changes he would make, if he were an EFL teacher, regarding his lessons in this educational level answered as follows:

As I am very much interested in English I would make some changes that, for example, I'd like to have more hours [of EFL lessons] a week so that we could learn more, we could have more knowledge about the [EFL] subject. If we could change that it'd be better, to have more lessons so that when we get to university we didn't find English too difficult [FV.03.05:613-622].

THE SCHOOL AUTHORITIES:

For Rebeca, a secondary school academic co-ordinator, a former EFL teacher herself, it is inexplicable why the system has not given priority to the EFL subject within secondary education and hence more time. She explained that:

[the students] see their EFL teacher three hours a week which is the only contact

they have with English inside the school, outside they may have more but inside the school it's only three hours a week and they [spend] the rest of the school-time speaking in Spanish. I don't know (.) we have a system that is not well developed, with little interest in the EFL subject, I don't know why, truth be told I don't understand what the reason is. They place a lot of interest in computers; it's incredible because in computers everything is in English. I don't know why English has not been a priority for the system [C.A.R. 06.04: 357-365].

But why do the people who indeed experience what goes on in EFL teaching and learning in the state school milieus find that the time available is not enough? After all approximately 360 hours after secondary education¹⁸, as stated in the official documents, plus the three hours per week during the first semester of preparatory education are 'quantitatively' a great deal of time allocated to EFL learning. The answer is to be found in what 'time available' for EFL learning actually means to the people directly involved in EFL practice within the context of the state schools.

5.4.1.1 REAL TIME FOR EFL INSTRUCTION IN STATE SCHOOLS

As was shown in chapter four (4.2.1) in the official documents it is stated that three hours per week are to be devoted to EFL learning during the three years of secondary education and the same number of hours, at least, during the first three semesters of preparatory school (see 4.4). However, in practice these 'three hours' are organized into three 50-minute modules in the curricula of these educational levels. In other words, the three hours are in fact 150 minutes or two hours and a half per week. That is, there is a half an hour gap between the voice of the documents and how time has been, in actual practice, organized.

EFL teachers are especially well aware of this 'minor' mismatch between what is stated in the official documents and how these 'three weekly hours' are indeed organised within the school timetable. Not only are they aware of the incongruence between this aspect of the stated policy and the actual practice but they feel that this is detrimental to what they can achieve in the EFL classroom, as teacher Carolina emphatically pointed out:

¹⁸ 200 days (40 weeks) per year of school attendance are compulsory see: http://www.sep.gob.mx/wb2/sep/sep_Bol2240806.

One of the biggest limitations that I feel that we have here is that we JUST have EFL lessons three hours a week THREE MODULES, because they are NOT HOURS, they are three 50-minute modules a week [MC.06.04:001-027].

This *small* overlooked miscalculation would not be as significant as it is perceived by EFL teachers and students if other organizational and contextual issues (timetabling, class size, working conditions, etc.) were not intertwined with this 30-minute gap in the teaching and learning process within the state school classroom. When considering that ‘half-an-hour gap’ per week between the voice of the documents and the voice of the people inside real classrooms in the light of all those other contextual factors, the detrimental impact of this mismatch is even greater. Moreover, this ‘gap’ in time in the real context of EFL teaching and learning becomes more significant as it throws light on how this issue of availability of time for EFL instruction represents a key area of difficulty in the EFL learning situation for both teachers and students alike. For instance, a closer examination of how a full time EFL teacher’s workload in secondary or preparatory state school is organised reveals that those two and a half hours decrease even more the real time available for EFL teaching and learning given the particular characteristics of the Mexican school setting. A typical timetable for the *morning*¹⁹ shift of an EFL teacher who works full time in a secondary school is shown in Table 5.1.²⁰

On paying careful attention to the way class time has been tightly organized without any breaks between lessons — apart from the 20-minute recess — it becomes obvious that those two and a half hours are reduced even more. For example, when we consider the way classes are organized in Mexican schools, it becomes clear that the time-gap widens even more. In Mexican state schools, in all levels of education, it is the teacher who has to turn up to different classrooms. Teachers spend a good deal of their school-time running up and down the stairs to go, for example, from one classroom on the third or fourth floor to the next classroom on ground floor or vice versa. Similarly, they may be rushing along the school corridors from a classroom that is at the front of the building to get to the next lesson that takes place exactly at the opposite end of the school. The students, on the other hand, are allocated to a group and a classroom where they

¹⁹ Most full time teachers (40 hours per week) teach in the morning and the afternoon shifts.

²⁰ This is a real timetable one of the secondary full time teachers gave me to show me how tight and how loaded her timetable was.

have to take all their different subjects. This has a significant bearing not only for the time aspect but on the issue of lack of students' differentiation which will be taken up later. Needless to say, if an EFL teacher has to teach a group of students on the third floor from 7 am to 7.50 and her next lesson begins exactly at 7.50 on the ground floor, it is necessary for her to finish her previous lesson between five and ten minutes earlier so that she can be on time to begin her next class. One way or another the 50-minute period shrinks even more to a 45 or 40 minutes, converting those 'three weekly hours' into a roughly two-hour class time.

Table 5. 1 Timetable of an EFL Secondary School Teacher

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Observations
07:00-07:50	3 rd F	1 st A	3 rd C	3 rd F	3 rd E	
07:50-08:40	3 rd E	3 rd B	3 rd B	3 rd B	3 rd D	
08:40-09:30	1 st B	1 st C	1 st B	3 rd A	1 st B	
09:30-10:20	1 st A				3 rd C	
10:20-10:40			R E C	E S	S	
10:40-11:30	3 rd A	3 rd D	3 rd E	3 rd D	3 rd A	
11:30-12:20	1 st C	3 rd F	1 st A	3 rd C	1 st C	
12:20-13:10	1 st D		1 st D			
13:10-14:00					1 st D	

The Headmaster's comment on other related aspects that EFL teachers are bound to experience not only inside but outside the classroom reinforces the view that the real time for EFL learning is not at all, in practice, what is stipulated in the official documents:

class time for EFL lessons] is reduced, reduced. It's 3 lessons per week, 50 minutes each which are NOT 50 minutes. As the teacher has to go from one classroom to another then in the interval between going from one classroom to another about 5 or 10 minutes are wasted, especially, for example, a teacher who is now with the 3rd grade group and has to come here, to begin with, s/he doesn't leave the classroom when the bell rings but s/he stays in for 2 or 3 more minutes if somebody asks a question or on the way to the next classroom s/he meets a par-

ent for example, then s/he gets to the next classroom 10 or 15 minutes after the bell ring, NOT all teachers and not every day, but there ARE times when 10 or 15 minutes of [class-time] are wasted [HM.06.04: 346-358].

These quotes, and many similar ones in my data, show clearly the mismatch between what is stipulated in the documents and what happens in practice inside the schools. Some respondents added other examples exacerbating the problem, such as the need for teachers to deal with their students' parents between lessons as there is no time set aside for them to do this.

5.4.1.2. OTHER TIME ISSUES INSIDE THE CLASSROOMS

Coupled with this time-gap discussed above time is further reduced, inside the classroom, by other factors which are not directly related to the EFL teaching and learning process *per se*. Teachers complained that they had to dedicate some of their teaching time to other activities that are deemed necessary as part of their job: call the roll, check homework, and deal with students' behavior. For example, Gisela, a newcomer to EFL teaching in secondary level, explained how, after a short period of time of being teaching *here*, her perception of EFL teachers in that particular setting changed radically. She said that her first reflection was:

Oh my God! Now I DO understand why teachers have no opportunity to teach you WELL why they can't teach you MUCH, no? BECAUSE it's 50 minutes, it's NOT AN HOUR, it's 50 minutes that are reduced to 30 when you have to check homework, you have to check attendance and etc., etc., etc. and then I think that the students are still CHILDREN, they're still not mature enough and then they [students] are TOO MANY and then there are TOO MANY objectives that you have to cover during the course that well (.) NO, it's NOT easy! [MG.06.04: 502-531].

Teacher Gisela's comment above shows that her perception of the 50 minute-lesson may in fact be, at best, a 30-minute real time for an EFL lesson since they have to call the roll, check the homework and deal with too many 'immature students'. This 'restless' nature due to the students' age has also an impact on how teachers perceive that they have to 'waste' part of their class time to deal with other tasks when they should be concentrated on teaching EFL.

In addition to the almost standard reductions of class time that I have highlighted, the time might be further shortened by other factors within the lesson such as the need to discipline students, something which many teachers regard as eating significantly into their teaching time (see Chapter seven, section 7.3 for examples).

To sum up, the issue of time allocated to EFL instruction, according to the documents, and how much time there is in real practice is very revealing. If the authorities in charge of designing the syllabi for these two levels of education, insist that there are three hours of EFL teaching and learning and plan the syllabi for these educational levels accordingly but in practice those three weekly hours of EFL lessons are indeed reduced, be it to two and a half hours, or two hours, or yet to one and a half hours due to the diverse reasons described above, it is not surprising that teachers, find it almost impossible to cover the ‘too many objectives [. . .] during the course’ as teacher Gisela emphatically stated above.

Finally, if in practice there is just a bit more than half of the time and *not* what is stipulated in the documents for EFL teaching and learning, the pressure that this *gap in time* place on teachers may make them either rush to cover all contents without any consideration to the students’ learning process or they as well may decide to do what they *think* that can be done considering the real given time. Then, what do teachers do with the real time they have to concentrate on EFL instruction? What do teachers and students are engaged in, in the actual time that there is left for EFL teaching and learning? The answers to these questions are presented in the next sections.

5.4.2 APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING INSIDE SECONDARY AND PREPARATORY SCHOOLS

As already shown in chapter four, whereas in secondary school the documents state that a communicative-functional approach is to be adopted to EFL teaching and learning, the focus in preparatory education should be on reading comprehension. It is also worth bearing in mind that according to the official syllabus for 3rd grade of secondary education, a heavy emphasis is to be given to developing the students’ reading comprehension skills, especially during the last months of secondary EFL lessons thus creating a ‘neat’ curricular continuity between these two educational contexts (see 4.6). But how is this stated policy realised in practice?

*5.4.2.1 FOCUS ON GRAMMAR EXERCISES, THE USE
OF L1, AND THE STUDENTS' ROLES*

For the student participants in this study, learning English the school subject should be about learning and doing different things from what they do and from the way they are taught in the state school system. Among the most recurring complaints are the widely use of their mother tongue in their EFL lessons; the almost exclusive focus on grammar; and the mechanical lessons followed on both sides of the transfer process. For the sake of space, in order to illustrate the participants' lived experience of EFL learning and teaching I use just a few representative quotes that best illustrate the issues that are dealt with in the remaining sections in this chapter.

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Soledad's experience of her three years of EFL lessons in secondary education did not differ at all from that of other participants' in this study. She explained that each of her EFL teachers:

had their own teaching method: the [teacher] in first grade, she would talk all the time and in SPANISH or she would translate. The one in second grades made us copy wall charts in English and then she would, more or less, explain. And the one in third grade would ask us to answer the activities in the workbook but she was very SPECIAL, very strict, like sort of GRUMPY [S.03.05: 004-012].

The student's experience of EFL learning in secondary education described above touches upon three important issues that are worth noting. First, it is interesting to note that although Soledad had the opportunity to take lessons with three different teachers, in essence the EFL experience was rather the same: learning and doing things that did not match with what was expected to happen according to the official programmes for her three years of EFL learning in secondary school. Second, on the whole, her complete EFL learning experience in secondary level was devoted to mechanical and rather passive activities: listening to the teacher speak most of the time in Spanish or copying from wall charts on the blackboard or concentrating on answering the activities in the textbook. None of these activities matched those commonly associated with communicative language learning.

Finally, it is clear from what she described in the above extract that her role as an EFL student was rather passive and *not* that of the ‘main actor of the educational process’ that the official programme expects teachers to encourage. It is sensible to assume that her experience of the EFL subject throughout her whole secondary education was neither a satisfactory nor a productive one.

Fabiola’s description of her EFL lessons in secondary school is another fair representation of what is found in my interview data. The teaching of EFL in secondary school is not in accord with what should happen according to the syllabus. She explained that ‘the teacher gives us several examples of some words and then we have to write them down about 10 times, we have to make *planas* (lists) so that we LEARN them.’ (06.04: 034-036).

A further example of the mismatch between what is expected to happen and what indeed goes on in EFL lessons is provided by Raúl’s experience during his secondary education. He stated that even though he had two different EFL teachers in his secondary state school, the methodology employed, the content and the delivery of the lessons were basically the same:

Well, it was basically the same regarding the way they taught us because mainly what both teachers taught us, and this was something that ANNOYED us a lot, was VERBS, VERBS, VERBS, VERBS and then we had to learn loads of verbs and the teachers believed that THAT WAS LEARNING English, no? knowing ALL the verbs and the possessive pronouns but I THINK that the most important thing when you are learning English is everything else: learning how to SPEAK it, being able to ask questions orally and feeling confident when you speak English I FEEL that’s also VERY important and [the teachers] have to help you develop that [R.03.05: 140-151].

These negative feeling towards EFL learning *inside* state school classrooms are created by the way students are taught: the almost exclusive use of class time on repetition of grammar points and the lack of opportunities to learn to speak EFL. Students are able to articulate very clearly their ideas concerning how and what is needed to learn the EFL. Interestingly enough, their ideas go hand in hand with the emphasis in CLT. For example, in one of our conversations through messenger, Marissa very emphatically told me what, in her opinion, was the ‘worst’ part of learning EFL in state schools. She said that she was aware that her teacher had to follow a syllabus but nevertheless:

'Personally, I'd like my lessons to be much more about talking, for example, the teacher could look for a topic that has to do with what the programme asks her to do but then she could organise a debate or something that would make us talk because it is there where we're all in the hole! (M.msn. 09.05).'

Lety provides a further example of what was widely found across my data. She liked the vast majority of the students who participated in this study would have liked her EFL lessons to be different from what they actually were. She said that she would have liked to have:

my lessons in English and I'd like to have not only grammar exercises, I'd like to [practise] LISTENING and I also like VOCABULARY, I'd like to listen [to English] and sometimes try to translate a bit. I'd like to understand when somebody spoke to me in English and I'd like to talk and write in English because I feel it's necessary [to do all this], no? [L.06.04:011-0122].

It is clear that the students' expectations regarding what EFL learning should have been about in state secondary schools clashed with what actually happened in their EFL lessons in secondary school. They also stated that they would have liked to be doing the sort of activities deemed necessary to develop essential skills in the spoken and written foreign language. The next section presents the students' post-transfer experience of EFL teaching and learning during their first semester of preparatory education.

THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

As mentioned before, according to the official documents the focus in preparatory school should be on reading comprehension. However, these reading comprehension lessons were spent for the most part on studying the same grammar points as in secondary school, translating texts, or analysing sentences.

Patricia mentioned that her EFL lessons were spent on the analysis of sentences:

Well, the teachers asks someone to write a sentence, on the blackboard, from the textbook, any sentence or one that she dictates, on the BLACKBOARD and then you have to start ANALYSING it and then she checks or helps finish analys-

ing the sentence in case there were some missing words or something like that and if there is some time left then we do TWO or THREE more sentences and different students [analyse them on the board] and then she calls the roll and THAT was the WHOLE lesson BUT sometimes we analyse only ONE sentence of around TEN words [P.04.05:244-255].

For Rodrigo, the transfer to EFL lessons in preparatory school represented continuing with the same routine he was used to do in secondary school:

But the SURPRISE is that you start first semester in *Prepa* [school] and I feel that you SEE THE SAME I mean [the teacher] gives you the same (.) the only [extra teaching] material apart from the SEC textbook that is used is ALWAYS your sheet with REGULAR verbs on one side and the IRREGULAR [verbs] on the other side and you don't move on any further from there I mean I DON'T know, I feel that [moving to preparatory EFL lessons] was simply to follow with the same routine [as in secondary school]! [R.03.05:301-310].

The students' statements regarding their experience of EFL instruction in preparatory schools show clearly, once again, the disjunction that prevails between the voice of the documents presented in chapter four and what actually went on within the state school milieus as reported by the participants in this study. But why did what was supposed to be happening in EFL lessons in state schools *not* happen? The issues discussed below provide a response to this question.

5.4.3 WORKING CONDITIONS, CLASS SIZE, CLASS MIX, AND LIMITED RESOURCES IN EFL STATE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

WORKING CONDITIONS:

EFL teachers and school authorities mentioned that many of the problems encountered in the EFL state school classroom were largely due to the mismatch between what the system states should happen and what in reality can be done due to contextual constraints, an aspect which those responsible for designing and planning EFL curricula seemed to ignore. The following quote from one of the school authorities expresses a common frustration:

There is no congruity between what they ask you to do and the time they give you to put it into practice. What I have always thought but I haven't devote myself to investigate is who's in charge of the English area in the SEP in Mexico City, then we would have to look at this person's profile because if there were someone from the area of Foreign Languages there, in that post, I AM sure that the situation would be DIFFERENT, it must be a lawyer, must be a pedagogue, something like that, someone that has nothing to do with ENGLISH [. . .] but definitely it must be someone who does not belong to this teaching area, definitely not. I'm telling you this because of the poor interest they've shown to improve, to update, to make the EFL teaching more relevant, come on! It's supposed that as they give you the topics then the teacher has to make it relevant, YEAH RIGHT but as long as they provided the necessary conditions AS WELL! Imagine, I'm complaining and I live in a city, what would teachers in rural areas think if they have no support? [AC. 06.04:388-401].

The demands imposed by the system on the EFL teachers, given the characteristics of the Mexican context, made the academic co-ordinator suspect that the people in charge of the EFL planning and policy have no idea of the realities of teaching EFL. It seems that fact that she was a former EFL teacher made her aware that there was a mismatch between the rhetoric of the educational authorities and what is feasible in reality in the state secondary school. Interestingly, she acknowledged that it was unfair of the system to ask EFL teachers to do what is stipulated in the programme since the people in charge of EFL planning did not provide the sort of working conditions that are considered indispensable for the delivery of the syllabus efficiently.

CLASS SIZE:

Research has shown that the desired number of students in a given classroom has proved to be a controversial one since more often than not budgetary considerations have been prioritised over the teachers' or the students' needs (Glass *et al.*, 1982). Furthermore, it has also been shown that the number of students in a class has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning (see the *International Journal of Educational Research*, 1998, vol.29, Day *et al.*, 1996) and especially on learners' attainment (Galton *et al.*, 1996). Research on EFL communicative teaching contexts, especially in developing countries, has shown that overcrowded groups

or classes that are too large represent a challenging reality for EFL teachers (Sawar, 2001) especially when these contexts lack adequate teaching and learning resources (Peng, 2007).

In the Mexican context both syllabi for EFL teaching and learning in secondary and preparatory education, as already shown in chapter four, stipulate that students are expected to be the ‘main actors of the educational process’. Therefore, all learning contents have to be ‘adapted’, as far as possible, to ‘their needs and real interests’ so that they are motivated in taking an active role of their own learning. For this to be put into practice the EFL teachers’ role is conceived as ‘facilitators of learning and organizers of class activities’. They are also expected to promote communicative situations and encourage students to work, when necessary, independently from teachers. All these attitudes to teaching and learning stipulated in the Mexican EFL policy are undisputable desired conditions for teaching and learning in EFL classrooms. However, in reality, teachers in the current study said that the number of students in each group, the reduced space of their classrooms and the lack of necessary teaching resources have all contributed to create the opposite learning conditions to what is stipulated in the official documents. The following quote from a secondary school teacher is fairly representative of what teachers in both levels of education stated:

I have 52, 50, 48 students. We have asked to have groups with no more than 40 students but they keep on enrolling and enrolling students even though the grades required to enroll in this school are high we still have groups of 42, 48 [. . .] I’d like to have smaller groups. Our classrooms are small and uncomfortable, we cannot do any group dynamics because the time we take trying to move the chairs around or to find the room to make something different, that takes up almost all the class-time, there is NO space to do small group activities, different dynamics instead of teacher fronted or students sitting in rows [MY.06.04:203-224].

By the same token, among the outcomes expected after the first grade of preparatory education is for the students to be able to ‘take advantage of all their knowledge and imagination to approach the reading process in an active way’. However, EFL teachers in preparatory schools who participated in the current study said that it was impossible to do other activities where both teachers and students could take the roles as stipulated in the official documents. The combination of so many different constraints and the lack of adequate teaching conditions may explain at least in part for why teachers follow a mechanical routine most of the time.

Alejandra, has been teaching EFL for 20 years in preparatory school. She said that the teaching situation during those years had not changed much. The average number of students in her classes was 45 and, as she observed, ‘you cannot give the same attention to a group of 45 students as to a group of 25, it’s not possible’ (MA. 03.05: 362-369). Although she ‘you do what you can’ (255-256), she also complained that the textbook that they had to follow was very dated and that the students did not like it at all, adding:

[We] have tried to see if they update the textbook but to tell you the truth they haven’t done anything about this . . . I think that nobody follows the textbook 100% . . . and you have to do this because if you don’t, then you fall asleep and so do the students! [MA. 03.05: 392-400].

LACK OF STUDENTS’ DIFFERENTIATION:

A further important issue aggravating the situation of EFL teaching and learning within the public school setting is the lack of students’ differentiation according to their EFL educational background. This is something that all participants regarded as one of the biggest problems for both teachers and students alike. Yolanda, a secondary teacher, highlighted this issue in the following extract:

There are many different [students’ EFL] levels within the same group. There are learners who have had the opportunity to take or are taking English courses in other institutions and well you can see the HUGE difference between those learners and the ones who haven’t had that opportunity. This represents a CHALLENGE for me because I KNOW that they, what I’m teaching, they ALREADY know it [MY.06.04: 076-090].

Having excessively large groups where EFL teachers have to deal with students whose EFL background may differ a great deal represents a challenge to teachers, who do not have the freedom to set the students according to their educational background. This problem has been also created by the assumption behind the syllabus for secondary education that students have no prior knowledge of EFL (Terborg *et al.*, 2007), despite the fact that ‘EFL pilot lessons’ have been in place since 2003 in primary schools in Xalapa, Veracruz where this study was conducted. It is also well known that students at the beginning of secondary school

may have transferred from a private school where EFL lessons are compulsory (see 1.4).

LIMITED RESOURCES:

Gisela, a secondary teacher, explained how limited were the activities she could carry out in the EFL classroom due to the lack of teaching materials other than the textbook provided by the SEP:

The SEP sends different cassettes and videos for ALL other subjects but for ENGLISH there is NOTHING, I tell you because I have asked “what’s new for English?” and they say “no, well, there’s nothing” because even to rest from the routine of the classroom you could say “ok, today we are going to watch a movie” or do something different, no? But there is NOTHING, NOTHING. BUT I think that the school direction is not to blame but rather it is the SEP since they are in charge of sending the MATERIALS. There is a LOT for Biology, there is a lot for HISTORY, there are many things, there are tapes for other subjects but not for ENGLISH, there is NOTHING [G.06.04: 374-387].

Nadia, another secondary school teacher, complained about all the limitations that she has to face as an EFL teacher in her particular teaching context:

Well, [the working conditions for an EFL teachers in secondary education] are not the adequate because for starters, for example, the SOCKETS in the classrooms DO NOT work, then if we want to work with the tape recorder we have to buy BATTERIES and that’s very EXPENSIVE to be ALWAYS buying batteries then to be honest I DON’T use the tape recorder because of that. We DO NOT have a place, a locker where to keep our materials, NOTHING. We have to be CARRYING all our materials then that’s heavy I mean all the teaching and on top of that CARRYING well, NO! Now, for example, this year they enrolled too many students in 1st grade who are going to pass to 2nd grade and THERE ARE NO big classrooms. I really don’t know what’s going to happen, we are going to teach with students crowded into the classrooms I mean they are going to be like SAUSAGES ((laughter)) in fact there are no groups in which you can work with students sitting in circle or small groups because there are TOO MANY that there is not enough room for all of them. Besides, the NOISE the loud noise they

make because they pull the chairs and all that and then you feel embarrassed because there are other teachers downstairs who are teaching COME ON! like these are DIFFICULT conditions to work in, . . . [MN.06.04: 027-056].

All these difficult situations that Nadia mentioned above seem to highlight the impossibility of making EFL teaching and learning more in accord with what is expected of them as stated in the official syllabus. The picture painted by the main actors of EFL teaching and learning in state schools on both sides of the transfer process was overwhelmingly negative. On the whole, the practice of EFL within public schools was reported as unsatisfactory and frustrating for the people directly involved in it. The next section considers how all those aspects of the teaching and learning process impinged on EFL learning.

5.4.4 LACK OF PROGRESS IN EFL LEARNING IN STATE SCHOOLS

The main negative consequence provoked from the issues discussed and illustrated throughout this chapter was a widely shared perception that as far as EFL is concerned, at best, very little progress could be achieved. The following quote from a student illustrates this:

I have heard that the least liked subject or that the school subject that most students dislike is ENGLISH but it is NOT because it's a different LANGUAGE or because it's difficult to learn BUT because it's a subject in which you learn ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ((very emphatically)) . . . and it's because one thing is the LANGUAGE and a very different one are the [EFL] lessons in the government secondary and *prepa* schools [R.03.05: 406-418].

Raúl's view concerning the lack of progress achieved in EFL learning in state school classrooms was widely found among the participants in the current study in both secondary and preparatory schools. It is worth noting that Raúl's comment above is made after he has undergone the experience of transferring from secondary education to having already completed his first semester in preparatory school. After having experienced more than 400 'hours' of EFL instruction, he stated what it was like to learn EFL in state school classrooms in both levels of education. His lived trajectory as an EFL learner in state secondary and preparatory schools has in his view rendered EFL learning as something useless or

a waste of time since ‘you learn absolutely nothing’. This clearly demonstrates, I would argue, that the transfer process regarding the students’ EFL learning seems to imply a mere change of physical space — from the familiar classroom of the secondary to the new school classroom — but at best minimal change as far as progress in EFL learning is concerned.

The school authorities who participated in this study also recognised that the teaching and learning of EFL within the public school classroom was not as successful as it should be. They not only acknowledged this honestly but showed awareness of some of the factors that could be held accountable for the lack of progress in EFL lessons, drawing from their former experience as EFL teachers and their current school administrative duties. The headmaster of one of the secondary summed up the situation described in this chapter:

Look, regarding EFL lessons we are unable to achieve progress, the progress we would like to achieve. In EFL learning, I would say that we normally manage to cover, at best 30% or 40% of the programme. Reasons: the working conditions of EFL teachers, they have groups of 50-60 students. For example, ((when he was an EFL teacher)) I had 62 students in my groups in Cempoala, groups of 63-65. Then the weather there is too hot and the classrooms are too small then they [students] are very uncomfortable and you can’t work, that’s to begin with. Second, there are students who are not motivated to study English. [. . .] it’s very difficult with too large groups, very difficult. Then whether you like it or not the teacher’s proficiency in the language counts a lot, I mean, personally I am not proficient in the language [HM.06.04: 036-057].

5.5 SUMMARY

In summary, the issues presented and discussed in this chapter have shown that there is a clear disjunction or incongruity between what goes on in the EFL state school classrooms in secondary and preparatory education and the stated policies for EFL teaching and learning for those levels of education (see Table 5.2).

Despite the fact that the voices of the people inside the state schools on both ends of the transfer process – secondary to preparatory education – have shown that EFL is perceived as an essential part of education for Mexican students, they have also provided evidence that that, on the whole, the conditions in which they work are detrimental to the teaching and learning process.

With regard to the students' continuity and progress that is assumed to happen in their transfer from secondary to preparatory school, the analysis and discussion of the different issues that are intertwined in EFL teaching in secondary education — the pre-transfer stage — have shown that since EFL learning outcomes are rather limited and unsatisfactory there is a lack of continuity in the students' EFL learning progress.

Finally, what has been shown in this chapter, taken together with what was presented in chapter four, is that there is a system which is rhetorically adequate (i.e. there is an assumed curricular continuity from one level to the next) but practically inadequate. This chapter has demonstrated that the stated policy would be adequate *if* the contextual situations were in accord with what is assumed to apply to teachers and students working in the state school classroom. The questions that this chapter has raised are: Why does someone not do something about this lack of progress in EFL learning in state schools? How do students respond to this frustrating experience? What do EFL teachers do to cope with the failure of EFL teaching posed by the disjunction between the demands of the voice of the documents and the limitations of their contexts? The data presented and discussed in chapters six and seven will offer response to these questions.

Table 5. 2 Documents versus People inside State School Classrooms

Documents: Secondary School:	EFL Teachers, Students, School Authorities:
• Time distribution: 3 hours per week.	➤ Three 50-minute lessons or even less time
• Approach: communicative-functional.	➤ Main focus on grammar exercises.
• Use of L2 (English) as the means of communication in the classroom.	➤ Ss rarely if ever use the L2 as the means of communication in the classroom.
• Programme contents adapted to learners' needs and real interests.	➤ No differentiation according to Ss' level of L2.
• Learners are the 'main actors of the educational process'	➤ Students' role rather passive and they hardly ever get a chance to decide what and how to learn.
• Use of authentic materials.	➤ Seldom are authentic materials used due to the lack of resources.
• Shift from the traditional teacher's role to that of the organiser or facilitator of learning.	➤ Teacher fronted lessons due to working conditions: lack of space to move chairs around for pair work, group work, etc.
Transfer Process: from Secondary to Preparatory education:	➤ Lack of assessment of EFL knowledge acquired in secondary education to proceed to preparatory school.
• Students have to sit an exam that evaluates contents of the subjects that are taught in secondary school and which are deemed necessary to continue making progress in preparatory school.	
Preparatory School:	➤ Most of the time the focus is on translating, analysing sentences or grammar points already studied in secondary school.
• Focus on reading comprehension.	
• Progress from Secondary to preparatory School: students have acquired, by the end of secondary education, the necessary knowledge of EFL (including reading comprehension strategies) to communicate, albeit at a basic level, with native and non-native speakers of English.	➤ Lack of progress: they start from scratch or they start studying the same as in secondary school.

6

THE STUDENTS' RESPONSE TO INCONGRUENCE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

While in chapter four I presented what is stated in the official documents regarding EFL teaching and learning in secondary and preparatory education, chapter five dealt with what in practice happens in EFL teaching and learning as reported by the people involved in this activity in state schools classrooms. It has been shown that there is a clear disjunction or incongruence between the rhetoric of the educational authorities in the Secretariat of Education and the lived experience of students, EFL teachers and the school authorities who participated in this research. This chapter, therefore, sets out to present the student responses to the question posed at the end of chapter five: how do students respond to the prevailing dissatisfaction in EFL learning in state schools? How do students cope with the lack of progress in EFL learning within the system?

There is evidence in my interview data that shows that students, as a result of the dissatisfaction in EFL learning experience in their educational contexts, have developed two distinct ways to deal with this frustrating situation. First, students have responded conceptually by drawing a distinction between English the *language* and English the *school subject* or how EFL is taught in state schools. These different views with which the students conceptualize EFL are presented in section 6.2. Second, they have also found practical ways for coping with the lack

of progress in their EFL learning within the system. These coping strategies are presented in section 6.3. Finally, section 6.4 provides a summary of the findings discussed in this chapter.

6.2 ENGLISH THE LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH THE SCHOOL SUBJECT

The widespread view of the English language among the participants in this study is that it is of fundamental importance to *learn* it. This is not surprising if we consider all the factors that have contributed to this prevalent view in general and the ‘appeal’ for English in particular for Mexicans (see Baumgardner, R. J. 2006, García Landa and Terborg, 2002, Salazar, D. 2002). Although the perception regarding the importance of learning English has always been shared by all stakeholders in the Mexican Educational System (see Terborg, García Landa, & Moore in Baldauf, R.B. and R. B. Kaplan, 2007), the long-standing problems associated with the teaching and learning of EFL have not yet been addressed, as I pointed out in the introduction of this thesis. However, there are signs of change in attitude: as recently as 25 January 2007 the local educational authorities in the state of Veracruz publicly recognised that there were serious problems with the teaching/learning of EFL in state schools and urged the people involved in this activity ‘at least to acknowledge this problem as this could be the first step towards finding solutions to improve the quality and efficiency of the EFL practice in the state sector’²¹. Therefore, listening carefully to the voices the people most directly affected by the ‘serious problems’ — the students — becomes of paramount importance.

A prominent theme which emerged from the analysis of the student interview data was the perception of EFL as a valuable part of education for Mexican students. Further, it became apparent from the analysis that English *the language* and *the learning of English in state schools* were not only perceived in two different ways but, most importantly, these two perceptions seemed to be in conflict with one another. Whereas English *the language* was perceived as something worth learning for the various reasons that will be discussed later on in this chapter, English *the school subject* was viewed as something that seemed to impede the learning of the language that was so valued. Although this distinction is to be

²¹ Diario de Xalapa 25.01.2007 (Local newspaper).

found throughout the data set, it was not always articulated in the same way. For example, there were subtly nuanced representations of this distinction that became apparent through the students' talk. The following example, from a secondary school student, illustrates this:

PEPE:

I love English, it is very beautiful. I like the EFL lessons but the English language is something I like very much [P.06.04:058-059].

When I first asked Pepe to talk about his experience after three years of instruction in secondary education, he is apparently *just* talking about this experience. The distinction he makes between the language itself and the formal learning of English is a subtle one. However, on paying careful attention to Pepe's choice of the words to talk about his experience, this distinction becomes transparent: the use of *but* (**pero**) signalling a contrast; the use of *very much* (**mucho**) marking a different emphasis; and the choice of the two verbs *love* (**encantar**) to express his view of the language itself as opposed to the more neutral *like* (**gustar**) used to refer to his English lessons makes the contrast more meaningful as part of a subtly nuanced representation of his experience.

There were other explicit statements that clearly showed that whereas the *language* is construed as something of vital importance to learn, the EFL lessons in the state school system seemed to be appreciated in rather the opposite way:

JIMENA:

Well, I believe that English is a basic language (.) as for [the learning here in] the school maybe we have not progressed [...] I mean, no, no, well at least I DON'T like how EFL lessons are taught HERE [J.06.04: 003-014].

Some students seemed to be struggling to voice the different perceptions they have of the *language* and the *school subject*. However, the distinction is made without hesitation once I prompted the students to give me their views of the language in response to negative comments about the EFL lessons in secondary state school, such as the lack of progress or boredom:

MARISSA:

- N: And how did you feel in your English lessons here [secondary school]?
M: Ay, they're very boring!
N: Do you like English?
M: Oh, YES! [M.06.04:036-044]

It is remarkable how in the small extract above Marissa's negative emphasis and the adjective used to describe the EFL lessons 'here' in secondary schools, contrasts with the enthusiastic and positive 'oh, YES' allocated to the English language. This clearly shows the distinction that students drew between the language and the EFL lessons within the system. On the whole, students perceived the language as something enjoyable or attractive whereas the EFL lessons in state schools were viewed as something boring or tedious.

A further interesting example which, undoubtedly, illustrates how the students drew contrasting views allocated to the language itself and to the learning of EFL in *state* schools is provided by Esther, a preparatory school student. When I asked her about her experience of learning English in state schools it was interesting to notice that she kept on talking about her private lessons and how much she liked them. However, the quick and straightforward response I obtained from her once I pointed out that I was interested in her experience of learning EFL in *state* schools showed that, for her, talking about English the *language* and EFL lessons *within* the system were two distinct things which were appreciated in very opposite ways:

ESTHER:

- E: Well, I do like English as a language and the EFL lessons, well, I like them depending on how they are taught.
N: If we talked about your experience in secondary and preparatory schools without taking into account your private lessons=
E =Then I don't like EFL lessons. [E. 03.05: 319-0327]

In sum, all the above extracts showed that whether implicitly, explicitly, or through the construction of their talk, all the students seemed to orient towards this duality with which they construed English: the language *itself* and the study-

ing of it in secondary and preparatory state schools. This conceptual distinction allowed them to recognise that learning EFL is important, beautiful, basic or of fundamental importance to learn but they dismissed, on the whole, EFL lessons or rather *how* they are taught in state schools. This distinction must be borne in mind since it is fundamental to understanding these students' experience of the EFL learning in state schools and especially in their transfer from one level of education to the next since it permeates every aspect of the EFL learning and teaching process that the participants in the current study were involved in. Therefore, the remainder of this section will present a fuller picture of the significance of this distinction together with the discussion of the key issues that emerged when this distinction was stated.

6.2.1 ENGLISH AS A BASIC LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS' PRESENT AND FUTURE PLANS

Apparently, the question why are these students learning English? lends itself to the straightforward answer 'because they have to' or 'because it is a compulsory subject in secondary and preparatory state schools in Mexico'. However, when we listen attentively to their views of the English language itself it becomes clear that there are more reasons for their desire to learn English than the mere fact that it is a compulsory part of the curricula in these two educational levels. Furthermore, I would like to argue that their reasons for their wanting to learn EFL go beyond the confines of the state school classroom. When careful attention is paid to these students' voices what emerges is the important bearing that the conceptual distinction between the language and the subject has on the understanding of the student process of the transfer/transition in EFL learning.

The next long extract from a secondary student was chosen for analysis and discussion at length because it touches upon the most salient and recurring issues that, in one way or another, were also found in most participants' talk when drawing the distinction between the language and how they were taught EFL at school.

JIMENA:

Jimena was a secondary school student about to complete her three-year secondary education. In her long response to my request to tell me about this experience

Jimena made it very clear, albeit implicitly, that talking about her EFL lessons in that educational setting was something different from talking about the English language itself and mentioned it outright:

N: OK Jimena, let's start, shall we? Tell me about your experience regarding your English lessons here in the secondary school, please.

J: Well, I believe that English is a BASIC language. As for [the learning here in] the school we might have not progressed much because sometimes the lessons do not last (.) well, there's very little time and there are too many students then again it is very difficult erm to learn (.) well, not to learn but to try to understand because then again as there are too many of us sometimes the lessons cannot be taught well to everybody. Then I believe that we have lacked I don't know erm TIME so that it can be taught (.) well, I mean at least I DON'T like how English is taught HERE. We need or THEY [teachers] need to know a bit more about English, well, they know but they teachers need to explain things better, they need to give us more English class time because as it is a basic language that we are going to use wherever we may go, then again, I think WE need more class time, well THEY haven't given enough time and dedication to the English subject because, for example, there are many other subjects: Spanish, mathematics, and all those subjects they are given as many hours as possible but NOT to English, I mean we do need to have more time for English, that's why when we finish we know a bit of English, I mean we learn a bit of English but then again I think more time and dedication should be given to English HERE in the SCHOOL, in the secondary school [...] as I tell you what is mathematics, Spanish and the other subjects, well, yes we also need to have I don't know a lot of TIME for those [subjects] but I believe that it's a bit more important what English IS. If we want to go and study (.) I don't know to, to the United States and we CAN'T speak English, then it's going to be very DIFFICULT for us to be able to communicate. However, with maths, I mean we CAN [do something] because I think that since we are kids, since kinder garden or since primary school we study it, then it's far more easy, I don't know (.) to do something with mathematics than to speak English, to be able to communicate (.) [English] is BASIC [J.06.04:001-063].

The request made to Jimena to talk about her experience regarding the EFL lessons in secondary school was straightforward. However, it was noticeable that the first statement she made was about her view of the English language *itself* as a 'basic language' instead of focusing on her experience in learning EFL after three years of formal instruction in secondary school. After all, during those three years she had taken many hours of EFL (see chapter four). Furthermore, she not only drew this distinction from the outset but the distinction served as a point of reference to discuss all the issues deemed most important that impinged on her frustrating experience as a learner of EFL *here* in a state school classroom: the time allocated to the subject of English, the number of students in class, and the teacher's knowledge of the EFL subject, among other things.

One of the most interesting aspects of Jimena's long turn is the fact that the juxtaposition of English the *language* and English the *subject* in the secondary state school can be found throughout the whole quote. For example, whereas Jimena perceived the learning of English *the language* as something 'basic' i.e. of fundamental importance, the conditions in which the EFL lessons are taught are represented as an obstacle to achieving progress. That is, after the time she has spent taking EFL lessons in secondary school, the expected language learning outcomes seemed to have been far more than just 'a bit'. Of equal importance, the conditions in which EFL lessons are taught 'here' in the secondary school classroom seem to be represented as an obstacle for achieving progress in learning English. Further, the recurring allusion to the 'lack of time', the 'very little time' devoted to EFL lessons or that 'the lessons lasted too little' in the state secondary school seemed to suggest two things: a) that she believed that in order to achieve desired progress in the learning of the foreign language more time was needed than the time available in secondary education: or b) that the class time might be adequate if it were *efficiently* used.

Perhaps one of the key issues arising from the duality between the *language* and the *school subject* in Jimena's talk that seemed to have a significant bearing for the process of transfer/transition from secondary to preparatory school was the way she represented English as a language that can be used as a means of communication wherever she might go. In so doing she was projecting the use of English the *language* far beyond the 'here and now' of the EFL lessons in the state school classroom. In other words, being able to communicate in the FL would enable her to go and study in the United States. This view of the language and not the EFL lessons seemed to be linked to other transitions the students were inevitably undergoing at that time. As an adolescent, she was becoming curious about find-

ing out about new things such as travelling and /or studying in a foreign country in which knowledge of the *language* would be essential and not what she was getting in her EFL lessons in secondary school.

It is worth noting that Jimena did not deny how important it was to learn mathematics and Spanish, nor was she opposed to having maths and Spanish lessons every day. Rather, what she seemed to oppose is that 'they' (curriculum designers/policy makers) did not recognise 'what English was' or I would like to suggest, what English *represented* to her not only for her current interests but, most importantly, for the potential usefulness that she seemed to perceive in the *language* for a myriad of other activities outside the classroom and for future plans and which other school subjects would not provide her with this. This contributed to Jimena's view of English the language as being 'a bit more important' than other school subjects.

In sum, Jimena's perception of the *language* is that of something that would not be difficult to learn, but it was nevertheless difficult to understand the EFL lessons given the situation of the secondary school classroom (see chapter five). The difference between *learning* the language and understanding what is *taught in the state school classroom* is a very interesting one inasmuch as the distinction drawn from the onset and articulated throughout our conversation seemed to suggest that the learning of English within the state school classroom would be possible to achieve as long as the conditions that are to the detriment of the learning are changed or modified.

PATRICIA, LAURA, DARÍO AND IGNACIO:

The perception of English being a 'basic' language was common to most students. For example, Patricia stated that learning English was already becoming something *basic* because nowadays it was 'a very important part of our education' and explained that regardless of the undergraduate programme they would be likely to study in their future student trajectories 'when you want to graduate [from university] you necessarily need to know English or another foreign language but for sure you need to have knowledge of English and computers' (P.06.04:180-191).

This perception found an echo in Laura's view that 'English is a basic language which can help you in many ways in the future' (L.06.04:114-115). While Darío's view of the 'importance' of English was also linked to his future plans in taking up Engineering at university and he believed that if he learned it he would be able

to make the most of his university studies since 'most [texts] are in English' and therefore, he said: 'I need the *language* very much' (DC. 03.05:125-128).

Ignacio said that he had not had the opportunity to learn English other than in his secondary school and he admitted that:

I think that the English subject is basic but I erm I'm not particularly keen on it but I feel that it's going to be useful in my future and I have to learn it .[I. 06.04: 001-013].

I then asked him why he did not like English and in what way he thought that English was going to help him in the future. He responded as follows:

I think that [I don't like it] because of the way that it's taught here in the school (.) I didn't like much in third grade (.) I did like it in second grade because the teacher focused more on speaking rather than being writing all the time and if you want to go, if you want to travel you have to know the LANGUAGE [I.06.04: 020-026].

For Ignacio learning EFL should be about learning how to speak the *language* or rather how to *use* the language. He seems to perceive that oral skills are more useful if you travel to a foreign country than writing which he may consider from his experience as entailing copying from the blackboard. His perception of the need to develop his oral skills was based on his view of the English language as a tool for his future plans: in order to travel to other countries 'you have to know the *language*' that would enable you to communicate with other people rather than what is taught in the state school or the way he was taught in first and third grade in secondary school. Ignacio emphasized what, in his perception, marked the difference between tedious/irrelevant and engaging/relevant English language learning when a few turns later he reiterated why he was not particularly keen on English: the way the English subject was taught, for example in second grade it was nice because the focus was more on speaking or oral expression but then again in third grade the focus was on doing something different (I.06.04: 034-037) to what he was expecting to be learning. It is clear that Ignacio equated meaningful or relevant learning of the language with communication. However, it seemed that the way 'English is taught here in the school' did not meet most students' expectations regarding learning the language in their state schools. It is clear from this that there was a mismatch between what students expected to

be doing and learning in their EFL lessons and what time for EFL learning was devoted to (see chapter five).

Having realised that the preferred term to describe English among most students was '*básico*' which in fact translates as 'basic' in English, I therefore checked with them what exactly they meant by English being *basic*. Their answers were in accord with what Patricia succinctly responded:

N: When you say 'basic', what do you mean exactly?

P: That it's already a very important part of our education [P.06.04: 184-185]

Or with Ignacio's response who stated that:

when I say it's basic it's because I think that everyone should have the opportunity to learn [English] [1.06.04: 023-024].

Thus far, students stated very clearly that it is of fundamental importance to learn English and they also expressed the instrumental or extrinsic motivation that they had for wanting to learn EFL. However, to appreciate the importance of this distinction between the *language* and the *learning of EFL* in state schools it is necessary to understand how it permeates the students' perception of their educational experience of attending EFL lessons in state schools. This is presented in the next section.

6.2.2 ENGLISH THE LANGUAGE AS A VEHICLE TO REAL INTERESTS: VIDEO GAMES, THE FOREIGN LADS, SWEARING, COMMUNICATION, AND SONGS.

VIDEO GAMES:

English the *language* was also perceived as a *vehicle* for 'discoveries'. This desire for discovering or learning about new things goes hand in hand with the developmental stage the students were inevitably going through. Moreover, English the language and *not* what they were being taught in schools could help them achieve this. Students mentioned that they would like to learn English either because what they were interested in was connected with using or being able to understand

English or because there were 'certain things' they enjoyed doing in Spanish that they would like to be able to do in English as well. For example, although Manuel Alberto had taken EFL lessons in primary school he first became genuinely interested in learning English the language when he realised from an early age that EFL was the perfect vehicle to learn more about what he was very much interested in at that time. He explained that:

I studied English in primary school but I don't think that that was the reason I have learnt English. I think that I learnt independently, more on my own, because when I was a kid I was very keen on VIDEO GAMES then on one occasion I bought a magazine and it was all in English and I started reading it and with the little English I knew then I started to read it and I grabbed a dictionary and THAT was the first THING I did that gave me a lot (.) that HELPED me it was NOT because I wanted to [learn EFL] but it just happened [. . .] well at that time I don't know maybe because I was little but English was not that necessary (.) well I didn't feel it that WAY psst it was only like if I want to play the guitar I have to learn how to play it, if I want to play NINTENDO I have to learn English because all the games are in ENGLISH [. . .] and the EFL lessons [in third grade of secondary school] were NOT very helpful and [. . .] as I kept on playing video games and as they are all in ENGLISH and all that stuff then I on my own continued learning some more [English] [MA.03.05: 024-137].

Neither his primary nor his secondary school EFL lessons triggered his interest in learning the foreign language but it was the discovery that English was the perfect 'vehicle' to know more about what he has been interested in for a long time outside the classrooms: video games. It is clear that since these games and 'all that stuff' were in English, his perception of the *language* that he has been acquiring on his own — and not his EFL lessons — has been the perfect vehicle that has helped him reach the knowledge he needed to have access to his real interests. Moreover, as he seemed to imply, the fact that he succeeded at acquiring meaningful and useful knowledge of the *language* was so strong that motivated him to continue making progress outside the state school classrooms.

THE FOREIGN LADS:

Fernanda said that apart from liking the English language she was well aware of how important English was going to be in her future life. However, on experienc-

ing the frustration of not being able to communicate in EFL in her present life, she had found out that *speaking the language* could have served as a vehicle for things that matter a lot in her current life: meeting boys. She explained that:

For example, last season, last year there was a Basketball season with the ‘Halcones’ [the University Basketball team] then there came some foreign lads who did not speak Spanish and there I was desperate trying to think of something that I could say in English to talk to them but I couldn’t because I didn’t know how to speak English ((laughter)) then, well, I feel that regardless of whether I’ll go to travel to the USA well you have to speak English for other things that are more IMPORTANT ((laughter)) instead of feeling ‘and now what?’ [F. 03.05:341-350].

Fernanda’s frustration or her feeling of ‘and now what?’ on realising that she could not cope with the opportunity to *communicate* with the foreign ‘lads’ whose native language was English, could have had an impact on her perception that what she had learnt in secondary school or what her EFL lessons were about was not what a 15-year-old girl needed the *language* for in real life events: to interact with young people she would have liked to meet outside the EFL classrooms.

SWEARING:

Ernesto stated very convincingly that because at this age they liked swearing in Spanish — their mother tongue — he and his classmates, both boys and some girls, would like to be able to do this in English as well:

- E: Well, erm, at this age ((laughter)) now well youths nowadays like ((laughter)) SWEARING in English.
- N: Do you think that students would like to learn how to swear in English?
- E: YES! ((laughter)) because they like swearing in Spanish and well, they’d also like to be able to do it in English ((laughter)).
- N: Do you think that the girls would like to learn to swear in English as well?
- E: Well, SOME WOULD ((laughter)) [E.06.04:087-097].

Ernesto's perception of the students' interests in the *use* of English in activities that were connected to their 'real life' interests was not limited to doing 'naughty things' such as swearing but English also represented a vehicle to enjoy different things such as: 'I'm interested in music, travel, sports, comics, that kind of stuff that are in English' [E.06.04: 108-110]. Most students mentioned that they were interested in activities of this sort.

MUSIC, GAMES AND DYNAMIC ACTIVITIES:

However, EFL lessons were hardly ever relevant to their interests even when students suggested some activities in which EFL would have to be used and connected to things they found them enjoyable doing. Victor, a preparatory school student explained how they had tried to persuade their EFL teacher to include this sort of activities in their EFL lessons but to no avail. EFL lessons were about following the textbook:

VÍCTOR:

For example, we say 'teacher why don't you bring in songs and then we listen to music and we WILL pay attention' and then he goes 'no, I can't because there are other people working and that bothers them'. Then we go 'please bring in cards and we can play memory games' and then he says he can't because it's going to be a mess and that we won't do anything. 'Well, then bring in some more dynamic activities' and again he says no, he says 'let's work with the textbook' and everybody goes like 'ay, ok' ((disappointment)) (.) most of the time we do what the teacher wants to [V.03.05:195-208].

It is interesting to note how the students tried to negotiate with their EFL teacher: they promised that they would pay attention to the EFL lessons if the teacher were to include activities that the students might enjoy doing and which were likely to be part of their everyday life outside the classroom. For example, the songs would allow them to sing (practise pronunciation) and understand the lyrics in English (acquire vocabulary) that are widely played in radio stations and movies in Mexico. However, by sticking to following the textbook, the teacher implicitly seemed to reinforce the students' view that EFL lessons in state schools were about

something different from learning and practising the EFL *language* in relevant and meaningful activities for them.

To sum up thus far, it has been shown that by drawing this conceptual distinction between the *language* and the *EFL lessons* in state schools, students seemed to have accepted the status quo in schools. They were able to talk coherently about this distinction by bracketing out what the EFL subject was about in state schools as opposed to how they perceived the foreign language itself. This conceptual response, I would argue, was one way that allowed them to deal with the incongruity created by the voice of the documents and the reality of their educational settings. Then the question that remains is what do they do about this? As already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the students have also developed practical ways to cope with the dissatisfaction encountered in EFL instruction in state schools and the lack of progress. These will be presented in the next section.

6.3 COPING WITH THE SYSTEM: THE STUDENTS' STRATEGIES

Up to now I have represented students' positions through the use of quotes to capture a sense of how these were represented across the sample. However, in terms of representation the most powerful way of representing each coping strategy is to take three very clear and very distinct practical ways that students have developed to cope with the incongruence created between the stated policy and what actually happens in EFL state school classrooms. It must be borne in mind that there may be aspects that did not apply to all of them. However, it is important to highlight that fundamentally the key aspects were common to all of them. They might be individuals and there might be minor aspects that did not fit to all student-participants but fundamentally the nature of their responses was common to all of them. There was no evidence in my data that the students who participated in the current investigation did not use or choose one of the strategies depicted in one of the paradigm cases.

There were other important reasons for the choice I made to depict these students as paradigm cases of the students' coping strategies to deal with the dissatisfaction with EFL learning within the public sector. First, it seems to me, they encapsulate the most salient and relevant issues that throw light on what seems to be the prevalent EFL situation in state schools in Mexico. Second, the students

presented in this section were students that I could follow from secondary to preparatory schools. I interviewed them on two occasions and I kept contact with them through conversations on the messenger. Third, I chose them on the grounds that they were students who transferred from a state secondary to a state preparatory school and not to a private preparatory school, which a few students in this study did. It would have been interesting to see to what extent the transfer experience of the latter was different to the students portrayed here; however, this study concerns only the transfer from one level of education to the next within the state school sector. Last, but not least, they are illuminating examples of what I call 'the transfer without transition' experience in EFL learning in state schools in Mexico (see chapter eight).

It is also worth mentioning that the cases presented in this section were from different socio-economic backgrounds, and although this study did not deal with socio-economic aspects *per se* this is a factor that weighs upon the complexity of the EFL learning process as one EFL teacher in a secondary school pointed out (see chapter five). Furthermore, this is another important aspect contributing to the diversity of students that can be found converging in state school classrooms. Therefore, it is expected that these students' coping strategies would be as accurate representation as possible of what is very likely to be found in the teaching and learning context that this study aimed to understand.

6.3.1 PEPE: I DO IT MY WAY

Pepe was 15 years old when I first met him. He was one of the very few students who addressed to me using the formal '*usted*' as opposed the more informal '*tú*'²² which is nowadays the widely favoured form among young people to address to anyone regardless of age or social status. However, despite his use of the formal address form, I felt that rapport and trust was established almost as we started talking. It might be that his choice of the formal language had to do with his education at home rather than as a means of establishing a distance between us. Pepe was very talkative and showed his willingness to co-operate from the beginning of our first interview.

22 *Usted* and *Tú* are the two forms for Spanish in Mexico for "you". *Usted* is used to show respect in asymmetrical relationships (age, job, social status, hierarchies, etc.) or it can also be used to signal that the speaker wants to maintain a 'distant' relationship with the addressee.

PEPE'S EFL EXPERIENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: I HATE IT, I HATE IT NOT.

Very early in our interaction Pepe showed he had no difficulty in articulating his lived experiences and opinions regarding EFL learning in state schools. He had very clear ideas about his EFL learning in secondary school. For instance, when I asked him to tell me what he thought about his EFL lessons in this level of education he said that:

I would like to use English more, use it more because we speak most of [time] erm we speak 100% almost only Spanish and well to tell you the truth I feel that we could learn more if we spoke English more [06.04:081-084].

Pepe's awareness of the need to use the target language inside the state school classroom as essential to learn the language was very interesting. What prompted most participants in this study who expressed their feeling of frustration regarding the almost non-existent opportunity to use the EFL inside the state school classroom was their experience of having studied EFL in private institutions in which the target language was widely used. However, Pepe was among the students in this study who "[had] never taken private lessons at all" (03.05:181) while studying in secondary and preparatory school. He said that even though he was very much interested in learning to communicate in English he had so far learnt EFL at school and on his own. At least up to the end of his first semester in preparatory school he made it clear that he:

definitely, private lessons no, no, not at all (.), private lessons I've NEVER[taken them] [03.05:181-182].

However, it was clear that he had given a careful thought to how his learning of EFL in his schools could be improved. He reiterated how important practising the language was in various ways. For instance, he said it would help to have 'access to internet at school so that the students could practise English with people in other countries like England or the United States'. He also thought that if the conditions were appropriate 'the students could write dialogues in English and then practice them' (06.04: 090-098). But Pepe had not only given serious thought as to what was necessary to make progress in communicating in EFL, he had seized each opportunity as well. When I asked him if he ever spoke in English at secondary school he admitted that:

hardly ever (.) there was this foreign teacher, American, who would sometimes come and talk to us but he spoke only in English and it was difficult to understand him because I do not speak English 100% [06.04: 30-33].

The visit of an American teacher to his secondary school seemed to have represented an opportunity for Pepe to speak English with a native speaker. It is worth noticing Pepe's strong motivation to try to use and practise EFL in a real communicative situation despite the fact that he was well aware that communicating with this foreigner teacher would be difficult due to what and how he was taught EFL at school:

Well, the teacher arrives at the classroom, calls the roll and she gives us some exercises or she dictates them or writes them on the blackboard and then she asks us to copy them and then after we've copied them, she asks us to pronounce them or she then gives us some exercises and then she checks them .[06.04: 023-026].

After the initial encounter that we had in his secondary school, he would greet me every day I was visiting his school and we would chat while I was waiting to do other interviews and while he was having his recess. He was curious about the undergraduate in EFL programme offered by the university where I work. He was considering, in due time, following an undergraduate programme in EFL or taking up 'work in a foreign country' or 'study acting *but* in English' (06.04: 165-175). After completing his preparatory school, he said, he wanted to study something in which he 'had to use English' (06.04:175). Interestingly, although Pepe's first contact with EFL was in his secondary school, his desire to pursue something in life that had to do with English had been triggered not by his EFL lessons themselves but by his 'discovery' of English as 'beautiful language' (06.04: 003-008).

However, Pepe's impression of EFL had not always been so positive, quite the contrary:

P: In fact, I hated it, I didn't want anything to do with English, I didn't want to speak it.

N: Why?

P: I thought of it, I don't know, I didn't consider it necessary. But in first grade in secondary school I started to like it, I started to pay attention to it, I started to investigate ON MY OWN. [03.05:040-046].

Although the extract above would seem to suggest that EFL lessons were appreciated in a positive way, I would like to argue that for someone like Pepe who had never had any EFL instruction, the EFL subject was an opportunity to ‘discover’ the language. His use of the phrase ‘I started to investigate on my own’ is revealing inasmuch as it points out that in order to know more about the new language he had discovered he needed to look somewhere else outside the state school. In other words, he had to take the initiative to learn on his own how to use the language since what was available at his state school did not meet his need to make progress, be it the EFL teacher, the textbook, or his classmates.

Furthermore, Pepe was not the only one who perceived it necessary to take some ‘extra’ action outside the state school. His mother had tried to persuade him to take extra EFL lessons in a private institute when he had just started his secondary education:

Well, when I was just beginning secondary school, my mom wanted me to enrol at an English course in a private institute and I’d tell her “no, I don’t like English” [06.04: 001-012].

That Pepe’s mother wanted him to study EFL lessons outside the secondary school seemed to suggest at least two things. She may have shared the widespread view that EFL learning is better achieved outside the state school (or at least that it had to be complemented with extra lessons in private institutes). Or it might as well be that she was concerned given her son’s lack of EFL background on commencing secondary education. The latter seemed to suggest that Pepe’s mother was aware of the prevalent situation in state secondary school classrooms in Mexico: some students beginning secondary school have already had some kind of instruction of EFL before. It seemed obvious that his mother thought that someone like her son would be at disadvantage since he had attended a state school throughout his primary education. As a result, he had not had any kind of formal EFL instruction that could help him cope with the ‘new’ subject in secondary school in a way that some other students with different educational backgrounds would be able to. However, it is remarkable how Pepe’s view of English as a beautiful language helped him not only to cope with his EFL instruction in secondary education in a successful way but encouraged him to develop his own strategies to learn more than what the lessons described before could offer him:

sometimes I watch movies in English with subtitles in Spanish and then you can learn how they say something in English you can learn also by ear and that's how you can also learn more . . . [06.04: 018-022].

Finally, when I asked him if he had other learning resources in the EFL classroom to learn English apart from the textbook he said he did not. However, he explained that in order to learn *more* he had found out that learning song lyrics was also a good strategy to make the progress he was eager to achieve in learning to understand spoken EFL:

- N: Apart from your textbook?
P: Yes, music
N: In your EFL classroom?
P: Outside, on my own. Yes, I feel that I can learn, learn fast
N: What do you do to learn a song?
P: You look for [the song] on internet or you look for the lyrics and then you listen to the song and then you translate it into Spanish and in this way you can learn more
N: Where do you get the lyrics?
P: In the CDs [with an accompanying booklet with the lyrics] [06.04:116-127].

Overall, Pepe seemed to have been content with having discovered, through the EFL subject, that English was a beautiful language which was worth pursuing not only outside his state school classroom but in his future studies and career. However, he suggested that he would have liked to have learnt more and in a different way from what he did in his EFL secondary school lessons. When I asked him to tell me if he had any expectations regarding his EFL lessons in preparatory school he replied as follows:

- N: What are your expectations regarding your EFL lessons in preparatory school?
P: I hope to have a more advanced English course
N: By "more advanced" you mean=
P: =a bit more difficult. Let's see what's going to be like but I think it's going to be a bit more complicated, it must be nice [the EFL course in preparatory school]

- N: What sort of activities would you like to have?
 P: I don't know, I'd like to innovate [. . .] I'd like to innovate, to see something different [06.04: 187-203].

At the end of his secondary education, Pepe was looking forward to having more challenging EFL lessons in preparatory school. But above all, his desire to 'innovate' or 'study something different', seemed to be, albeit implicitly, highlighting that after all he would like to be taught EFL in a different way from the one he was familiar with.

PEPE'S EXPERIENCE OF EFL LESSONS IN PREPARATORY SCHOOL: 'I FEEL I'M GOING BACKWARDS!'

Pepe's transfer to preparatory school in general and specifically in EFL learning was not at all as he had expected. He had just begun his second semester in his new school when we had our second interview. Despite the fact that he had already spent over six months in his new school, he was still struggling to adjust to this new environment. He told me he still felt a 'stranger' after a period of over six months in his new school (03.05:003).

THE SCHOOL TRANSFER: FROM KING TO PAWN

Several factors were contributing to make his transfer experience not as 'exciting' as he had expected it to be. He missed his friends, bigger outdoor space, the 'green areas', and the 'different open spaces' he had in his former school (03.05:029-033). This is what he said about the transfer experience in general terms:

- N: Hi P. Please tell me, how did you feel, in general, your change from secondary to preparatory school?
 P: [I felt] strange because in secondary school I felt I was the greatest, I felt big but I got here and it was like beginning from zero.
 N: Why did you feel great? Was it your age? As a student? In what sense did you feel different?
 P: I felt I was a 'grown up' compared to the other children who were in first or second grade. Well, it was a bit of everything because there in second-

ary school when you are in third grade you feel you are the best! You feel you are the king!

N: And when you get here?

P: You start from zero. [You have to] start to build everything from scratch once again! [03.05:001-0015].

This feeling of becoming the 'pawn' in his new school after being the 'king' in the secondary school had to do with all the things that mattered or were very important to Pepe. He had to start to 'build from scratch' what he had already gained in his previous educational level. He was struggling to make new friends in his new school. The difficulty he was facing to adjust to the new school culture must have had a real impact on him and must have been noticeable to the extent that I wrote this in one of my field notes:

Today I saw P wandering up and down the stairs during the break. Some boys were playing football in the small school paved square. When he saw me he came to talk to me. I asked him if he did not like playing football but he said that the groups in this school were very 'closed' and the boys who were playing were all friends because they had studied in the same secondary school and they hadn't accepted him yet! In fact, he said that some of them thought he was a bit 'weird' because he likes listening to romantic ballads in English and Spanish esp. Luis Miguel and Christian Castro. My gosh it must be terrible for him to be seen as weird just because of the kind of music he likes! How would all this impact on his learning? (FN.10.03.05)

It seemed that for Pepe the overall transfer experience from secondary to preparatory school was not a smooth one. After over six months he was still negotiating his incorporation into the new setting. That is, he had not been accepted as 'belonging' to the new group of classmates. The importance of friendship at school and the impact of the sense of 'belonging' or being accepted by your peers at this stage of life and the impact that this has on learning has been widely researched (see Osterman, K., 2000; Hargreaves *et al.*, 1996; Pratt, S. and R. George, 2005).

However, there is evidence in my data that he was having the hardest time at school in his EFL lessons. All his expectations and the excitement with which he was looking forward to having more challenging EFL lessons were not met. On the contrary, he said that from the first EFL lesson his frustration and disappointment regarding his new experience of EFL learning began to grow. He explained that:

Well, I get to my EFL lessons in preparatory school and the teacher gives us a test and I answer it quickly like in 10 or 15 minutes and then she says ‘I don’t like people showing off that they know English’ anyway, I handed it to her and it turned out that I had lots of mistakes, that what I was learnt in secondary school she says that it’s wrong! [03.05: 0083-0090].

This ‘diagnostic’ assessment (see 4.4) had been a frustrating experience for Pepe. His enthusiasm and effort in learning EFL as much as he could during his time in secondary school — especially on his own outside the state school classroom — had always been rewarded. Despite his never taking private lessons unlike some of his classmates to learn the language ‘better’, he had got straight 10s in all but one his EFL tests in secondary school (03.05: 078-080). Most importantly, he had done so well because he had invested effort and some of his spare time to advance his learning of EFL using the different strategies mentioned above. It is obvious to assume that this first negative impression could have negative consequences for his EFL learning within the state preparatory classroom in the semesters yet to come.

Pepe felt that his final grade in the EFL subject after his first semester had been, first and foremost, a matter of ‘injustice’. He felt ‘upset’ and not just because from being one of the best students in EFL in secondary school he had become an average student who was only getting a mark very close the minimum required²³ to be able to move up to the next the semester. He told me that he had ‘got seven in all three tests, in the first, second and in the final [he] got seven’ (09.03:89-90). In the following extract he explained why he thought his final EFL grade had not been fair:

- N: How did you feel the change from 10 to 7?
P: I felt really upset. Above all I felt upset (.) I felt it was unfair because the teacher never taught us new things.
N: ¿Your teacher here?
P: Aha, the teacher here never taught us new things, things that we hadn’t seen in secondary school, we did exactly the same [09.03: 110-119].

This feeling of injustice and stagnation was accompanied by a worsening sense of ‘moving backwards’ regarding his knowledge of EFL learning. He expressed this

23 The grading scale in Mexican schools is from 0 to 10 being 6 the minimum grade to pass. Even if a student gets a total average of 5.9 s/he cannot be promoted to the next semester.

without hesitation when I asked him to tell me about his EFL progress in preparatory school:

- P: No, no. I feel I stay the same, I don't move forward, I stay the same as when I CAME here because I haven't learnt, I haven't learnt new things.
- N: How does that make you feel?
- P: I feel, instead of moving forward I feel I'm moving backwards [03.05: 152-156].

This feeling of 'regression' made Pepe worried about what he could expect of the following EFL courses he would be taking during the next semesters. He attributed this sense of lack of progress or 'moving backwards' as he put it to: 'the book, the teacher's attitude, the materials, EVERYTHING' (03.05: 262-266). According to him, the textbook for preparatory school, unlike the one in secondary education, was 'terrible and badly structured' (03.05: 104- 150).

In Pepe's view there were various aspects to be worried about related to this unsatisfactory EFL transfer experience. He said that he felt that if the EFL learning situation continued like his experience in first semester he might as well start forgetting what he had learnt so far. But even more worrying was the impact that this frustrating EFL transfer experience could have on his love for the language. He stated his concern as follows:

For example, I'm one of those cases who loved the language, I adored it but when I started lessons with this teacher is like I start losing the love I have for the LANGUAGE [03.05:279-284].

However, in spite of all the negative experiences regarding his EFL lessons in preparatory school he had found a very strong intrinsic motivation that was helping him to alleviate the stagnation and his frustration regarding his EFL lessons in preparatory school. This new motivation made him keep on learning the language his own way:

I need [to know] English. Look my girlfriend speaks English ((laughter)) [. . .] She's from Mexico but she lives in Texas. [. . .] She speaks Spanish and English but she writes to me some stuff in English that sometimes I understand and sometimes it's a bit difficult to me. I have to use my dictionary but THAT is what most motivates me to keep on learning more [03.05: 167-175].

Pepe's need to communicate with his girlfriend or to understand that 'stuff' that she was writing to him which he could not always understand had triggered, once again, his motivation to find his 'own ways' to keep on learning English. He had succeeded in learning and progressing in his EFL learning because he had found coping strategies to learn the language, such as internet, lyrics, subtitled movies, the dictionary and his girlfriend. Finally, within this complex situation in which students have to face EFL learning it is not an exaggeration to assume that it requires a very strong motivation, like Pepe's, to strive to find successful coping strategies to learn what the system was failing to provide students within the state school milieus. Most worth noting is the negative effect that an unsatisfactory EFL transfer experience could have on students, as Pepe concisely stated:

I still like English but not the EFL lessons, English is my life but the EFL lessons are DEADLY! ((laughter)) [03.05:287-290].

6.3.2 CECI: IT'S ABOUT LEARNING THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE!

Ceci was 14 years old when I first met her at the end of her secondary school studies. I first interviewed her at the end of my first day of fieldwork in 2004. Despite her age she seemed very mature and she was very honest about her EFL experience. She did not hesitate to admit that she had learnt nothing during her three years at that school:

I can tell you that from first to third grade I didn't learn ANYTHING. I'm going to tell you that I didn't learn ANYTHING, ZERO, just like that ZERO and well, I am planning to take a course now a course in ((name of private institute)) because I learnt NOTHING and to start *prepa* with an idea, no? ((giggle)) [06.04: 014-018].

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIEND:

Then when I asked her how she had managed to move on from one grade to the next without knowing any EFL, she explained that a classmate, one of her best friends, had been 'helping' her to pass the EFL subject. Then I requested her to explain what this help consisted of and she responded the following:

She'd help me in some subjects and I'd help her in others. In English, she sometimes explained things to me, no? And then in the EXAMS we helped each other ((laughter)) I mean, no? We helped each other in the exams, she would pass me on the answers in the English tests, or her English test [to copy] and THEN I'd help her in other exams [other subjects I'm good at] and just like that [06.04: 051-064].

With this 'little help from her friend' Ceci managed to get 'eighth, nine, or ten', in all EFL tests in her third grade [C.06.04:071] which allowed her to finish her EFL course with a total average of 8 or 9 at the end of secondary education which was a very high grade for someone who had admitted to having learnt nothing during 3 years of EFL instruction. But this 'mutual help' in exams that Ceci and her friend had established as a coping strategy to pass those subjects that were difficult for one of them and easy for the other and vice versa would not have been enough for Ceci to get away with a very high mark since there were other 'razgos' or 'aspects' of the EFL class that were taken into account for the final grades.

*TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS, CONFORMITY,
CLASS PARTICIPATION, AND NOTEBOOK:*

A key aspect that seemed to have helped her not only to cheat on exams without having ever been caught was the perception that her EFL teacher had of Ceci as a very good student. Interestingly enough, this positive perception had been 'inherited' from her sister, a former outstanding student in the same secondary school. Ceci explained that:

I feel that teachers have an idea, like they know, the English teachers, I feel that they have a good perception about me because my sister studied in this school and she was an excellent student. She finished her secondary education with a total score of 9.99 and she's been doing well in preparatory school, she's been doing very well, she's had scholarships and things like this, my sister is an excellent student, you see, ((laughter)) and I ((giggle)) inherited ((giggle)) her, how can I say? [her reputation] like teachers saw me in the same way as my sister, you see? Then the EFL teacher has an idea about me like if I were as good as my sister was, you see? There were times when she even called me by my sister's name 'you, Paty' [. . .] It's like she thought of me like she had an idea about me that IT'S NOT ME, you see? [. . .] and like my sister really studied very hard, well they

thought that I was as good as she was in English ((laughter)) and I'm not like that at all! [06.04: 317-337].

Ceci not only took advantage of the positive perception that the EFL teacher had of her but she realised that conforming to all the classroom rules set by her EFL teachers would enable her to get 'extra points' not only to obtain the minimum grades to pass the EFL subject but to get very high marks in EFL regardless of her lack of knowledge. She learnt that for her EFL teachers there were other issues that mattered as much, if not more, as the tests. These other 'aspects' counted as 'extra points' to be added up to the final grade, namely discipline, keeping your notebook tidy and clean with all your homework and 'class participation' in it. In this notebook, the teacher signed both homework and exercises done in classes at the end of each lesson. Having all the teacher's signatures meant that she had complied with all work assigned inside and outside the classroom thus giving her the opportunity to 'win' more extra points for her EFL final average. However, when I asked her how she could participate in class if she did not know anything she explained that:

The teacher says 'you've got this much time to answer these pages in your books. And when the time is up and she says 'I'm going to take participation. She goes asking 'at random' BUT at random is more or less following the same order as on her list, it's not completely at random, then I MORE OR LESS know when my turn IS, you see? [...] my friend... she knows that I don't know anything but as the teacher gives us 'participation marks' when we answer the exercises in the textbook then I ask her 'what are the answers here in the book? [...] she tells me the answers before I'm called upon, before the teacher says 'Ceci, participation' and I tell my friend 'I don't know the answers to any of these following exercises [...] BUT in these that [I DO know that] the teacher IS going to ask ME tell me each of the answers for these exercises' and it's like that, no? Then the teacher says 'Ceci, what's next after this sentence?' And then I complete the sentence or something like that, you see? And then I get the point for participation ((laughter))... [06.04: 105-167].

Ceci was not only helped with getting the extra points for class participation but her sister and her parents also helped her do EFL homework [C.06.04:178-180]. Therefore, she always obtained those extra points for the work assigned to be carried out outside the school. However, she was very conscious that having learnt those 'tricks' was neither good nor fair for her and her friend or other students who knew more EFL than her. She acknowledged that:

My friend, the one who helps me, the one who knows English because she studied it before [she started secondary school] I can tell you that I get a 10 and she gets an 8, I get a 9 and she gets an 8 BUT she is always getting lower marks than me and she knows MORE, I mean, I go like: what? ((laughter)) and then my friend says 'no, HOW [can this be possible] if I help YOU, right?' And I say YES but ((laughter)) the thing is that she is a bit careless with her work, with the EXTRA things that apart from the tests [give you points]. She is like more RESTLESS in class and I try to pay attention to the teacher though I DON'T understand [. . .] But I feel that what I do it's only BAD for myself, no? And I don't learn anything, I'm just passing a subject but like I'm FOOLING myself, no? [C.06.04:78-93].

It is interesting to note that Ceci was well aware that paying attention to the teacher was also a good thing to do. However, it seemed that she paid attention to her EFL teacher not because she was interested in what the teacher was saying because, as she stated, she could not understand anything. Rather, she was well aware that being 'restless', like her friend, would mean not to be granted those extra points to get a high mark regardless of the lack of EFL knowledge. She also was aware that what she had been doing was wrong because what she had been doing throughout her secondary education was to learn how to 'play the system' or how to 'navigate the EFL classroom culture' to pass the EFL *subject* but nothing else. She also said that as she knew that she would have to take EFL lessons in preparatory school she had already given careful consideration as what she needed to do since her best friend was to attend a different preparatory school and, therefore, she would not be there to keep on 'helping' her:

After I finish secondary school I'm going to start an INTENSIVE [EFL] course and I'm going to learn it. And now well it's like I say to myself 'I've already passed the subject, so what?' And as my friend is not going to attend the same preparatory school I'm attending, then my plan is to take [during holidays] an English course [. . .] I'm going to try to learn English on holidays and ((laughter)) and my sister can help me, and I have some videos and I'm going to study intensively, I'm going to work hard because I DO know that I have to learn English [06.04: 198-228].

The extract above seem to suggest that Ceci believed that by attending EFL lessons in a private institute for roughly two months, by using videos, and with her sister's help she was going to be able to learn what she should have learnt in her

three years of EFL instruction in a state secondary school. In other words, she could replace those three years' instruction in a state school with learning EFL in a different way or in different conditions which were to be found outside the state school classroom. Finally, when I asked her why she thought she had not been able to learn at least some English in secondary school she said that:

I feel that I HAVE learnt in all other subjects but in ENGLISH I'm in ZERO, just like that zero and I think that it's because I haven't found the person that 'gets MY WAY' so that I can learn English because in all other subjects I'm doing well, I'm even in the 'cuadro de honor' [board of outstanding students] because I'm really very good at all other subjects but not at English ((laughter)). [06.04:604-612].

It seemed that Ceci believed that it had been impossible for her to learn EFL because she did not find the 'right' EFL teacher that could engage her or that could explain EFL in the way she needed to during her secondary education. Her plan was, as already mentioned, to attend private lessons to 'catch up' to be ready for preparatory school.

THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL TRANSFER EXPERIENCE:

By and large, Ceci's transfer experience to a technical preparatory school was a smooth one. She said that she had been looking forward to starting her new studies and to meeting new friends and she had not found it difficult to achieve this in her new school. She told me that although she was taking more subjects than in a different type of school, she had decided to study there because it offered her the possibility to study not only the preparatory education but also technical studies in the area of accountancy. This way, she was getting ready for what she wanted to pursue at university level: the undergraduate programme on accountancy.

THE EFL SUBJECT IN PREPARATORY SCHOOL: LACK OF PROGRESS AND DULL LESSONS:

In our second face to face conversation, after Ceci had completed her first semester of preparatory education, she told me that she had started taking EFL lessons in a private institute during holidays as she had planned to do. Further, she said

that despite the fact that she was having compulsory EFL lesson in her current state school she had decided to carry on taking three weekly hours of EFL in the private institute. When I told her that I had understood that she wanted to study EFL during holidays just to catch up and 'have an idea' so that she could cope with EFL in preparatory school, she said that she had decided to carry on learning in the private EFL institute because the experience of EFL studying in her new state school was as follows:

Well, the thing is that I feel I don't move forward, no? Because it's like you stay in the same lagoon, like you stay in the same and you go back to the same and well you don't make any progress, you see? It's like there is no project to follow, you see? It's like you go back to the same and the same or then you move forward a bit and then they make you go back again and like this well you don't (.) like you make progress but not as much as you'd like to, no? [03.05: 084-090].

Ceci became interested in learning English during her EFL lessons at the private institute. Whereas in secondary school she was only concerned with passing the EFL subject, several factors contributed to engage her in the learning of English the language. She said that she enjoyed her EFL lessons at the institute because:

Well, for starters in my English Lessons [at the institute] you go to learn to SPEAK it, no? And then we learn to do everything [all 4 skills] and with many different dynamics and there are fewer students. There aren't like 50 students in one class then the teachers pay more attention to you and then they can clarify your doubts, not like here that teachers go over the topics too fast and they say 'we have to see from X topic to Z topic and I don't know how BUT we have to cover them all' and then we go too fast, you see? And there [at the institute] it's much clearer, like they explain better and you can understand things better, with more logic and then it's easier for you [to learn] [03.05: 140-153].

Having resorted to private EFL instruction permitted her to compare how different EFL learning could be from the way EFL was taught in her preparatory school. She explained what lessons, in her preparatory school, most of the times were spent on:

Well, the teacher brings in photocopies. He spends about half of the class time scolding us, he tidies up the classroom and everything [. . .] no, I mean and we

only focus on writing, reading and that's it but he doesn't play a recording and other things, no? Because at [name of institute] we do that, no? But then you come here and it's basically two things: reading and writing and yet reading is not that well, it's like, it's deadly DULL [03.05: 290-295].

There are several aspects that are worth highlighting about Ceci's experience of EFL learning outside the system. First, having resorted to EFL private learning gave her the opportunity to have a different perspective of what and how learning EFL was about. Second, having the possibility of studying in different conditions from the ones found in a state EFL classroom made her aware that she was able to learn EFL without having to use 'the tricks' she had used while in secondary education. Further, in the private institute she realised that she *could* learn the language in an enjoyable way thus encouraging her to carry on leaning outside the system while she was taking her EFL lessons in preparatory school. Finally, it seemed that her private lessons were in accord with what she thought what the foreign language was worth learning: not only to speak it but to be able to do 'everything' in it, i.e. understand spoken and written language.

6.3.3 ANA: YOU HAVE TO TAKE PRIVATE LESSONS IF YOU REALLY WANT TO LEARN ENGLISH!

Ana was about to turn 15 at the end of her secondary education. On the whole, her EFL learning experience in both levels of education that this study covers was very much the same as the other participants: neither satisfactory nor motivating.

ANA'S EXPERIENCE OF EFL IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: IT'S NOT FAIR!

Ana had transferred to a technical public secondary school from a private primary school. In her primary school she studied EFL in all six years of this educational level. She found it very frustrating when she realised, on commencing secondary school, that students were not streamed according to their EFL background knowledge. Most of all she found it unfair to be made to cover already EFL knowledge she had previously acquired, but nothing else. Although this allowed her to get high marks she nevertheless felt bad because she thought all those high marks she got in secondary school were not the result of her trying to make an

effort to learn something new but because her prior EFL knowledge, which gave her an advantage over other classmates who had not had the same opportunity, had been ignored. She explained this as follows:

Yes, in primary school I studied English, ALL years of primary school, the 6 YEARS! [...] but when you get to secondary school they don't take into account what you already know, we all start from scratch. Then when you start secondary school you feel very bad! It's to go over the SAME but you feel BAD because you know more than your classmates and you feel bad because you say to yourself 'this grade that I got it's not because I really learnt SOMETHING here at school but because I ALREADY knew [EFL], it's something I had already learnt! It's NOT fair! [06.04:068-080].

Not only did she find this situation frustrating but she thought it was problematic to her and to her classmates. She stated clearly how beginning secondary school with prior knowledge of EFL had affected her and her relationship to the whole group:

First of all, most of the time teachers get upset when you know things that they haven't taught you yet, for example, or that you ask them things that you think that are not correct and then they get upset and then also your classmates say 'ok she already knows English that's why she gets straight 10s' and that's why knowing English causes a lot of problems [A.06.04: 082-89].

It seemed that for Ana and for students with prior EFL knowledge there was almost nothing that they could find motivating inside the EFL state secondary school classroom: quite the opposite. Some students who have had the opportunity to study EFL before commencing secondary education might have felt that this could be an advantage since this could make them feel self confident to face a 'new subject' (Bolster *et al.*, 2004). However, from Ana's experience this seemed not to be the case. She stated that she had not only learnt nothing new but that most of her EFL lessons during secondary education had been erratic. In addition, most of her EFL teachers seemed not to appreciate her previous EFL knowledge. This may suggest, interestingly enough, that teachers might have felt threatened or helpless as to what to do with students that have studied more years and spent more time than the secondary school programme had to offer to them. Therefore, acquiring some EFL knowledge before secondary education, instead of being an advantage, on the whole seemed to represent a disadvantage for students like Ana.

It was not until her final grade – third grade — that she finally found an activity that she thought was helpful to cope with the dissatisfaction of her EFL lessons:

The first TWO years were like vaguer, generally vaguer in the sense that there was not a topic to follow. The teacher was skipping UNITS, she'd present something from the beginning [of the textbook] and then she'd move to the end and like this she was 'skipping' and then our group was much bigger than the rest, there WERE 55 students then nobody could HELP much. It was too much work for the teacher and then in 3rd grade the teacher formed a GROUP with the students who already knew English because we had attended schools where we had taken private lessons and those students who were doing badly were set in a different group. Then the teacher asked US to help and explain to those students who had doubts. We had to help them in SOME WAY because there is more confidence between STUDENT-STUDENT than TEACHER-STUDENT and THAT I think was the ONLY thing that I liked in all my secondary school because when YOU have to explain to your classmates it helps you review and helps you not to forget what you already know otherwise you may forget even WHAT you already knew before you started, no? [06.04: 227-241].

It is worth highlighting that it was not until the teacher set the students in two groups — the ones who were doing well because of her private lesson and the ones with problems – that Ana finally found that she was doing something enjoyable. Moreover, as Ana put it, this represented an opportunity to review, but most importantly this was a good strategy to not lose the EFL knowledge she had already learnt before secondary school. A fear of losing prior acquired EFL knowledge was expressed by all students who had taken EFL before.

*THE EFL TRANSFER TO PREPARATORY SCHOOL: IT'S SIMPLY
TO LOOK FOR REFERENTS AND CONNECTORS!*

In our second face to face conversation, Ana reiterated that her 'EFL experience in secondary school [had not been] a pleasant one' [03.05:05-07]. But what had surprised her most was the fact that her EFL lessons in preparatory school, after her first semester, had not offered her what she seemed to have been expecting her lessons to be about: using the language for communicative purposes or practising

oral skills. The programme focused on developing reading comprehension skills (see chapter four) and the classes consisted of following the textbook which she did not like but nothing else. This situation made her feel that the stasis she felt in her secondary EFL lessons was going to be repeated through her EFL learning in preparatory school:

With regards to English in *prepa* I feel that it was NOT very DIFFERENT because I mean it is surprising that I come from secondary school where I saw too easy topics but the SURPRISE is that you start first semester in *prepa* and you see the SAME I mean they make you go back to the same [...]. We NEVER spoke in English in class. NEVER! We never practised oral skills I mean we only saw what was in the textbook and to tell you the truth I don't feel that the textbook is GOOD. It was simply to go over the lessons to look for REFERENTS and CONNECTORS or things like that! [03.05: 298-316].

It is interesting to notice that although the official programme in secondary school ('communicative') was different from the one offered in preparatory school ('reading comprehension') Ana felt that they were not very different. I would like to suggest that she felt they were almost the same because, although the contents might have been different, the conditions and the routines in both levels are perceived as going back to the same: following the textbook in a very mechanical way.

IF IT NOT WERE FOR THE PRIVATE EFL LESSONS . . . !

Ana's experience of EFL learning in her private primary school and then nothing new in her secondary education made her feel that she had to do something to fill in the gap during her EFL lessons in secondary school. She had the good fortune to be granted a scholarship to take EFL in a private institute. Her observation of the situation she encountered once she started attending this course was very acute:

HERE [in preparatory school] there is not an objective to follow and if you really want to LEARN English well then you have to ENROL in a course [at a private institute] and THERE you ARE going to learn it. In fact, there are SEVERAL places where they offer English courses and they are FULL. For example, they came here to offer some scholarships at ((name of institute)) and well FORTUNATELY I got one. There in my course there are students older than me, there are stu-

dents from secondary, *prepa* and some are even UNIVERSITY students and they don't know English and they have already gone through secondary, *prepa* and even university and they didn't LEARN ANYTHING! That's why they are now taking English courses at private institutes. But if they were not attending those lessons. . . [03.05: 403-421].

Finally, both experiences of EFL learning in secondary and preparatory school compared with what she could do and achieve at a private institute led Ana to the following conclusion. She stated it very convincingly:

Besides my private EFL lessons in the afternoon are VERY GOOD and they are all in English [. . .] then I think that if in secondary and preparatory schools they are not going to teach you English well then I prefer not to be taught I mean if we are going to LEARN NOTHING then I don't think we should study the EFL subject or they should PREPARE teachers so that they could teach the subject WELL or English should be an elective outright! [03-05:363-372].

6.4 SUMMARY

For the student participants in this investigation, whereas English the *school subject* was mainly about doing and following a course that they needed to pass if they were to complete their secondary education and then to be able to proceed to preparatory education, English the *language* was 'beautiful', of 'fundamental importance' to learn how to use for other things that matter outside the state school. English the *language* was, therefore, perceived as a means to have access to other things that were significantly relevant to these students' lives and which were not found in their EFL lessons inside the state school classrooms. English the *language* was viewed as a 'vehicle' which could allow them to move on or reach those things that were of interest to them at this stage of their lives, namely having the opportunity to meet new friends in other countries through the internet, to be able to understand films, to sing the songs they loved and most of which were in English, or to be able to communicate with the 'foreign lads'.

The students' desire to learn the language is triggered by various reasons other than an inspirational teacher or their experience of learning the language in secondary or preparatory state schools. And all these reasons expressed by the students are interesting because they have revealed even more clearly the disasso-

ciation of the school experience from the process of learning English. They want to learn English for all the reasons presented and discussed in this chapter and learning the language is perceived to be an entitlement for these students' future educational careers. Facility in English has become, as they see it, vital in order to function well not only within the context of their present interests but most importantly for their future plans both personally and professionally. It is both illuminating and paradoxical that what students expected to be doing regarding their EFL learning was what, in fact, the system has stipulated should happen. However, as discussed in chapter five, the voice of the documents does not match the reality of the people's experience inside state school classrooms.

This chapter has shown that the students draw a distinction between English *the language* and English *the school subject*, thus constructing a conceptual response to the dissatisfaction they encounter in their EFL lessons within the public system. The main issues discussed in section 6.2 in this chapter arising from this conceptual distinction are presented in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 English the Language and English the School Subject

English the Language	English the School Subject
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic of fundamental importance to learn • A vehicle for discovery: new friends, music, films, video games • A tool to access other knowledge related to their interests (texts in English, magazines, songs) • A means to communicate with foreigners or with native speakers of English through the internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boring, unimportant • A vehicle to obtain a better total average at the end of their studies. • Irrelevant to their personal interests. • Learning <i>about</i> EFL and not how to use it.

This chapter also discussed and presented the practical students' response to deal with the failure of EFL learning within the public system. Briefly, students in the current study have developed three different strategies to cope with the dissatisfaction and the failure of EFL teaching in the system. Students with a high motivation to learn the EFL have found their own ways to make progress to overcome the stasis of the EFL state school classroom; some students have learnt to navigate

the culture of the EFL classroom and have developed their strategies just to gain pass grades in EFL subject regardless of their lack of knowledge of EFL. Other students found other opportunities provided by their parents or by other means, namely private EFL lessons in which they have experienced 'learning' or progress, as opposed to what they were being provided with inside the state school classroom. Sadly, there may still remain a group of students who have not found or do not have the necessary resources to achieve progress in learning the language, and on the evidence of this study it would appear that they may just as well give up learning EFL altogether.

This chapter has responded to one of the questions posed at the end of chapter five. The question that still remains and which will be responded in chapter seven is: What do EFL teachers do to cope with the failure of EFL teaching posed by the disjunction between the demands of official documents and the limitations imposed by their contexts?

THE TEACHERS' RESPONSE: BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to provide an answer to the question posed at the end of the prior chapter: how do teachers cope with the disjunction between the demands of the official documents and the limitations encountered in their teaching settings? The response to this query, it will be shown, is to be found in two salient themes that emerged prominently in the teacher participants' talk: 'the quality of the students' and 'the limitations that you have here in the school'. The teachers' views of the system and their views of the students are the two main issues that will be dealt with in this chapter. It is worth highlighting that some of the issues that will be touched upon in this chapter have already been mentioned in chapter five since those issues together with the ones introduced here are intrinsically connected and therefore overlapping is unavoidable. However, I think that this inevitable repetition instead of weakening the arguments presented in this chapter and in chapter five will strengthen them. In a nutshell, EFL teachers, unlike some of the students who participated in this investigation, have not found satisfactory ways to cope with lack of progress in EFL learning in their teaching contexts. Therefore, they cast themselves in the light of people who are trapped between the system

(7.2) and the students (7.3). A summary of the findings and the issues discussed in this chapter will be provided in section 7.4.

7.2 THE EFL TEACHERS AND THE SYSTEM

As already mentioned in chapter three, Section 3.3.3, five secondary school and two preparatory school EFL teachers participated in the current investigation. For ease of reading, Table 7.1 below presents relevant information on these EFL teachers whose voices will be presented and discussed throughout this chapter. The information provided in Table 7.1 will serve to show that although the teachers' EFL teaching experience varied considerably – their years of experience in teaching within the public schools differ; some of them taught both shifts in the same state schools whereas others had to teach at the same time in other different contexts – yet their responses to the questions regarding different aspects of their experiences of teaching in state schools classrooms were almost identical.

Table 7.1 Profile of EFL Secondary and Preparatory State School Teachers

EFL teachers' names*	Age	Educational Background	Teaching Experience in years	Working both shifts	Teaching at other institutions
Carolina	50+	BA in EFL	25+	Yes	No
Lolita	50+	BA in EFL	30+	Yes	No
Yolanda	20+	BA in EFL	5+	No	Yes
Nadia	45+	BA in EFL + Diploma in TEFL	25+	No	Yes
Gisela	20+	BA in EFL	3	No	Yes
Alejandra	50+	BA in EFL	25	No	No
Gerardo	40+	BA in EFL + Diploma in TEFL	20	No	Yes

* All teachers' names are pseudonyms.

As mentioned before some of the issues that emerged prominently in the teachers' talk about the difficulties they found in EFL teaching posed by what was expected of them to do by the system and what they actually found feasible to implement

given their contextual realities have already been highlighted in chapter five in section 5.4. Briefly, some of the teachers' remarks on both sides of the transfer process were the following:

- Time for EFL instruction was insufficient;
- Working conditions were not adequate: lack of appropriate infrastructure; classrooms were not big enough and uncomfortable;
- Class size: groups were too large;
- Class mix: a huge disparity of students' EFL levels within the same group and no measures in place to differentiate the students accordingly.
- Limited resources: apart from the textbooks the SEP/SEC did not send extra teaching material, they would have liked to work with.

In this section, I will mainly concentrate on other equally important themes that represent, in the opinion of teachers, impediments to making progress in EFL instruction in secondary and preparatory schools. All these issues concerning the teachers' perceptions of the system together with their views of the students allowed them, as it will be shown, to represent themselves in the light of teachers who were trapped between the system from above and their students from below. On the whole, this feeling of being caught in between these two, made them appreciate EFL teaching in state schools as a frustrating 'activity'.

EFL TEACHING IN STATE SCHOOLS IS AN 'UNGRATEFUL' ACTIVITY:

When I asked teacher Catalina to tell me about her experience as an EFL teacher in secondary school she responded as follows:

Well, honestly, I feel that this activity [teaching] at least in THIS context where we teach, it's, say, a bit of an UNGRATEFUL activity ((laughter)) because one tries hard. At least talking of my own experience, I do try to do my best. UNFORTUNATELY, you do not always obtain the results that you would like to due to the QUALITY of the students that you get and also to the LIMITATIONS that you have here [in the school] [MC.03.04:001-010].

In the extract above, teacher Carolina touched upon the two prominent themes that emerged throughout the teachers' interview data set: 'quality' of the students (section 7.3) and the 'limitations' teachers had to face in their teaching settings. These two themes were recurrent issues to be found in the teachers' views

which were held accountable for the unsatisfactory outcomes and the frustrating experience as EFL teachers in the two educational levels that this investigation concerns.

It is noticeable how teacher Carolina's view of the students and the limitations of 'this context' – the state secondary school – were represented as being the source not only for the poor outcomes but these two factors have contributed to her perception that, after over 25 years of teaching experience in secondary education, EFL teaching was an 'ungrateful' /disheartening activity. This negative perception of her teaching career seemed to be the result of her long trying to do the best of the efforts without being able to achieve the outcomes she would have liked to. Her emphasis of 'in this context' is interesting insofar that it might have made her reach the conclusion that her efforts in EFL teaching had just not been appreciated as would have been otherwise in a different teaching context.

That teaching in state schools was not a rewarding experience due to the scarce EFL teaching resources and the lack of the necessary support deemed as basic to make their work better was common to all teacher participants. For example, teacher Gerardo said that the 'panorama' in middle and upper middle education within the state system is a 'sad situation' compared to his experience in teaching EFL courses at the state university:

... the panorama is a bit sad in middle and upper middle schools because there is no money here compared to the university ... there we have a lot of resources . . . [here] it IS a bit sad here, we have hardly got (.) a piece of chalk, to tell you the truth we have to bring our own markers [G.03.05:107-115].

Another important aspect that teachers complained about was the fact that not being provided with basic teaching resources such as chalk, worsened by the unfavourable conditions they found in their classrooms (see section 5.4.3) was a reflection of the unfairness of the system. They stated that the system was *just* in charge of mandating EFL policies which were not realistic. Further, the system designed the programmes without taking into consideration their needs. Nor were teachers provided with the different kinds of support considered as necessary by the teachers. For example, the syllabi for both educational levels were decided from 'above' as well as various textbooks options to choose from — in the case of secondary school — and a very obsolete textbook for preparatory education. However, EFL teachers were not given the opportunity to express their opinions as to whether they would be able to adopt the mandated approaches. Nor were

they ever consulted on whether they felt they would be able to implement them or what was required in order to put them into practice in their real teaching environments.

The secondary and preparatory teachers' views on how the imposition from 'above' or the top-down approach regarding the teaching methodologies and the set textbooks affected their teaching will be presented next.

THE TOP-DOWN APPROACH TO EFL PROGRAMMES AND TEXTBOOKS:

The teachers in secondary school concurred with what teacher Carolina said about the state of affairs that existed between EFL teachers and the system regarding the little 'freedom' they had to decide on EFL matters. In other words, what and how they had to teach had always been dictated by the system without acknowledging the constraints posed by the system itself (see 5.4). EFL teachers were even told the order in which they had to implement the syllabus. Further, teachers felt that those in charge of EFL policies allowed little, if any, flexibility to decide upon these vital aspects. For example, in secondary education, teachers received from 'above' the following 'suggestion'. They were instructed that the students:

... have to COMMUNICATE even if they make many mistakes but the students have to be able to communicate and UNDERSTAND. That's what the Ministry of Education demands us to achieve. That's why they tell us that it has to be a COMMUNICATIVE [approach to] English. However, at the end of the day it turns out not to be as COMMUNICATIVE nor is it that EASY to be able to implement it in the way they SUGGEST we have to do it [...] ALL [textbooks] are sent by the Ministry, they tell us what we have to do and, of course, we can choose from the textbooks available; the textbooks, by the publishing houses that have an agreement with the SEP [...] we have to work with one of those textbooks and that's exactly what we have to teach they EVEN tell us the order in which we have to follow them, really [C.06.04: 060-093].

The extract above shows clearly how this top-down approach to decision-making did not fit with what EFL teachers believed they could achieve given their experiences of working in their real teaching situations. That is to say, this top-down approach to EFL teaching created a conflict between what the system asked teachers to do in their classes and what teachers thought was not at all 'easy' to

implement in their classrooms. Teachers for diverse reasons that will be taken up later in this chapter, together with some aspects that have already been discussed earlier in this thesis (see 5.4), found that adopting a communicative approach was not feasible given their contextual realities and the lack of genuine support from the system.

On the same issue in preparatory education, when asked if the educational authorities had ever taken into consideration their opinions regarding the programmes and what they perceived as indispensable support to achieve more satisfactory learning outcomes, teacher Alejandra answered as follows:

NOT AT ALL. No, not at all. They only send the programme, the textbook and then you do what you can. [. . .] Besides, I feel that the textbook is not updated; it's a book that is approximately over 10 years old and well it's got a lot of dated readings which do not motivate [the students] at all [A.03.05: 0142-0259].

Once again it can be appreciated that EFL teachers at both ends of the transfer process that is the focus of this study represented the system as one key element of their frustrating teaching experience within the public sector. Further, albeit implicitly, the teaching materials chosen by the system were also represented as a key element in EFL teaching contributing to the student's learning dissatisfaction. In other words, the textbooks allocated by the system were held accountable for preventing teachers from delivering more engaging and motivating EFL lessons to their students. Teachers have tried to take action to change the obsolete textbooks that they and their students found de-motivating but to no avail. Teachers affirmed that there was almost inexistent communication between them and the educational authorities in charge of EFL policies. What they found even more frustrating was that on the rare occasion that they had had the opportunity to express their opinions about EFL matters, the educational authorities had never paid attention to their requests.

*LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS
AND EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES:*

As already presented in chapter five section 5.4, teachers stated that they had asked for some changes to ameliorate the unsatisfactory EFL situation in the public school sector. They stated that they had asked for more time allocated to EFL instruction

and for a reduction in the number of students in their classes. However, their petitions had been long disregarded by the system. The following quote from Alejandra a preparatory school teacher was a fair representation of how teachers expressed their feelings of having been being ignored by the system:

We have asked them many times to try and see whether they could update the textbook but to tell you the truth they haven't done anything. But, honestly, I think that nobody follows the textbook completely and we have to use extra materials and YOU have to do THAT because if you don't, you fall asleep and so do the students! [A.03.05: 393-400].

Even worse, teachers felt that when they were asked to express their needs to improve EFL teaching in the public sector, this was more a mere formality than a genuine desire to 'learn' from what teachers had to say.

LACK OF GENUINE COMMUNICATION:

Secondary school teachers asserted that they had to write annual reports. Among the things they had to include in these reports was a statement of what was needed in order to *improve* the quality of their teaching. However, this seemed to be more a set 'routine' by the system than a genuine interest in finding out what EFL teachers had to say about their teaching necessities. For example, Nadia complained that in her school they lacked, among other very basic things, a socket in which to plug a tape recorder to do the listening comprehension exercises that were part of the set textbook. However, she said that although every time she had written her annual report she had reported this, no action had been taken to address this elementary necessity:

We have asked, we have asked and ALWAYS in our individual ANNUAL report where we write about EVERYTHING we did and our NEEDS for the following academic year and well we have asked to the EFL department in the area we have asked for the SOCKETS but well NOTHING happens! [N: 06.04: 089-093].

Preparatory school teachers also stated that they were hardly ever consulted as what could be done to ameliorate the recognised failure of EFL situation (see 6.2) in the public sector. What is more, the one time that teacher Gerardo was asked

for his co-operation to better the EFL situation in his teaching context he felt this was just a waste of time. His opinions and suggestions based on his real teaching experience were not taken into account:

Teachers in preparatory level are not asked for our opinions. Only this time the SEC called me and asked if I wanted to co-operate with them because they want to change the EFL programme to change from reading comprehension to teaching the 4 skills [. . .] but they only asked like five teachers in the State of Veracruz . . . but then they didn't take our opinions into account. I was saying that we couldn't teach with 50-student groups, that we don't have tape recorders, videos, that it's only 3 times a week and that it's not enough because of the low level of EFL that students achieve in secondary school, but then they say 'we have to make the change and make an effort as long as this effort is possible to make' because they just told us 'there is not much money for the education in upper middle education' [G.03.05: 341-369].

It is clear, from the extract above, that this rare opportunity that the few preparatory teachers had to express their opinions did not represent a genuine concern on the part of the educational authorities to hear what teachers had to say. After all, EFL teachers are the ones who know the day to day situation in EFL classrooms. Moreover, teachers might have felt that what the educational authorities were indeed interested in was not in providing them a chance to voice their experiences regarding the realities of the EFL situation in their settings. Rather, this asking for their 'co-operation' seemed to be an opportunity *for* the system to inform EFL teachers that the programme had to be changed and that they had to make the best of their efforts in adopting the new programme handed, once again, from 'above'. As a result teachers might have found this a rather frustrating experience that just represented a waste of time since his contributions and suggestions were not taken into account.

However, this lack of genuine communication was not restricted between EFL teachers and educational authorities. There was almost no communication between EFL teachers within the same school. Nor was there any opportunity provided for EFL teachers on both sides of the transfer process to talk about EFL matters that pertained to teachers working in the two educational levels where EFL was a compulsory subject.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EFL TEACHERS:

The interview data showed that there was, if any, very little communication between EFL teachers inside the same school and there was no communication at all between EFL teachers in secondary and preparatory schools. EFL teachers in secondary school had no idea what the EFL teacher in the next level of schooling would concentrate on. Conversely, some of them *thought* they knew, but their talk revealed that what they knew was not accurate since they had no opportunities to exchange information on both sides of the transfer process. The following extracts illustrate the virtually non-existent communication among all those in charge of the practice of EFL teaching in state secondary and preparatory school.

EFL TEACHERS WITHIN THE SAME SCHOOL:

When I asked Yolanda to tell me how often EFL teachers had meetings to discuss matters about the EFL subject she responded as follows:

No, what happens is that she [the other EFL teacher in the same school] is always too busy then it's TOO difficult for us to get together to talk about those issues then [. . .] as she works more hours in the school than me then she chose the textbook and that was it. For instance, I don't know the book she's chosen for next year, we're now following 'Rally' but the textbook that I'll have to use next year I still don't know it, the one she chose [MY. 06.04:051-060].

This virtual lack of communication among the EFL teachers within the same secondary or preparatory schools was common to all EFL teacher-participants in this investigation. However, after learning about their tight schedules (see 5.4.1.1) and their overwhelming workload as teacher Lolita explained: 'I have got 13 groups, say, 50 kids in each, I have to deal with around 600 kids in a week ((laughter)) between the two shifts: morning and afternoon' [L.06.04:221-222], it should not be surprising that they did not find the time to discuss EFL teaching and learning issues that were germane to all of them. On the other hand, the system seemed not promote or allocate any time and space for EFL teachers to learn from each other about EFL teaching in the pre and post transfer process.

*LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EFL TEACHERS
ON BOTH SIDES OF THE TRANSFER PROCESS*

When I asked teachers in secondary school if they knew what the EFL programme for the next educational level consisted of they clearly showed that they had only a vague idea, if any, about what their students would be doing on the other side of the transfer:

- Nora: Do you know the English programme for preparatory school?
- Nadia: No, no (.) well I know that they do lots of translations OR reading comprehension but I don't know the programme. . .
- Nora: Is there communication between teachers in secondary and preparatory schools?
- Nadia: NO, because when we have meetings is by zones or areas but it's only SECONDARY schools and these are general meetings and we do not focus on English.
- Nora: Why do you think there is no communication between EFL teachers in secondary and preparatory schools?
- Nadia: I don't know, but we NEVER get together so that there is a SEQUENCE in the learning [of EFL] no, no, there is nothing like that [N.06.04: 271-287].

It is interesting to note how Nadia pointed out that the meetings that they had to attend were of general nature and did not concentrate on English. More importantly, she showed awareness as why communication between teachers working on both sides of the transfer process could be beneficial for the learning experience or so 'that there is a sequence in [EFL] learning'. By the same token, when asked if she knew what the EFL programme focused on in secondary school, Alejandra said that:

- No, I don't know about secondary school, no. Well, yes, yes, yes, I've got many colleagues in secondary and I more or less know the programme. I feel that the programme in secondary focuses a lot on grammatical aspects [A. 03.05: 205-212].

All the issues discussed so far were even aggravated by the fact that teachers reported that even when the programmes or approaches to EFL teaching had been

changed they did not receive the necessary support to enable them to keep abreast of new teaching approaches or techniques. Never were they given the opportunity to practise the EFL themselves, something that all teachers concurred was of vital importance to them. Evidence for his lack of support will be presented next.

THE SYSTEM AND LACK OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING COURSES:

Another recurrent theme that emerged from the analysis of the teacher interviews data was the lack of support from the system concerning teacher development or training courses. All teachers were of the opinion that, although the system had long offered these sorts of courses, they had not received the kind of support that all teacher participants in the current investigation perceived as indispensable to enhance their EFL teaching careers. For example, when asked what type of support she would like to receive from the system teacher Lolita stated that:

Well, [I'd like] to have teacher development courses but in ENGLISH because [English] changes, the vocabulary changes, we use the vocabulary in the textbook all the time and it's not good, it is different. Look, my son tells me "you don't know how to say this [in English]" and well, my son is learning English in [name of private institute] and there he learns other things and then I NEED to be up to date but to go and take a private course at this stage NO! [ML.06.04: 281-303].

Secondary teachers not only thought that teacher development or training courses were needed if they were to be up to date in order to be able to help their students learn EFL more efficiently but teachers in preparatory school also complained that coupled with the lack of the basic resources they have not been offered any help in teacher training for over a decade. The following quote, from Gerardo, illustrates this:

. . . between semesters [we've got some time off] and we don't have any teacher training courses [. . .] if truth be known, long time ago they offered us training courses, about 15 years ago, when preparatory education changed from two to three years[. . .] and what they gave us was most of all an orientation to the new programme because before the change in year 1 the focus was on grammar and year 2 was devoted to translation and the shift was to three semesters of reading

comprehension. Then as we were used to teaching translation and grammar, they 'instructed' us as how to a class of reading comprehension should be given BUT it was not actually a development course BUT to inform us about the new programme. In fact, here in preparatory school I have ONLY received a course, a course on COMPUTERS in all these years [MG.03.05: 107-215].

In response to the limited resources and the lack of opportunities for real professional development that would help EFL teachers improve their knowledge of the EFL and learn about the new approaches to teaching that are imposed from above, teachers seemed to resort to those familiar and long-established approaches and routines that they found feasible to incorporate in their EFL lessons.

TEACHING WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN TEACHING FOR THE MOST PART:

Teachers in secondary education openly recognised that:

. . . we are told, for example, NEVER, to mention grammar points in our lessons. However, there are kids that until you tell them 'this is the same as X in Spanish, say, the gerund, to mention something, then they go 'oh, now I do get it', I mean, that's why I have ALWAYS opted, although they say we must not do this, to incorporate some grammar explanations [. . .] Somehow, I feel I DO have to concentrate on VERBS, for example, because they say 'when you learnt to speak Spanish you didn't know what a verb was and you learnt it anyway' and I agree, but if you DON'T mention that [verbs] there ARE lots kids who just won't get it! [C.06.04:051-067-083].

In the same manner, teachers in preparatory school admitted that:

In the *prepa* programme you don't have to teach any grammar but I feel that it is necessary [. . .] because if there are students who already know [grammar] then it's good practice for them and the ones who don't know can learn [. . .] then what I have done now, apart from reading comprehension I devote one day, because EFL lessons are three days a week, then three hours is a little time and then the lessons are 50-minute lessons, for example, on Thursdays I concentrate on grammar aspects, I use a lot of grammar exercises because they DO need them [MA.03.05: 221-239].

Since in their view the Ministry ignores them and provides them with neither the training nor the resources to implement changes imposed without consultation, it is hardly surprising that EFL teachers in both educational levels have resorted to relying so heavily on teaching grammar, which represents reassuringly familiar territory to them.

These teachers clearly feel trapped by the system and its impositions, which ignore their real experience in teaching EFL. However, this provides grounds for the teachers to exonerate themselves from the responsibility for their students' failure and lack of progress in EFL learning. The other key aspect held accountable for poor outcomes and lack of progress is to be found in the teachers' representations of their students. This is presented and discussed in the following section.

7.3 THE EFL TEACHERS AND THEIR ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

'... the students are at the age (.) at a very, very (.) a very restless age, an age full of changes. I can tell you, the students' AGE is the problem'.

THE STUDENTS' AGE IS A MAJOR PROBLEM:

The other important recurrent theme to be found throughout the teacher data set was the students' age. All EFL teachers, regardless of the level of education they were teaching or their teaching experience within the public system and their teaching expertise mentioned the students' age as a determining factor in the dissatisfaction in EFL teaching in public schools.

The opening quote in this section, taken from my interview data, was a fair representation of what was found throughout the teachers' talk. One of their main sources of complaints had to do with the age of the students they had to deal with. It was interesting to note the associated constructs that the teachers assigned to their adolescent students (Hammersely, 1980). Being adolescents implied 'people difficult to handle' and 'uninterested in learning' among other negative connotations. Although this study does not concern adolescence *per se* this was an important issue I had to bear in mind since 'categories are not neutral descriptions: they are what Sacks called inference rich — there are strong expectations and conventions associated with them' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 213; see also Hargreaves

et al., 1975; Woods, 1983). In the remainder of this section I will show how teachers in secondary and preparatory schools associated the meaning of their students' stage of development – adolescence — as being an important hindrance to their EFL teaching (for a detailed account of the concept of adolescence as a key point of reference for secondary education in Mexico, see Levinson, 1998, 2001).

ADOLESCENT STUDENTS REPRESENTED AS A CHALLENGE:

Students' age was represented not only as another key problem but as a challenge in EFL teaching in secondary education, as teacher Yolanda stated:

Well, some of the PROBLEMS I have had to face, CHALLENGES in teaching in secondary school is precisely the students' AGE. They are undergoing a physical and emotional transition . . . and well the programmes designed for secondary school cannot be applied because the groups are too large in secondary school [Y.06.04:025-033].

Yolanda acknowledged that one of her 'problems' in her teaching context was the students' age. She showed awareness that her students were undergoing a physical and emotional transition which seemed to be connected to the difficulty in teaching this age group. Interestingly, she associated this with the way the secondary programme was designed and the large number of students (adolescents) in her groups, concluding that all these factors taken together, in her view, made it impossible to implement the mandated syllabus.

Later in our conversation she mentioned how the students' age posed another sort of challenge. Being a young teacher, she had to devote part of her work to making the students distinguish between trust and joking around:

the kids are VERY RESTLESS, they are in a stage when they are discovering EVERYTHING [. . .] and that also represents a challenge because sometimes they cannot differentiate between a teacher and a father or sometimes they want to see young teachers, in my case for example, as I am young, they want to see me as a sister and sometimes they cannot establish that difference that OK I'm your teacher and you have to RESPECT but you can also TRUST in me but sometimes they mix up trust with JOKING around too much, things like this then for me as a teacher THAT is one of my challenges [Y.06.04: 303-321].

*ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EFL LEARNING:
UNINTERESTED STUDENTS AND DISAPPOINTED EFL TEACHERS:*

Teachers on both sides of the students' transfer process stated that they had realised that their students were interested in learning *English*. However, their talk revealed that they were somehow aware that the students' interest or motivation in learning the foreign language was not triggered by EFL lessons in the state school classroom but to external or out of the school influences:

Yes, very, very, very much, I feel that they are [interested in learning English] and I think that nowadays this is due, for instance, to Internet, computers and many modern things for which they necessarily have to know English [A. 03.05: 376- 381].

However, when teachers concentrated on talking about their students' motivation to learning EFL inside the state school classroom, their responses were completely different as the following extract illustrates:

Look, I feel that unfortunately as students move to a higher grade, I think their motivation [to learn EFL] should INCREASE but it's the kids' AGE, at that age they are TOO difficult no matter what you try . . . [C.06.04: 563-567].

It is noticeable how, on the one hand, teachers acknowledged that the students' interest in learning English was due to issues other than EFL lessons. On the other hand, they invoked to the students' age to account for the lack of interest in learning English inside the state school classroom no matter what teachers tried to do.

Similarly, Nadia said that she felt very disappointed by her students' attitudes towards EFL learning in general. However, her frustration seemed to have been more acute when she noted her students' response to the final test they had to take. She explained that:

I sometimes feel VERY DISSAPOINTED, for example, with the English test, I gave the students a test last Friday, the 5th bimonthly, you give them 5 tests and then you add them up and then you get the final grade (.) then I ask them 'did you study for today's test?' and then they go 'is there a test today teacher?' or then they ask each other 'hey what's today's test about eh?' They do NOT even know which test they have. Nor do they know what DAY it is, they don't know if they

have a test and if they DO then they don't know what the test is going to be about because they are NOT INTERESTED then I can notice all these things and I wonder "what can I do, no?" I really don't know . . . and even if you wanted to help them so that they don't say 'the teacher is really bad' [because some of them fail] but no, THEY just don't realise that with these SORT of kids you just CAN'T do anything! [N.06.04: 204-228].

The extract above touched in three different but equally important aspects which taken together showed Nadia's feeling of helplessness. First, it showed Nadia's feelings of frustration or disappointment caused by her students' utter lack of interest even in EFL tests. Second, on realizing that her students openly demonstrated no interest in learning she pondered as what she could do to make her students interested in learning but she found no answer. Third, when she said that 'THEY' did not realise that she could do nothing with that sort of student, she was referring to the educational authorities or the system. It seemed that she would like them to realise that EFL teaching under this circumstances seemed to be impossible. Her contextual realities were held accountable for her failure to achieve more satisfactory results.

STUDENTS' BEHAVIOUR:

Teachers on both educational levels concurred that they had inevitably to waste some EFL time on other activities that happened inside the classroom due to their students' disruptive behaviour. For example, teachers explained that:

First, you WASTE TOO much time trying to control them and MOST of all they [students] distract me a LOT when I'm explaining, when I'm reading to the class or when I'm talking and the students at the back, for example, they are laughing, chatting, then most of all they interrupt me no? INTERRUPT too often, they are INTERRUPTING the class every moment and then you have to be 'please be quiet', 'sit down', 'stop drawing', 'pay attention to the class', 'you, stop doing that', 'you stop throwing papers' and class time goes by doing these things! [N.06.04: 177-188].

The students' misbehaviour was therefore seen as another important factor contributing to the teachers' inability to deliver the programme in the way they would have liked to.

ADOLESCENTS ARE DISRESPECTFUL: YOU HAVE TO CONTROL THEM!

Adolescent students were also, on the whole, represented as being disrespectful to their teachers. Teachers who had more years of experience working within the public sector thought that the students' values had changed over the years for the worse. For example, teacher Lolita asserted that:

When I started teaching here [in secondary school] there was more respect for teachers. Nowadays, values have been lost a lot and the kids are not as respectful as they used to be before. When I started teaching here kids were educated and they used to like and appreciate you in another way. Now, as years go by you realise that the kids are ruder, more disrespectful. In the past kids would not disrespect teachers. Now, for example, they EVEN tell you 'bugger it', 'don't be mean', 'bollocks teacher!' COME ON like [to put up with] all those things, NO! [L.06.04:119-128].

The fact that the students were seen as badly educated and rude to teachers had a negative effect not only on their teaching. Teacher also attributed health problems to their every day 'battles' with students, as the following quote illustrates:

... FIGHTING, you see? against the children who are very, very badly educated. . . I've been working here for 24 years and at the beginning I used to work very well but now (.) I don't know if it's because I'm (.) because of my age or because they are worse but I DON'T know but I sometimes leave the school even with a HEADACHE or completely STRESSED OUT! [N.06.04: 157-164].

The view that students nowadays are more disrespectful was not confined to older teachers; newcomers to teaching EFL in state schools agreed with this appreciation. Gisela mentioned that:

Well I think that kids no longer see the teacher as a person who deserves all their respect, they see you as their equal, ESPECIALLY me who I'm younger [than other teachers]. They don't see me as a teacher deserving respect, no, they don't, they see me as if I were an equal and sometimes they are disrespectful, they are RUDE [G.06.04: 171-176].

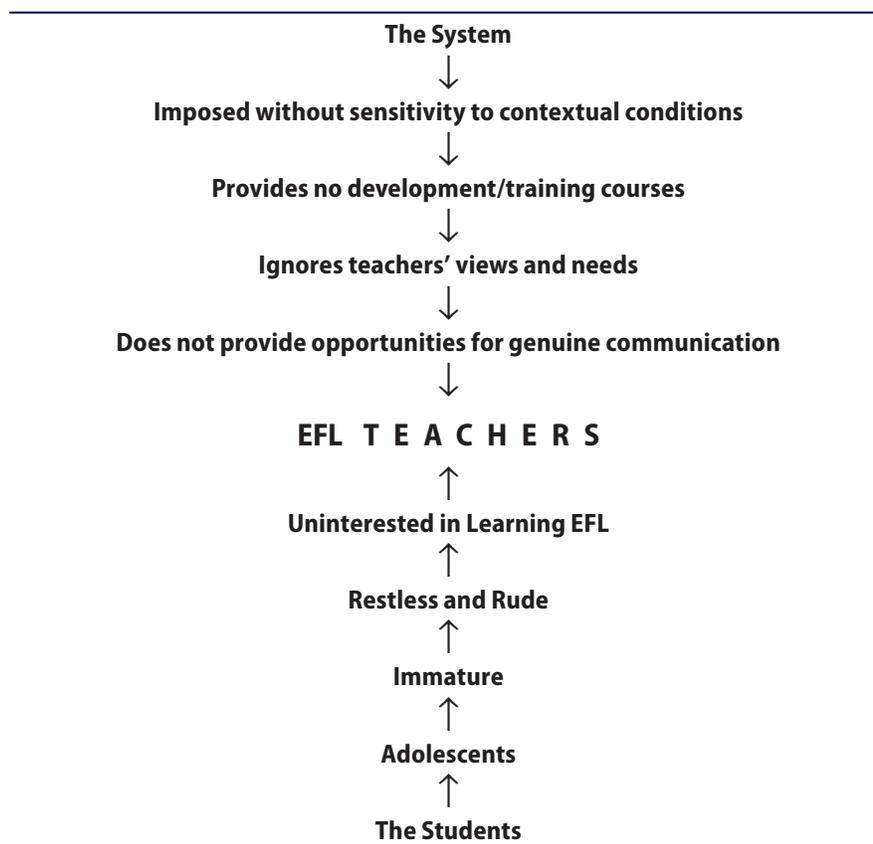
7.4 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter presented and discussed the key issues that taken together with those presented in chapter five section 5.4 provide a response to the question concerning how teachers dealt with the incongruity created by what was expected of them in state school classrooms and what they found feasible to accomplish.

These findings suggest that EFL teachers in both levels of education view themselves as trapped in what might be described a culture of helplessness and isolation. On the one hand, they see themselves as rendered helpless by a system which seems not to acknowledge their contextual realities and nevertheless puts a lot of pressure on them by demanding what seemed to be impossible for them to implement in their classrooms even if they would like to. On the other hand, EFL teachers feel that they have to deal with students who do not appreciate their teachers' efforts in trying to help them learn the foreign language.

The students were categorised by EFL teachers as adolescents who are uninterested in learning, immature, non-cooperative, restless, and who make their teachers' lives difficult. As a result, teachers cast themselves in the light of people who are caught in a system where they have no choice but to implement the impossible that is handed out from 'above'. At the same time they are required to deal with students from 'below' who are non cooperative, who do not want to learn EFL and who make their lives difficult. In other words, these teachers feel trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea. These two vital aspects of their teaching situations were the main sources that the teachers held accountable for the poor and frustrating outcomes in EFL teaching and learning in state school classrooms (see Table 7.2 for issues contributing to teachers' feeling of helplessness).

Table 7.2 Issues Contributing to EFL Teachers' Feelings of Helplessness



DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the premise that the aim of any educational system is to provide and create opportunities for efficient and continuous learning. Previous learning acquired in one level of education should serve as the basis upon which new learning should be built. In the context of this study, as students transfer from one level of education to the next, they should experience a sense of progression in the acquisition and understanding of the foreign language. Unfortunately, the analysis of the data gathered from different sources which was presented and discussed in chapters five - seven has clearly shown that this is not the case. Rather, the findings emerging from the data analysis have shown that there is stasis rather than a meaningful progress in students' EFL learning when they transfer from the last year of secondary education to their first semester in preparatory state schools.

This qualitative inquiry sought to understand and identify those issues that have contributed to this stagnation in EFL state school classrooms, from the perspectives of the people who are most directly involved in the teaching and learning of EFL in real practice: students and teachers. This chapter is divided into several sections. Section 8.2 presents an overview of the findings, while section 8.3 provides the answers to the research questions that guided this study. Section 8.4 discusses the contributions of this study to the field of TESOL and the implications for foreign-

language-in-education policy planners, for teacher educators, and for EFL teachers. Finally, section 8.5 presents a conclusion reflecting on the outcomes of the study.

8.2 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The Mexican Ministry of Education (SEP) defines the content for the teaching of English as a foreign language in public schools (Terborg *et al.*, 2007). Educational authorities have stipulated that EFL should be the foreign language taught in state schools at all levels of education. Furthermore, the SEP has given priority to communicative competence in the EFL curriculum for state secondary education. In accordance with this new tenet, the shift in major teaching methods from the ever-dominant grammar-translation method to the communicative approach has ‘officially’ been implemented in secondary state school classrooms over the past several years. As a result, teaching methodologies and textbooks imported from foreign countries, especially Britain and the United States of America, have been adopted in secondary schools. EFL teachers in secondary schools were, all of a sudden, expected to speak the target foreign language as much as they could to provide students with maximum comprehensible input. Students, as stated in the official curriculum, were also encouraged to maximize the use of English by engaging in various activities and tasks in and outside the classroom (see 4.3.1).

As for preparatory schools, a curriculum was designed to focus on reading comprehension, thus providing a ‘neat’ curriculum continuity between these two levels of education, as the analysis of documentary data indicated (see 4.6). A dated reading comprehension textbook produced by local writers has been used for a long time (see chapters four and five), despite the complaints by both teachers and students who have had to adopt it as the main tool in their EFL lessons (see chapters five and seven).

The findings of this study have indicated that changes designed to ‘align’ curricula for both levels of education, as officially planned by policy-makers, have not been effected in practice. In their study on students’ transfer in modern language learning, Hunt *et al.* (2008) concluded that curricula for the top KS2 and early KS3 should be aligned, both in terms of content and approaches to teaching as ‘a coherent approach and mutual understanding are crucial to progression’ (*ibid.*: 924). However, this study has shown that what official documents stipulate does not necessarily translate into practice in real classrooms (see 5.4; see also Cohen and Loewenberg, 1990).

In both levels of education, students were expected to become more active and responsible learners without any considerations as to whether this new ‘role’ was in agreement with their prior role in EFL learning and in other subjects in the curriculum. However, from this research it has emerged that teachers are still using a traditional approach to EFL teaching, where a focus on teaching grammar rules still dominates (see 5.4.2.1; see also, Nunan, 2003; Wedell, 2008). Moreover, teachers are still very much in control as to what students can do and how they do it inside the EFL classroom (see 5.2). As for the students, the results of this study have suggested that, if given the opportunity, they would be willing to take a more active role in their EFL learning (see 6.3).

The results of this investigation have indicated that despite the change in EFL curricula, the predicted improvements in students’ EFL communicative proficiency and their ability to understand written texts in English have not been achieved, or at least they are not evident to those sharing state EFL classrooms. The reasons contributing to this failure are multiple and varied. There are mismatches between the policy-makers’ rhetoric and what it is actually feasible to implement in practice, given the particularities of the Mexican context. Similar results have also been found in other parts of the world (Nunan, 2003, Wedell, 2008, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009). There are also conflicts between what students expect to be doing and what their teachers implement in EFL lessons (see chapters six and seven). And all these unresolved and largely neglected disjunctions, as this study has shown, are held accountable for the failure of students to negotiate successfully the transfer from secondary to preparatory EFL phases.

As already mentioned in chapter two, in the Mexican context there are no studies like the one reported here. The only available published study on students’ EFL proficiency showed that there is a pressing need to try to find ways to improve the poor outcomes achieved by students who have undergone six years of EFL instruction in the public sector (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2004). However, this study only highlighted the deficiencies in EFL learning in secondary and preparatory state schools, without attempting to identify the reasons for such deficiencies. Therefore, in order to understand all the interconnected factors hampering the EFL teaching and learning in Mexican state schools, it was necessary to review research carried out in other parts of the world and in different related fields of education: transfers and transition in mainstream education and in LOTE and MFL, language-in-education policy and planning, and teachers’ and students’ perceptions of ESL and EFL instruction (see chapter two).

8.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The impetus to undertake this research was to seek an answer to the following question: How can transfer between secondary and preparatory school be made more effective? In order to respond this overarching question it was first necessary to answer the two main and subsidiary questions posed in the introduction of this thesis (see pp.11-12). The answers to the research questions guiding this study are provided in the remainder of this section, based on the results emerging from the data analysis (chapters four – seven) and insights gained from the review of relevant literature.

8.3.1 ADEQUATE RHETORIC AND INADEQUATE POLICY PLANNING

In terms of answering how official policy on EFL teaching in secondary and preparatory schools in Mexico are implemented in practice, the findings have shown that there is a disjunction between theory and practice in the context of EFL classrooms in Mexican schools. There is a clearly manifested mismatch between what has been planned by language-in-education policy makers and what teachers and learners can do in reality, given the constraints imposed by the conditions of the Mexican context (Haque and Cray, 2007). In other words, there is a gap between ‘rhetoric and reality’ (Nunan, 2003). The findings of this study regarding the gaps that exist between theory and practice are similar to those of research carried out in other contexts, which sought to investigate the relationship between official documents and their implementation from the bottom up (Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009; Li, 1998).

The outcomes of this investigation have revealed that the most recurring problems faced by EFL Mexican teachers when trying to implement foreign language policy are similar to those revealed in comparable studies (reviewed in chapter two). The main factors affecting the implementation of mandated curricula, seen from the perspectives of the teachers who participated in this study, were as follows:

- Lack of appropriate infrastructure; classrooms were not big enough and uncomfortable; limited teaching resources (Section 5.4.3; see also Haque and Cray, 2007; Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009);

- Class size: groups too large (Sections 5.4.3 and 7.2; see also Haque and Cray, 2007; Zappa-Hollman, 2007; Sarwar, Z. 2001; Ning, P. 2007);
- Class mix: a huge disparity of students' EFL levels within the same group and no measures in place to differentiate the students in terms of language level (Sections 5.4.3 and 7.2; see also Crawford, 2001);
- Lack of adequate conditions relating to using teaching techniques associated with CLT, e.g. pair or small group work (Section 5.4.3 see also Unyakiat, 1991);
- Lack of sufficient teacher training (Section 7.2 and 5.4.3; see also Wedell, 2008; Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009; Nunan, 2003);
- Issues of discipline (See section 7.3; see also Zappa-Hollman, 2007);
- Students' lack of interest (Section 7.3; see also Zappa-Hollman, 2007);
- Teachers' lack of appropriate EFL proficiency (Section 5.4.3; see also Nunan, 2003; Wedell, 2008).

As a result of the aforementioned factors affecting the implementation of CLT and a learner-centred approach to EFL teaching and learning, the following still predominate in state secondary and preparatory school EFL classrooms in Mexico: a heavy emphasis on teaching grammar and translation, the extensive use of the L1, and a teacher-centred approach to EFL instruction, (See 5.4.2.1).

In the current study a key issue perceived by both teachers and students as posing one of the major obstacles to EFL learning was the mismatch between what is stipulated in the official curricula and the class time that was allocated to EFL lessons in reality. Both teachers and students who participated in this study concurred that this gap in real time represented a major hurdle (see 5.4.1). Other studies reviewed in chapter two did not identify class time as something hampering the EFL learning process. It may be that those researchers did not analyse documentary evidence in as much detail as was done in the current investigation. Conversely, class time was not found to represent a real problem hampering the implementation of mandated EFL syllabus. However, the careful analysis of this small but revealing gap between stipulated and real time for EFL instruction did reveal a considerable negative impact on the teaching and learning process resulting from this overlooked timetabling issue (Section 5.4.1).

8.3.2 STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF THE KEY TRANSITIONAL STAGE FROM SECONDARY TO PREPARATORY EFL LESSONS: TRANSFER WITHOUT TRANSITION

Concerning the response to the second and subsidiary research questions posed in the introduction of this thesis, the data revealed that there were many interconnected key issues hampering the EFL transfer process. These issues have also been identified to be obstacles to successful student transfer in research carried focusing on student transfer in mainstream education (Galton *et al.*, 1999, 2000) and in studies on transfer in LOTE and MFL (Bolster *et al.*, 2004; Hunt *et al.*, 2008; Hill *et al.*, 1998).

CONTINUITY AND PROGRESS

The interview data revealed that the outcomes with regard to the continuity and progress that is assumed to happen in students' EFL learning when they transfer from secondary to preparatory education are rather limited and unsatisfactory (Section 5.4.2.1). The findings of this investigation suggest that there are several factors affecting the EFL transfer process. Again, the results of this investigation concur with some results reported in the few studies focusing on the students' transfer in education and in the few studies on transfer in foreign language learning (LOTE and MFL) in the Australian and British contexts (see 2.2). The key elements found to be detrimental to achieving a fluid EFL transition leading to students' progression in the EFL learning in Mexican state school are multiple and varied.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND LIAISON

The interview data gathered from the EFL teachers working in secondary and preparatory schools revealed that there was little, if any, communication and/or liaison among EFL teachers within the same school. Moreover, there was virtually no communication concerning EFL teaching and learning between EFL teachers in schools at both ends of the student transfer process (see 7.2). The data revealed that teachers in secondary schools did not know about the EFL programme in preparatory schools, and neither did EFL teachers in preparatory schools know about

their students' prior EFL experience. Consequently, EFL teachers worked under assumptions rather than being guided by certainties about their students' prior learning experiences (see 7.2). Nor did teachers know what their students were able to do and what skills they already possessed that could be taken advantage of to help them continue learning EFL in subsequent levels of education (Bolster *et al.*, 2004). Other studies have indicated that information exchanged on students' foreign language learning has been considered a key factor to pupils' progression (Hunt *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, some scholars have highlighted that communication and liaison between teachers is central to continuity in learning. It has also been noted that the problem of continuity between schools would not be solved by a national curriculum because the real problem is lack of communication between teachers (Gorwood, 1991).

The consequence of this lack of communication between EFL teachers at both ends of the transfer process is very serious and it is clear that communication between EFL teachers on both levels of education needs to be promoted and sustained. However, it must be borne in mind that teachers are busy people and it will be not an easy task to organise and implement well-planned meetings. It is first necessary to try to find out from the teachers themselves how, when and what sort of support they require in order to promote the exchange of information that could be useful to them. Moreover, teachers need to be aware that it is of vital importance to learn about what their students have already learnt or what they need to be learning; otherwise, this endless going back to zero or 'starting from scratch' (Bolster *et al.*, 2004; Hargreaves and Galton, 2002; or 'more of the same' (Low *et al.*, 1993, 1995; Low and Johnson, 1997) syndrome that has become entrenched in EFL learning in the public sector will continue and the situation will remain as stagnant as it has been for decades. Most importantly, what is needed is for policy-makers to listen to and pay careful and genuine attention to the voices of the people who are in charge of helping those who are supposed to benefit from the provision of EFL in state schools: the teachers.

LACK OF STUDENTS' DIFFERENTIATION, PROGRESSION AND MOTIVATION

The interview data revealed that there are no mechanisms in place in the Mexican education system to differentiate or set students according to their EFL background level (see 5.4.3; see also Terborg *et al.*, 2007). This is a major obstacle contributing not only to students' lack of progress, but also to their loss of motiva-

tion in EFL learning, since they are made to repeat work done not only in previous years in state schools (see also Galton *et al.*, 1999) but in their private lessons as well. Having students with a huge disparity of EFL background knowledge within the same group was found to pose one of the greatest challenges for EFL teachers (see 5.4.3; see also Crawford, 2001; Terborg *et al.*, 2007), especially for teachers who do not have access to any sources of help in dealing with this problem.

MISMATCH BETWEEN STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

The analysis of the interview data indicated that there was also a huge gap between what teachers thought that students needed to learn and what students expected to be learning in EFL and the way they wanted to be taught (see 6.2 and 6.3). The review of relevant literature in the field of foreign language learning has shown that a lack of congruity between students' and their teachers' perceptions represents a serious problem since this mismatch may cause tension, hindrance, and ultimately lead to students' dissatisfaction in the EFL learning process (Block, 1994; Kumavadivelu, 1991). In the context of this study it was also found that the mismatch between students' and their teachers' perceptions on EFL learning inside the state school classroom affected the learning process. On the whole, students reported feeling for the most part frustrated by the traditional approach to EFL teaching and learning as they were looking forward to new and more challenging content following their transfer to preparatory education (see 6.2 and 6.3.1).

8.3.3 HOW CAN TRANSFER BETWEEN SECONDARY AND PREPARATORY SCHOOL BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE?

This lack of progress in EFL learning has prevailed in the Mexican state education system for over four decades. The most important question is: how can transfer from secondary to preparatory school be made more effective? At a superficial level, it may be thought that unsuccessful EFL transfer between secondary and preparatory school has prevailed because there is no communication among the parties involved, i.e. teachers, school administrators, students, and people in charge of language-in-education policy. In this case the obvious way of making EFL transfer more effective would be to create the necessary bridges for people to communicate. Similarly, if the lack of communication were the *only* problem, then

the obvious response to the lack of progress would be to create the necessary conditions for EFL teachers to start communicating with each other. Unfortunately, the problem is more complex than it appears. It would be naïve to suggest that once the conditions are created for teachers at both ends of the transfer process to start communicating with each other better transfer will follow immediately. The outcomes of this study have shown that the lack of progress in EFL learning when students transfer from secondary to preparatory education is far more complex than it appears. There are too many interconnected contextual issues that have to be addressed first: differentiation of students according to their EFL background level, more appropriate teaching and learning resources, and better timetabling, to mention but a few. If immediate change is not possible due to contextual constraints then the teacher training courses that teachers follow have to be designed in such a manner as to respond to the specific demands of the secondary and preparatory school teachers in the Mexican context.

The findings of this study have suggested that an important first step towards better EFL transfers would be to move away, as far as this is possible, from top down approaches to decision making between policy-makers and EFL teachers, and between EFL teachers and their students. The outcomes of this study have also shown that the stated policy may be adequate *if* the contextual situations were in accord with what is assumed to apply to teachers and students working in the state school classrooms. In providing clear evidence of a mismatch between the assumptions of policy-makers and institutional realities, this research provides a basis for raising awareness of this important issue, but this is no more than a first step: further research will be needed to evaluate the impact that changes in contextual conditions will have on the efficiency of EFL transfer between the two levels.

8.4 CONTRIBUTION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although what has been exposed in this study may seem very obvious, this study has made a significant contribution to the EFL situation in the Mexican context to the extent that nobody has exposed this problem and the intertwined issues associated with this stagnation in EFL learning before. There is currently no research that has reported what has been going on in EFL teaching and learning in state schools in the Mexican education system from the perspectives of the main stakeholders of the EFL teaching and learning process. Further, I believe that this study has also made a contribution by showing that entrenched attitudes to EFL

teaching and learning are pervasive in the system. The evidence from the data will, I hope, prove food for thought for all those concerned with, and interested in changing, the long-standing failure of EFL teaching and learning in state schools: policy-makers, teachers educators, and, teachers.

Because of this disjunction between the rhetoric of the educational authorities and the realities of its application, teachers have developed their own rhetoric, their own discourse, which accounts for this failure in transition in terms of failings in students and institutional inadequacies, hence absolving themselves of the responsibility for current failures or the need to see new ways to promote successful transition. This research has also revealed hitherto unnoticed responses by students which contribute to masking the true extent of the problem. It presents clear evidence of students' self-initiated activities for improving or progressing in EFL which reflect tacit acceptance of systemic failure. The thesis has proposed an important distinction between views of English the *language* and English the *school subject*, revealing how rejection of the latter does not necessarily imply indifference to the former, with the result that many students have developed 'coping strategies' in order to achieve progress outside the EFL classroom. In other words, some students have their own ways to make progress in learning English the language *despite* the system whereas other students have learnt how to work *through* the system to pass the English subject.

In sum, what I have found is a system which is rhetorically adequate but practically inadequate, with the result that the teachers invest their time in accounting for their failure. And as a result of this, while some students find other ways of progressing, in which case *transition* takes place outside the secondary and preparatory school classroom, other students who have not found 'coping strategies' just seem to have given up learning EFL.

Effectively this produces a two-tier system where students who rely entirely on state provision are condemned to failure and either remain indifferent to this or construct a discourse of blame directed at teachers, other classmates or the system, while those students who are determined to succeed, those who possess a strong motivation, overcome the limitations of the system by employing some sort of 'coping strategy or alternative exit', be it self-generated; parent-generated or of any other sort.

As a result of this research, I would like to suggest that the distinction between *transfer* (the change of school) and *transition* as suggested by Galton *et al.* (2000: 341; 2002: 26) should be reconsidered, at least when discussing the EFL situation in the Mexican System. As I mentioned in chapter two, these authors have sug-

gested that *transfer* be used to talk about the move from one phase of education to another involving a change of schools, whereas *transition*, they argue, describes year by year moves within the same school when moving up a grade. However, there are two main reasons to make a much clearer *conceptual* distinction between these two terms, not least because semantically the two terms convey different meanings. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995: 1537) *transfer* means ‘to move or arrange for someone to move from one place to or job to another, especially within the same organisation’, whereas *transition* is the act or process of changing from one form or state to another.

I propose that *transfer* should be used to refer to the move from one place to another and/or one level to another, which may involve a physical change from one school culture to another. *Transition*, however, has to do with the process of changing in a broader sense: from one state of life experience to another, from one phase in life to the next, which may involve adjustment to a culture or to a new life stage such as adolescence. This distinction seems to be very meaningful and useful in this study because while it is clear that transfer is taking place, there seems to be little evidence of successful transition.

Furthermore, the changes the participants (teachers and students) describe regarding their experiences in EFL lessons seem to imply a mere physical change from one school to another rather than a change associated to a process in which progress or academic development is desired and/or expected. A shift in perspective from transfer to transition, however, reveals a much richer picture. As adolescents, students are undergoing their own life *transition* where they are no longer simply children but not yet adults, while at the same time they are making an important psychological transition from one school culture to another. And though some teachers use adolescence as a convenient explanation for a lack of student interest in their subject and behavioural problems, this fails to recognise that adolescents are, on the whole, looking forward to experiencing new and more challenging, more meaningful changes. The significance of this for coping strategies has emerged in the thesis. The nature of this relationship between transfer and transition in the context of student progression, masked by the distinction proposed by Galton *et al.* (2000, 2002) would repay further investigation.

Finally, I have also argued in chapter two that it is not enough to recognise that there exists or that there has long existed a problem in the EFL teaching and learning in the Mexican context (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2004). What is needed is an attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of those obstacles contributing to the deficiency in EFL teaching and learning which have prevailed for so long in

the state school sector in the Mexican context. Only then can those who are more directly concerned with EFL policy and its implementation act upon them in an informed way. This is where I hope the major contribution of this thesis lies.

It must be acknowledged, however, that this study has its limitations. Firstly, the number of teacher participants was small, especially in respect of EFL preparatory school EFL teachers. Secondly, I was not able to do any class observations due to time constraints and these may have provided a richer picture of the situation on the ground (see chapter three). However, it should be mentioned that interviews with both teachers and students confirmed that classrooms routines have not changed since my involvement in the research project of 2000 (see pp 7-8). Thirdly, all students are Mexicans learning EFL in state schools in Xalapa, the capital city of the state of Veracruz, where there are other possibilities for them to learn EFL in more congenial and productive environments. More research is needed focusing on students whose only opportunity to study EFL is state school classrooms, where they do not have other opportunities and see to what extent they are able to develop their own coping strategies (see 6.3). Finally, as I have already mentioned, there is no tradition of research focusing on school transfers or transitions from both ends of the process, and my research has concentrated primarily on the receiving school at the expense of the feeder schools. It has also concentrated only on one transfer, and further research is needed on other EFL transfers that students have to undergo (from primary to secondary and from preparatory to university) to see to what extent the issues affecting the EFL learning process are the same or different according to different learning contexts and different age groups of students. Nevertheless, this study has at least indicated that there is a pressing need to do more research of this sort in the Mexican context.

8.5 CONCLUSION

The picture that has emerged from this investigation is complex and in many respects rather disappointing. However, I feel that in adopting an in-depth case study approach to research, I have been able to listen carefully to what the main stakeholders of the EFL teaching and learning process have to say, and this has generated useful understanding and insights about what is going on in real EFL classrooms in the Mexican education context. This study, I hope, has paved the way for further research that is urgently needed if we are to improve the student experience of school transfer within the Mexican Education public system.

Many new and innovative EFL reforms may come and go, but if the Ministry of Education is serious about improving the quality of EFL teaching and learning it has to be prepared to listen to the voices of those most directly affected by the top-down policy it imposes without any consideration of local constraints. Policy-makers have to learn about what seems to have been going on for over four decades in Mexican EFL state school classrooms, otherwise the existing unsatisfactory EFL teaching situation will prevail. One way to start achieving more satisfactory results in EFL teaching and learning, I believe, is to publish or make available to all those concerned research that reports what is really happening inside EFL lessons in state schools. Further, I firmly believe that any changes will only be successful as long as the voices of the teachers and students are consulted before introducing new changes or reforms. Ultimately it is the teachers and their students who can inform policy makers, teacher trainers, teacher educators and anyone involved in EFL in Mexico as to what, when and how they need to change the conditions *inside* the EFL classrooms. A bottom-up approach could lead to a more realistic approach to improving the EFL teaching and learning situation in state schools. The challenge then becomes one of how best to establish effective partnerships in order to bring about this change.

This investigation has shown there are many gaps between policy and practice in EFL teaching and learning in state schools, but it has not looked at other subjects. It could be said that since the methodology and teaching techniques that EFL teachers are asked to use in their lessons are not likely to be used in other subjects of the curricula of the two levels of education that this study concerned, this could represent more challenges for EFL teachers than for teachers of other subjects. However, more research is needed in order to establish to what extent the gaps identified in this study are unique to EFL teaching and learning and how this may impinge on both teachers and learners.

Learning a foreign language is a unique opportunity for both personal and intellectual growth. However, if what has been happening in EFL state school classrooms in the Mexican context persists because the voices of those who share the EFL classrooms are not heeded, the existing frustrating and unsatisfactory EFL situation in the public sector will continue, sending an unfortunate message to those students whose only opportunity to learn English is the state school classroom. The real question is how much longer Mexico can afford to put up with a system in which, in the words of one teacher:

'We [teachers] pretend we teach and they [students] pretend they learn.'

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A

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide June 2004:

- Tell me about your experience of secondary school in general
- Talk me through about your experience in 3rd grade of secondary education
- Now, more specifically, tell me about your EFL lessons in secondary school:
 - ◆ Your EFL lessons in 3rd Grade
 - ◆ Teachers
 - ◆ Materials
 - ◆ Methodology employed
 - ◆ Use of L1/L2
 - ◆ Assessment
 - ◆ Activities
- Do you have any expectations regarding your EFL lessons in Preparatory school?
- If you were an EFL teacher how would you teach students of your age?
- If you could make some changes to your EFL lessons, what would these be?
- Is there something you would like to add/express that we haven't talked about and you think it's important to you?

Interview Guide: February-March 2005

- Tell me about your experience of the move to preparatory school in general.
 - Tell me about your experience of the change of EFL lessons in preparatory school:
 - ◆ Contents
 - ◆ Teaching/learning
 - ◆ Methodology
 - ◆ Materials used
 - ◆ Use of L1/L2
 - ◆ Assessment
 - ◆ Relevance to what was learnt before
 - Are your EFL lessons in preparatory school what you expected?
 - Is there anything you would like to mention/add?
-

B

EFL TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide: June 2004

- Tell me about your experience as an EFL teacher in secondary school
 - ◆ Methodology
 - ◆ Students/ level of EFL
 - ◆ Materials available
 - ◆ Working conditions
 - ◆ Support from authorities
 - ◆ Use of L1/L2
 - ◆ Assessment
- Is there something you would like to change? If so, what? Why?
- Do you know what EFL lessons are about in preparatory school?
- Is there anything you would like to mention/add?

Interview Guide: February-March 2005

- Tell me about your experience as an EFL teacher in preparatory school
 - ◆ Methodology
 - ◆ Students
 - ◆ Materials available
 - ◆ Working conditions
 - ◆ Support from authorities
 - ◆ Use of L1/L2
 - ◆ Assessment
 - Is there something you would like to change? If so, what? Why?
 - Do you know what EFL lessons are about in secondary school?
 - Is there anything you would like to mention/add?
-

C

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

FIRST PHASE OF FIELDWORK: XALAPA,
VERACRUZ, MEXICO - JUNE 2004

SECONDARY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS:

(S=student; PT= English teacher; PC= Co-ordinator; PH= Headmaster)

SECTEC A

Col. Inmecafé Ánimas

Tel: (228) 813 03 55

S1 - 

Address: Circuito de las Águilas

Tel: 812 62 99

Grade: 3rd

Prepa? Yes

Which? CEBETIS 13 (Miguel Alemán)

Email: peque_bu9@hotmail.com

Next interview? Yes

S2 - //

Álvaro Obregón
817 68 17
3rd grade
Prepa: VILLA DE CORTÉS (private)
ssalamndraa@hotmail.com
Yes

S3 - //

SIPEH Ánimas
812 05 82
3rd grade
Prepa: CEBETIS 13 / PREPA JUÁREZ
limin_oz@hotmail.com
Yes

S4 - //

Col. Cuauhtemoc
3rd grade
817 20 24
Prepa: COBAEV/ CONSTITUCIÓN de 1917
Yes

PT5 - //

Indeco Ánimas
Tel: 812 57 70
Secundaria Técnica A
English 1st and 3rd grades
13 years teaching English and 13 years admin work= 26 working for SEC
Other jobs: Bilingual secretary in Mexico City
Studied English in UV (graduated in 1966)
Next interview? Yes

S46 – //
2nd grade ® 3rd grade same school
834 81 07
Next interview? Yes

S47 – //////////////////////////////////////
2nd grade ® 3rd grade same school
814 63 90
Yes

S48 – //////////////////////////////////////
2nd grade ® 3rd grade same school
842 97 54
Yes

S49 – //////////////////////////////////////
2nd grade ® 3rd grade same school
Yes

S50 – //////////////////////////////////////
2nd grade ® 3rd grade same school
yonegodos@hotmail.com
Yes

PT 51 – //////////////////////////////////////
normafl13@hotmail.com

PT 52 – //////////////////////////////////////
gvalenciazavala@yahoo.com

D

CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
VIEWS OF SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working conditions• Teacher development (lack thereof)• Communication (lack thereof)• Top-down approach• Decision-making/freedom• Assessment
VIEWS OF ENGLISH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subject matter• Language
VIEWS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING EFL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of L1/L2• Resources• Programme• Expectations• Activities• Classroom management• Assessment• Progress (lack thereof)
STUDENTS' VIEWS OF TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal traits/personality• Roles• Knowledge of subject matter• Experience as EFL teachers
TEACHERS' VIEWS OF STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adolescents (age)• Educational background• Attitudes to learning EFL• Discipline/ behaviour
VIEWS OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relations• Confidence• Authority• Respect• (Di) Motivation

THE STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF CODING AND CATEGORISING

EFL Teacher
3rd Grade
Secundaria

(1A)

First attempt

Interview: Mtra. Cecilia Rojas Salazar 10/02/2020

0001 IR Buenos días maestra. Platíqueme sobre su experiencia
0002 como maestra de inglés aquí en la secundaria, por favor.
0003 TI Bueno, sinceramente, yo siento que: es una actividad, al
0004 menos en el medio en el que estamos nosotros, es una
0005 actividad un tanto INGRATA, digamos (risitas), porque
0006 pues sí se le echan (.) al menos MI forma de ser, trato de
0007 echarle las más ganas que se puedan. NO siempre,
0008 desafortunadamente, se obtienen los resultados que uno
0009 quisiera, porque la CALIDAD de alumnos, por las
0010 limitaciones que tiene uno también aquí. Una de las
0011 limitaciones mayores que yo siento es tener NADA MAS
0012 tres horas a la semana. TRES MÓDULOS, porque no son
0013 horas, son módulos de 50 minutos, a la semana,
0014 entonces eso y los chicos que están en una edad muy,
0015 muy este..., pues de mucha INQUIETUD, de muchos
0016 cambios para ellos, les interesan realmente otras cosas,
0017 no tanto como que así a MÍ me gusta, me han dicho
0018 niños, "a mí me gusta mucho el inglés, pero no tengo
0019 tiempo, no me da tiempo de repararlo, no me da tiempo
0020 de estudiarlo" y pues el inglés tiene que ser algo que se
0021 desarrolla en base a constancia, a estar siempre
0022 repasando, al menos, continuamente para poder adquirir
0023 en idioma, entonces muchos se, se desesperan, y, y,
0024 este... y a la mera hora SI empiezan muy bien, pero se
0025 nos van, por mucho que se les insista y se les diga, de
0026 alguna manera se les presione un poquito, algunos NO,
0027 no logran reponerse de esa dificultad que para ellos
0028 implica el idioma
0029 IR Usted dijo módulos, más bien son módulos,
0030 explíqueme, por favor, qué son módulos.
0031 TI Pues, se supone que en nuestras clases en la escuela
0032 están divididas en 8 módulos diarios en total. Los niños
0033 vienen a las 7 y su último módulo termina al 1.45pm. A
0034 la hora de clase se le llama "módulo".
0035 IR ¿La hora de clase o la materia?
0036 TI No, la hora de clase es un módulo. O sea tenemos el, el,
0037 bueno aunque mi horario ya está muy ajetreado
0038 (sacando su horario de la semana para enseñármelo)
0039 estos son los módulos que trabajamos. Entonces de 7 a
0040 7.50, yo tengo estos grupos el día de hoy, dependiendo
0041 del día de la semana que corresponda, este es otro 2º
0042 módulo, 3º módulo, el 4º, viene receso y luego los otros 4
0043 IR módulos.
0044 O sea que "módulo" es el tiempo de duración de cada
0045 TI clase, independiente de la clase que sea.
0046 Así es, es el tiempo, independiente de la clase que sea.
0047 Ahora, yo tengo con cada grupo, aquí por ejemplo es 3º
0048 F, tengo los lunes, tengo los miércoles y tengo el jueves.
0049 Son los 3 módulos que yo tengo con ese grupo a la
0050 semana.

Experiencia EFL
Teacher:
Actividad
Ingrata = Secundaria

→ Trabajo mucha / echarle
ganas, / hacer lo más que
pueda - límites

→ No resultados deseados

→ Poco tiempo x clases
de inglés

→ 150 mins x semana

→ Edad de los alumnos:
ADOLESCENTES / inquietud

→ edad difícil:

→ inquietud / cambios

→ desinterés / no práctica
constante

→ interés x otras cosas

→ Expectativa de actitud
de los alumnos hacia el
inglés, / presión T-S

→ práctica fuera del
salón / dificultad x
aprender inglés

→ cambios de actitud
de los SS

Explicación de cómo
es el sistema de la
materia = módulos

→ carga de trabajo

→ división de 'módulos'

3 módulos x grupo
= 150 mins

tiempo de EFL x
semana

0051 IR ¿Cuántos grupos tiene usted)

0052 T1 Tengo 10 ahorita: 6 terceros y 4 primeros. Y todos tienen 3

0053 módulos a la semana: 1º, 2º y 3º. Entonces, sinceramente,

0054 yo siento que es MUY poco tiempo para PRETENDER que

0055 que los niños, por mucho que los programas que nos dan,

0056 que tenemos que manejar 1º, 2º y 3º., para Mí,

0057 sinceramente, siento que sí están los suficientemente

0058 completos como para que el niño salga y que aquí la razón

0059 de nuestro aprendizaje de ellos ahorita, es realmente, que

0060 ellos se COMUNIQUEN, que aunque tengan muchos

0061 errores, pero que LOGREN comunicarse y logren

0062 ENTENDER. Esa, es, la, la tirada, de la Secretaría de

0063 Educación. Por eso se nos llama que debe ser un inglés

0064 COMUNICATIVO. A la mera hora NO resulta NI TAN

0065 IR COMUNICATIVO y mucho menos tan fácil poderlo hacer,

0066 en la forma en la que se nos SUGIERE.

0067 IR ¿Cómo, maestra?

0068 T1 Porque se nos dice, que por ejemplo, NUNCA, se

0069 mencionen cuestiones gramaticales en nuestras clases. Sin

0070 embargo, hay chicos que hasta que NO se les dice "esto

0071 corresponde a tal de español", al gerundio, por decir algo,

0072 entonces, "ah, pos sí, ahora sí, ya le entendí", o sea, y por

0073 eso yo he optado por siempre AUNQUE que digan que

0074 NO se debe, YO SÍ manejo, a veces, algo gramatical NO las

0075 estructuras que tienen ser sujeto, verbo y no sé que, porque

0076 vaya, para No caer también en cuestiones en que después

0077 si no se encuentran en el mismo enunciado, ya se complico

0078 todo. Pero SÍ sugerirles, "no pues esto corresponde a esto".

0079 De alguna manera sí mencionar VERBOS, por ejemplo,

0080 porque según ellos dicen que no, "pues cuando tú

0081 aprendiste a hablar español, no sabías que era un verbo y

0082 también te lo aprendiste". Voy de acuerdo, pero es que SÍ

0083 hay muchos niños que si NO se les menciona eso, no lo::

0084 no acaban de entender.

0085 IR ¿Entonces los programas que usted maneja vienen de la

0086 Secretaría?

0087 T1 TODOS vienen de la Secretaría, ellos nos marcan lo que

0088 tenemos que hacer y por supuesto, los libros que nos, que

0089 nos, este:: los libros están a nuestra elección; los libros,

0090 todas las editoriales están de acuerdo con la SEP y ahí les

0091 dicen que deben manejar nuestros libros y es exactamente

0092 lo que manejan, incluso HASTA el orden en el que lo

0093 debemos llevar, realmente. Últimamente, inclusive nos

0094 ayudan mucho los libros porque traen, incluso, la forma en

0095 que debemos manejarlos, o sea nos dan hasta exámenes

0096 nos ponen aquí, que a la larga, realmente, no es tan (!) NO,

0097 no puede uno confiarse tanto porque hay muchos chicos

0098 MUY inteligentes que a la mera hora, los libros del maestro

0099 los andan manejando en clases. Si así sí se hacen de ellos,

0100 de alguna manera, pero este:: pues aquí tendrían todas las

Carga de trabajo:
10 grupos: 6 terceros
4 primeros (400
alumnos X semana?)
Poco tiempo | limitación
expectativas reales
maestro - grupo
Objetivo: comunicación
y entendimiento ⇒ No se
los da
SEC VS REALIDAD
Programas
conflicto: programa y realidad
Uso de experiencia:
estrategia / No gramática
Enfoque comunicativo
libertad en y se le sabe de cosa
Estructural
Uso de Lit - conocimientos
para explicar LZ / estrategia
libertad?
conflicto entre formas
de enseñar una lengua
tradicional VS comunicativa
Programas impuestos
por la SEP
libros de texto
'decisión' del maestro
ayuda: libro de
texto + material +
exámenes
Libro del maestro
DES-CONFIANZA
ideas sobre alumnos
estudiante inteligente ⇒
'descubrir los planes / exámenes
del maestro → trapeos?
→ idea acerca de los alumnos

0101 respuestas. PERO si están manejados, si están manejados → mejoramiento

0102 de acuerdo a lo que se necesita y con actividades, Situación anterior

0103 últimamente, sobre todo, ÚLTIMAMENTE, porque antes vs actual

0104 los libros venían un tanto o en un inglés muy } CAMBIOS - materiales

0105 rebuscados, muy difícil para ellos, para el nivel de ellos, → relevancia de material

0106 o este:: que todavía los hay por supuesto, pero este:: → materiales (idea sobre)

0107 últimamente ya viene muy, muy agradables, inclusive → materiales más atractivos

0108 para el manejo porque tienen muchos colores, antes tanto para el maestro como

0109 venían en blanco y negro y esas cosas que → alumnos

0110 ((enseñándome una lección)) esto les atrae: hablar de temas actuales x jóvenes

0111 gentes que:: actuales, no tan sólo de héroes ni de libro de texto

0112 cuestiones atrasadas, no? si, si se refiere mucho a, a: esas Editoriales (SEP)

0113 cosas, PERO sí procuran enfocarlo a lo de ahora → ideas sobre trata

0114 (hojeando el libro de texto para enseñármelo) a maestros

0115 IR ¿Qué libro es maestra? → situaciones difíciles

0116 T1 Este se llama "Links" y es de McMillan, que de hecho, NO TAL VEZ, sino que entiendo, vamos a cambiar ya de

0117 ahorita en (.) yo he trabajado mucho con MacMillan, me editorial y los usa uno por tantos años y que lo estén

0118 gustan mucho sus textos pero desafortunadamente hay haciendo a uno sufrir por material REALMENTE como

0119 poca ATENCIÓN para los maestros por parte de la conflictos - materiales

0120 editorial y los usa uno por tantos años y que lo estén editoriales

0121 haciendo a uno sufrir por material REALMENTE como → seguir programa SEC

0122 que no me, no me convence mucho. Tal vez en este año, que sea, cualquiera que sea, está de acuerdo A lo que tenemos

0123 NO TAL VEZ, sino que entiendo, vamos a cambiar ya de que enseñar, porque es de acuerdo a los programas que

0124 editorial y vamos a llevar otro libro. Pero le digo, nos manda la Secretaría de Educación.

0125 cualquiera que sea, está de acuerdo A lo que tenemos

0126 que enseñar, porque es de acuerdo a los programas que

0127 nos manda la Secretaría de Educación.

0128 IR ¿Y, por ejemplo, este es el número 3 de la serie. Usted

0129 lleva el 1 en 1°, la maestra de 2°, lleva el 2 y así se lleva

0130 toda la serie?

0131 T1 Así es, llevamos toda la serie. → libertad en la

0132 IR ¿Y, cómo o quién decide qué libro de texto van a llevar? elección del libro de

0133 T1 Entre las dos lo decidimos, la maestra de 2° y yo. texto

0134 IR ¿Tienen esa libertad?

0135 T1 Sí, sí, definitivamente. Y, sí, hay muchos que a lo mejor

0136 están buenos pero, este sí lo ve está "gruesecito", pero

0137 hay unos que vienen al DOBLE, o unos que traen la letra

0138 muy pequeña, o traen demasiados ejercicios de un solo

0139 tema, o al revés: muy poco de los temas importantes;

0140 entonces tenemos que revisarlos con tiempo para poder

0141 decidir qué libro es el que vamos a pedir; precisamente

0142 que sea (.) pues lo más, lo menos complicado para los

0143 niños sobre todo hasta a la vista, le digo, que sea

0144 agradable, que tenga coloritos para que a ellos se les

0145 haga AMENO, por lo menos el abrir el libro. → trabajo 'en equipo'

0146 IR ¿Y cuánto tiempo tienen usando con esta serie? con la otra maestra

0147 T1 Esta serie apenas la empezamos (.) es el tercer año que lo

0148 manejamos, pero como 3° grado, o sea, se han venido

0149 pidiendo desde 1°, entonces con 1°, si ve mi libro de 1°

0150 que ya está mucho más trabajado porque ya lo manejé → problemas con libros de parte

→ temas en el libro

de texto

AGRADABLE A LA VISTA

materiales atractivos

para los alumnos

MATERIALES

LIBROS DE TEXTO -

TIEMPO

EFL Teacher
3rd Grade
Secondary School

(1B) 2nd attempt

Interview: Mtra. Carolina Rosales Salazar, Docente

0001IR Buenos días maestra. Platíqueme sobre su experiencia como maestra de inglés aquí en la secundaria, por favor.

0003 TI Bueno, sinceramente, yo siento que... es una actividad, al menos en el medio en el que estamos nosotros, es una actividad un tanto INGRATA, digamos (risitas), porque, pues si se le echan (.) al menos MI forma de ser, trato de echarle las más ganas que se puedan. NO siempre, desafortunadamente, se obtienen los resultados que uno quisiera, po::: la CALIDAD de alumnos, por las limitaciones que tiene uno también aquí. Una de las limitaciones mayores que yo siento es tener NADA MÁS tres horas a la semana: TRES MÓDULOS, porque no son horas, son módulos de 50 minutos, a la semana, entonces eso y los chicos que están en una edad muy, muy este::, pues de mucha INQUIETUD, de muchos cambios para ellos, les interesan realmente otras cosas,

0016 no tanto como que así a MÍ me gusta, me han dicho niños, "a mí me gusta mucho el inglés, pero no tengo tiempo, no me da tiempo de repasarlo, no me da tiempo de estudiarlo" y pues el inglés tiene que ser algo que se desarrolla en base a constancia, a estar siempre repasando, al menos, continuamente para poder adquirir el idioma, entonces muchos se, se desesperan, y, y, este::: y a la mera hora SI empiezan muy bien, pero se nos van, por mucho que se les insista y se les diga, de alguna manera se les presione un poquito, algunos NO, no logran reponerse de esa dificultad que para ellos implica el idioma

0029IR Usted dijo "módulos, más bien son módulos", explíqueme, por favor, qué son módulos.

0031 TI Pues, se supone que en nuestras clases en la escuela están divididas en 8 módulos diarios en total. Los niños vienen a las 7 y su último módulo termina al 1.45pm. A la hora de clase se le llama "módulo".

0035 IR La hora de clase o la materia?

0036 TI No, la hora de clase es un módulo. O sea tenemos el, bueno aunque mi horario ya está muy ajetreado (sacando su horario de la semana para enseñármelo) estos son los módulos que trabajamos. Entonces de 7 a 7.50, yo tengo estos grupos el día de hoy, dependiendo del día de la semana que corresponda, este es otro 2º módulo, 3º módulo, el 4º, viene receso y luego los otros 4 módulos.

0044 IR O sea que "módulo" es el tiempo de duración de cada clase, independiente de la clase que sea.

0046 TI Así es, es el tiempo, independiente de la clase que sea. Ahora, yo tengo con cada grupo, aquí por ejemplo es 3º E, tengo los lunes, tengo los miércoles y tengo el jueves.

0049 Son los 3 módulos que yo tengo con ese grupo a la semana.

0050

→ Experience as an EFL teacher in secondary school
↓
→ ungrateful experience
work = ~~try~~ hard / frustrating activity
→ type of Ss in classes
→ working conditions: not adequate
→ limited time x EFL lesson
→ Ss: restless / changing not real interest in learning difficult age
→ Ss' attitudes to EFL learning:
→ T-S relationship
→ Class time: 50 mins each lesson
→ How EFL lessons are distributed
→ Teacher's workload = excessive
→ 3 "módulos" x week each 50 mins = 150 mins a week NOT hours

0051 IR ¿Cuántos grupos tiene usted)

0052 T1 Tengo 10 ahorita: 6 terceros y 4 primeros. Y todos tienen 3

0053 módulos a la semana: 1º, 2º y 3º. Entonces, sinceramente,

0054 yo siento que es MUY poco tiempo para PRETENDER que

0055 que los niños, por mucho que los programas que nos dan,

0056 que tenemos que manejar 1º, 2º y 3º., para Mí,

0057 sinceramente, siento que sí están los suficientemente

0058 completos como para que el niño salga y que aquí la razón

0059 de nuestro aprendizaje de ellos ahorita, es realmente, que

0060 ellos se COMUNIQUEN, que aunque tengan muchos

0061 errores, pero que LOGREN comunicarse y logren

0062 ENTENDER. Esa, es, la, la tirada, de la Secretaría de

0063 Educación. Por eso se nos llama que debe ser un inglés

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0066 en la forma en la que se nos SUGIERE

0067 IR ¿Cómo, maestra?

0068 T1 Porque se nos dice, que por ejemplo, NUNCA, se

0069 mencionen cuestiones gramaticales en nuestras clases. Sin

0070 embargo, hay chicos que hasta que NO se les dice "esto

0071 corresponde a tal de español", al gerundio, por decir algo,

0072 entonces, "ah, pos sí, ahora sí, ya le entendí", o sea, y por

0073 eso yo he optado por siempre AUNQUE que digan que

0074 NO se debe, YO SÍ manejo, a veces, algo gramatical NO las

0075 estructuras que tienen ser sujeto, verbo y no sé que, porque

0076 vaya, para No caer también en cuestiones en que después

0077 si no se encuentran en el mismo enunciado, ya se complicó

0078 todo. Pero SÍ sugerirles, "no pues esto corresponde a esto".

0079 De alguna manera sí mencionar VERBOS, por ejemplo,

0080 porque según ellos dicen que no, "pues cuando tú

0081 aprendiste a hablar español, no sabías que era un verbo y

0082 también te lo aprendiste". Voy de acuerdo, pero es que SÍ

0083 hay muchos niños que si NO se les menciona eso, no lo::

0084 no acaban de entender.

0085 IR ¿Entonces los programas que usted maneja vienen de la

0086 Secretaría?

0087 T1 TODOS vienen de la Secretaría, ellos nos marcan lo que

0088 tenemos que hacer y por supuesto, los libros que nos, que

0089 nos, este:: los libros están a nuestra elección; los libros,

0090 todas las editoriales están de acuerdo con la SEP y ahí les

0091 dicen que deben manejar nuestros libros y es exactamente

0092 lo que manejan, incluso HASTA el orden en el que lo

0093 debemos llevar, realmente. Últimamente, inclusive nos

0094 ayudan mucho los libros porque traen, incluso, la forma en

0095 que debemos manejarlos, o sea nos dan hasta exámenes,

0096 nos ponen aquí, que a la larga, realmente, no es tan (.) NO,

0097 no puede uno confiarse tanto porque hay muchos chicos

0098 MUY inteligentes que a la mera hora, los libros del maestro

0099 los andan manejando en clases. Si así sí se hacen de ellos,

0100 de alguna manera, pero este:: pues aquí tendrían todas las

Ts workload:
 10 groups T & 1st grade
 → limited time for
 Ss to really learn
 EFL well
 EFL Programme: CLT
 → Not enough time
 to teach Ss how to
 communicate in English
 → not easy to implement
 CLT

Traditional approach
 to EFL VS CLT
 → Grammar
 Use of L1 to "help" Ss
 understand better
 → Conflict: what
 the system wants Ts
 to do inside the classroom
 and what Ts do in
 practice

Top-down approach:
 All EFL programmes are
 sent/decided by MOE
 (SEP)
 → Ts decide which
 textbook to use
 among the ones sent
 by the SEP
 Ts' views of Ss:
 cheats, Ts have to
 be careful with textbooks/
 exams

0101 respuestas. PERO si están manejados, si están manejados
 0102 de acuerdo a lo que se necesita y con actividades,
 0103 últimamente, sobre todo, ÚLTIMAMENTE, porque antes
 0104 los libros venían un tanto o en un inglés muy
 0105 rebuscados, muy difícil para ellos, para el nivel de ellos,
 0106 o este: que todavía los hay por supuesto, pero este:,
 0107 últimamente ya viene muy, muy agradables, inclusive
 0108 para el manejo porque tienen muchos colores, antes
 0109 venían en blanco y negro y esas cosas que
 0110 ((enseñándome una lección)) esto les atrae: hablar de
 0111 gentes que: actuales, no tan sólo de héroes ni de
 0112 cuestiones atrasadas, no? si, si se refiere mucho a, a: esas
 0113 cosas, PERO SÍ procuran enfocarlo a lo de ahora
 0114 IR (hojeando el libro de texto para enseñármelo)
 0115T1 ¿Qué libro es maestra?
 0116 Este se llama "Links" y es de McMillan, que de hecho,
 0117 ahorita en () yo he trabajado mucho con MacMillan, me
 0118 gustan mucho sus textos pero desafortunadamente hay
 0119 poca ATENCIÓN para los maestros por parte de la
 0120 editorial y los usa uno por tantos años y que lo estén
 0121 haciendo a uno sufrir por material REALMENTE como
 0122 que no me, no me convence mucho. Tal vez en este año,
 0123 NO TAL VEZ, sino que entiendo, vamos a cambiar ya de
 0124 editorial y vamos a llevar otro libro. Pero le digo,
 0125 cualquiera que sea, está de acuerdo A lo que tenemos
 0126 que enseñar, porque es de acuerdo a los programas que
 0127 nos manda la Secretaría de Educación.
 0128IR ¿Y, por ejemplo, este es el número 3 de la serie. Usted
 0129 lleva el 1 en 1º, la maestra de 2º, lleva el 2 y así se lleva
 0130 toda la serie?
 0131T1 Así es, llevamos toda la serie.
 0132IR ¿Y, cómo o quién decide qué libro de texto van a llevar?
 0133T1 Entre las dos lo decidimos, la maestra de 2º y yo.
 0134IR ¿Tienen esa libertad?
 0135T1 Sí, sí, definitivamente. Y, sí, hay muchos que a lo mejor
 0136 están buenos pero, este si lo ve está "gruesecito", pero
 0137 hay unos que vienen al DOBLE, o unos que traen la letra
 0138 muy pequeña, o traen demasiados ejercicios de un solo
 0139 tema, o al revés: muy poco de los temas importantes;
 0140 entonces tenemos que revisarlos con tiempo para poder
 0141 decidir qué libro es el que vamos a pedir; precisamente
 0142 que sea () pues lo más, lo menos complicado para los
 0143 niños sobre todo hasta a la vista, le digo, que sea
 0144 agradable, que tenga colorcitos para que a ellos se les
 0145 haga AMENO, por lo menos el abrir el libro.
 0146IR ¿Y cuánto tiempo tienen usando con esta serie?
 0147T1 Esta serie apenas la empezamos () es el tercer año que lo
 0148 manejamos, pero como 3º grado, o sea, se han venido
 0149 pidiendo desde 1º, entonces con 1º, si ve mi libro de 1º
 0150 que ya está mucho más trabajado porque ya lo manejé

→ EFL Books are being improved: more attractive; more colours

→ Books used to be more difficult

→ Now TBs are more relevant

→ Textbooks: Conflict with publishing houses

→ lack of support

→ lack of materials other than textbooks

→ difficult situation

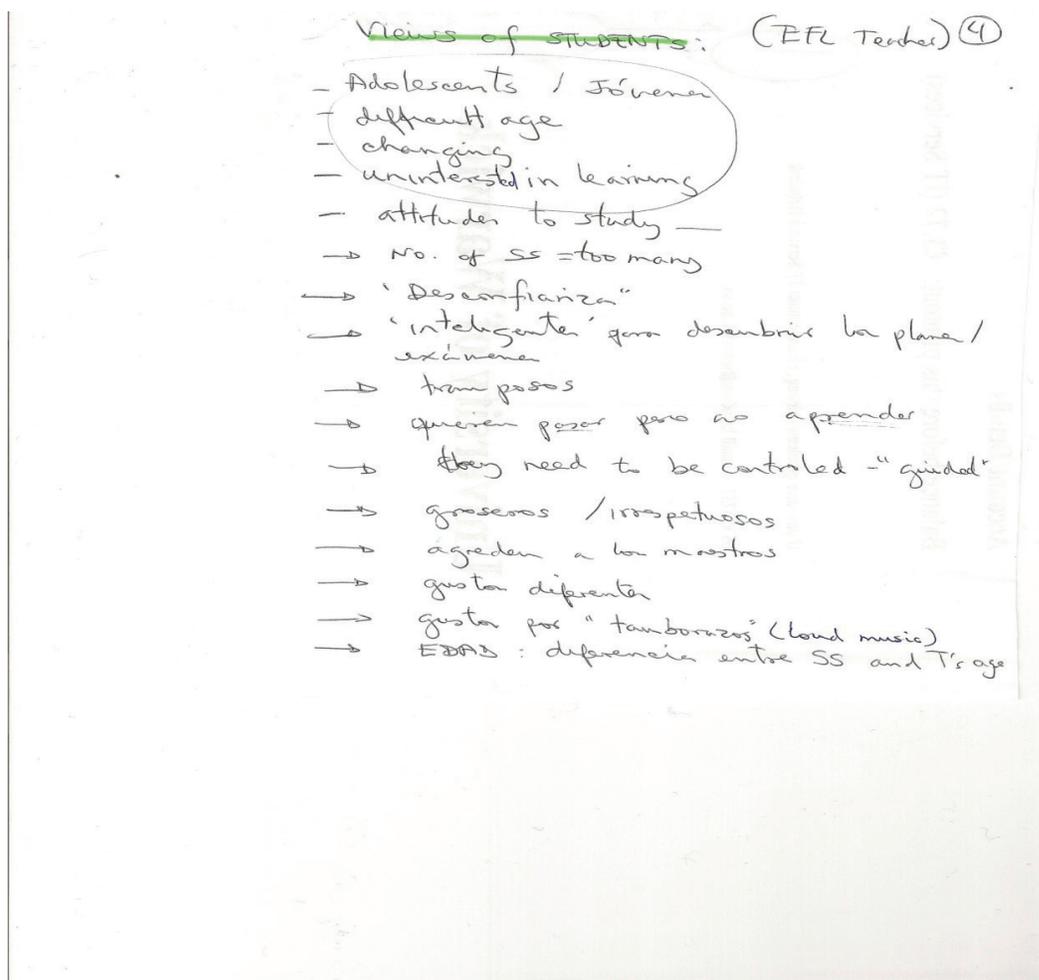
→ To have to follow SEC programme

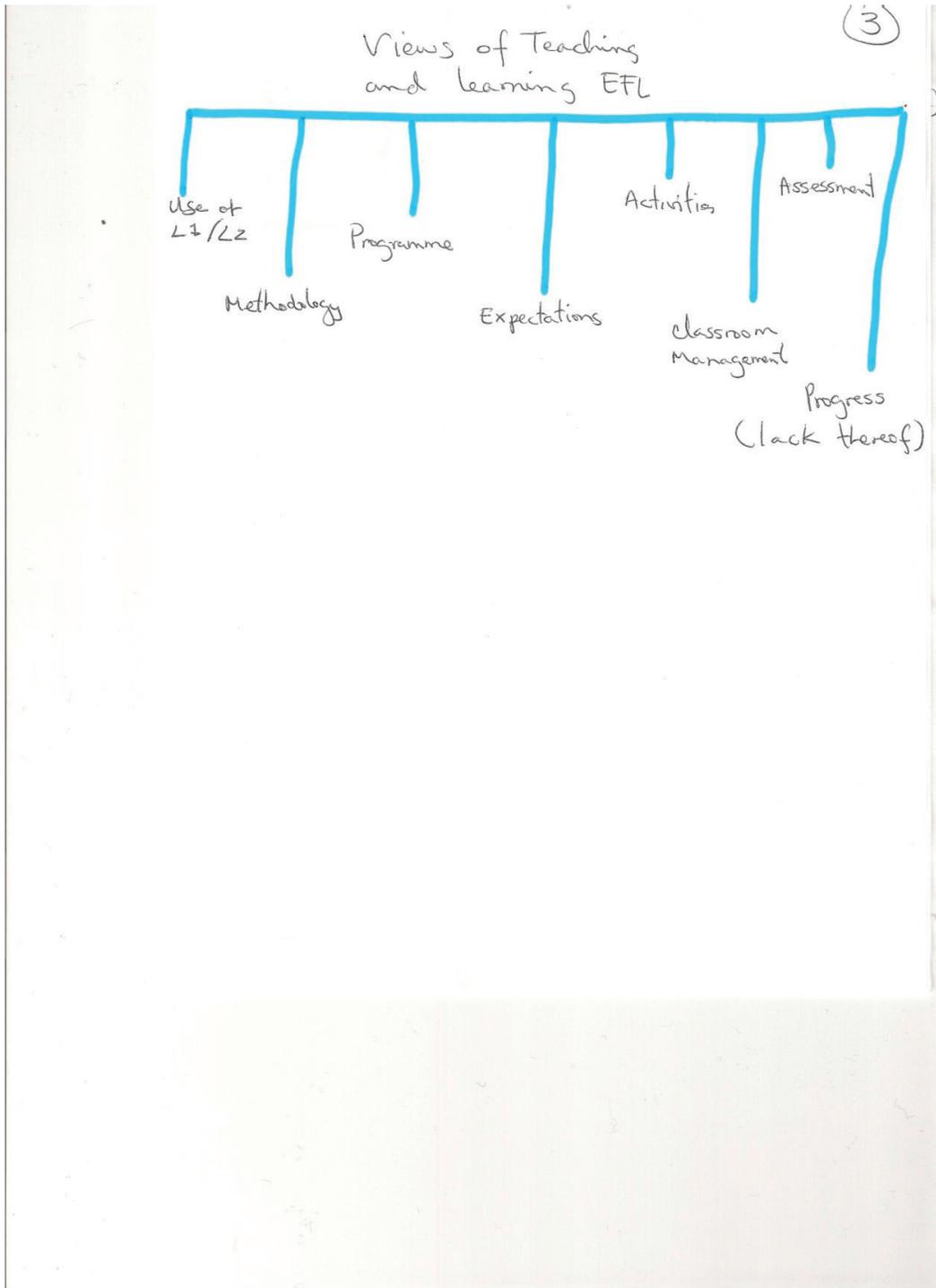
TS have 'certain' freedom to choose the textbook: the 2 EFL teacher in the school decide which TB to adopt

TS try to choose a book that motivates SS at least to open it!

→ Time using same textbook

<p><u>Views of EFL classes inside Sec classrooms</u> ①</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → limited time (classes) - Unrealistic / practice → conflict → programs and 'deadly' things in classroom - 'Communicative' - Use of L1 - Top-down approach to programme 	<p><u>View of EFL classes</u> ②</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programa ESTRUCTURA RÍGIDA - grupos MUY heterogeneos - no opciones ↑ → Problema con conocimientos previo → desorden / Indisciplina → 'el problema va creciendo' → visión de evaluación → calificación → Reforma de programas nuevo inglés → NO AVANCE Sec - Prepa → NO HAY SECUENCIA → Lo mismo en Sec / Preparatory → Principal problema
<p><u>Materials / Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Textbooks = material estructurado - limited - Situación desesperante → 'control' → disciplina → Evaluación → Role of EFL Teacher → Iniciativa para mejorar 	





E

INTERVIEW EXTRACTS AND QUOTES

CHAPTER FIVE

SECTION 5.3.1

CARLOS (P. 205)

Nora: Esta preparatoria en donde estás estudiando, ¿Cómo está considerada?
¿Cuál es su nivel académico?

Carlos: De Xalapa supongo que es la mejor porque según el CENEVAL la calificó como la prepa que está en el primer lugar en el país.

Nora: ¿Y a ustedes les pusieron el examen del CENEVAL al entrar a la preparatoria?

Carlos: Ajá, sí.

Nora: ¿Es un examen de conocimientos generales de todo lo que aprendiste en la secundaria?

Carlos: Ajá, sí de todo lo que aprendimos en la secundaria, y nos lo ponen para entrar a la prepa.

Nora: Este examen, ¿tiene preguntas de inglés? ¿Tiene una sección de preguntas en inglés?

- Carlos: Mm si, o sea el examen SÍ tiene una sección de inglés pero a la hora de que llegamos a presentar el examen nos dijeron que NO la teníamos que contestar.
- Nora: ¿Pero, la pudiste ver?
- Carlos: Ah sí
- Nora: ¿Y recuerdas que tipo de preguntas o cómo era? ¿Era en español o era en inglés?
- Carlos: Algunas (.) y también tenía un texto en inglés, y te hacían preguntas referentes a ese texto pero nos dijeron que no las contestáramos
- Nora: ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no tenían que contestar lo de inglés? ¿Les explicaron por qué?
- Carlos: Mmm no, no nos explicaron ((risas)). [C. 03.05: 030-061]

SECTION 5.3.2

ROGELIO (P. 207)

porque inglés yo creo que NO hay INTERÉS lo toman nada más para cubrir un programa NO por el interés de que el alumno realmente aprenda entonces es simplemente por llenar un programa y por eso mismo NO lo toman en cuenta de VERDAD creo que INCONCIENTEMENTE ellos tienen así PRESENTE que así que los alumnos realmente NO SABEN INGLÉS, saben o CREEN que no tienes conocimientos de inglés y pues para MUCHOS el que les hayan dicho 'NO CONTESTES lo de inglés' fue así como "Fiuuuuuuu ayyyyyyy qué bueno, como que fue un ALIVIO "ay qué bueno!" [R.03.05: 794-804]

TEACHER GERARDO (P. 208)

Si supe que en este examen, creo que es la segunda vez que pasa eso que la parte de inglés no la contestan (.) pero la mera verdad no, este, no he preguntado cuál es el motivo [MG.03.05:322-324]

(P. 208)

Dicen 'es muy importante, es muy importante' pero a la hora de la hora el sistema educativo no lo trata tan importante como a física, química, matemáticas, español, etc. [MG.03.05:324-326].

SECTION 5.4.1

TEACHER LOLITA (P. 212)

Fíjese que español, por ejemplo, toda la semana tienen clase de Español son 5 horas de español y en inglés tenemos 3 veces a la semana, como que también debería de ser 1 hora diaria (.) hemos pedido ese cambio pero NUNCA nos han atendido esa petición. [ML.06.04: 343-351]

FERNANDA: (P. 212)

Me gustaría que hubiera más horas y más clases. [FS.06.04:031]

FELIPE (P. 212)

Pues como a mí me interesa mucho la materia de inglés pues si haría más cambios que, por ejemplo, tuviéramos más horas a la semana para que así aprendiéramos más, tuviéramos más conocimientos sobre la materia. Si se pudiera hacer ese cambio si sería mejor, ya empezar a tener más clases para que llegando a la Universidad no se nos dificulte tanto. [FV.03.05:613-622]

REBECA (SCHOOL CO-ORDINATOR) (P. 213)

los estudiantes] ven a su maestro de inglés 3 horas a la semana que es su único contacto de inglés en la escuela, afuera quizás tienen más pero adentro de la escuela son solo 3 horas a la semana y lo demás es hablar en español. No sé (.) tenemos un sistema mal desarrollado, con poco interés en la materia de inglés,

no sé porqué, la verdad no entiendo cuál es la razón. A la computación le dan mucho interés, increíble y todo se maneja en inglés en computación. Yo no sé porqué inglés no ha sido la prioridad [del sistema]. [C.A. R. 06.04: 357-365]

TEACHER CAROLINA (P. 214)

Una de las limitaciones mayores que yo siento es que tenemos NADA MÁS tres horas a la semana TRES MÓDULOS, porque NO son HORAS, son módulos de 50 minutos, a la semana [MC.06.04:001-027)].

HEADMASTER (P. 217)

el tiempo para clases de inglés] es reducido, es reducido. Son 3 clases de 50 minutos a la semana que NO SON 50 minutos. Como el maestro tiene que ir de un aula a la otra entonces en el intervalo de ir de un aula a la otra se pierden 5 o 10 minutos sobre todo, por ejemplo, ahorita un maestro que está en el salón de tercero y se viene acá, para empezar no sale al toque sino a veces se queda 2 o 3 minutos por si alguien le hace una pregunta o luego en el camino se encuentra con un padre de familia por ejemplo, pues entonces llega después del toque, a los 10 o 15 minutos después, al salón, NO todos y no todos los días pero, pero se DAN casos en que se pierden 10 o 15 minutos [HM.06.04: 346-358].

TEACHER GISELA (P. 218)

¡Oh, por Dios! ahora COMPRENDO porqué las maestras pues NO tienen la oportunidad de enseñarte BIEN, de no enseñarte MUCHO, no? PORQUE son 50 MINUTOS, NO es UNA HORA, son 50 MINUTOS que se reducen a TREINTA en lo que tienes que revisar tareas, pasar lista, y etc., etc., [...] y son TANTOS [alumnos], y luego tienes TANTOS OBJETIVOS que se tienen que ver en el curso, que bueno pues no, ¡NO es fácil! [MG.06.04: 502-531].

SECTION 5.4.2

SOLEDA (P. 221)

cada quien tenía su método de enseñar: la de PRIMERO nada más hablaba ELLA y en ESPAÑOL todo el tiempo o traducía. La de segundo nos ponía a COPIAR LÁMINAS en inglés y ya después ella más o menos nos explicaba y la de tercero nos ponía a contestar las actividades del cuaderno de trabajo PERO la maestra de tercero era muy ESPECIAL, muy estricta, así medio ENOJONA. [S.03.05: 004-012.]

RAÚL (P. 222)

Pero pues era casi lo mismo en cuanto a cómo nos enseñaban porque principalmente lo que los dos nos enseñaban y eso era algo que nos MOLESTABA mucho eran VERBOS, VERBOS, VERBOS, VERBOS y a aprendernos muchísimos verbos y como que creían que ESO era aprender el inglés, no? saber TODOS los verbos y saber los pronombres posesivos pero yo creo que lo más importante del inglés está en todo lo demás: aprender a HABLARLO, poder preguntar oralmente en inglés y poder tener la confianza de poder hablar en inglés SIENTO que también eso es MUY importante y te tienen que formar en ese campo. [R.03.05: 140-151]

LETY (P. 223)

mis clases fueran en inglés y me gustaría que no fueran puros ejercicios gramaticales, me gustaría que hubiera LISTENING y me gusta VOCABULARIO, me gustaría escuchar y así a veces traducir un poquito al tanteo. Me gustaría entender cuando alguien me hable en inglés y me gustaría hablar y escribir [en inglés] pues siento que es necesario, no? [L.06.04:011-0122]

PATRICIA (P. 224)

Pues la maestra le pide a alguien que escriba una oración del libro, la que sea o la

que ella diga en el PIZARRÓN y este pues ya este tiene que empezar a ANALIZARLA y ya ella después revisa o ayuda a terminar de ANALIZARLA por si faltaron algunas palabras o algo ASÍ y este y pues ya si da TIEMPO se hacen DOS o TRES más con otros alumnos diferentes [las analizan en el pizarrón] y ya pasa LISTA y ya ESO fue TODA la clase (.) PERO hay veces en que en que (.) es una sola clase para analizar UNA sola oración una sola de cómo DIEZ palabras. [P.04.05:244-255]

RODRIGO (P. 225)

Pero la SORPRESA es que entras a PRIMER semestre en la PREPA y siento que VES LO MISMO o sea te vuelven a dar lo mismo (.) el único material [extra aparte del libro de texto de la SEC] que se utiliza SIEMPRE es tu HOJITA de verbos REGULARES de un lado e IRREGULARES del otro lado y de eso NO SE PASA o sea NO sé, yo siento que fue simplemente así como que seguir con la misma rutina! [R.03.05:301-310]

SCHOOL CO-ORDINATOR (P. 226)

No hay congruencia con lo que te están pidiendo y el tiempo que te dan para desarrollarlo. Lo que yo siempre he pensado y que nunca me he dado a la tarea de investigar es quién está en SEP en Mexico encargado del área de inglés y habría que ver qué perfil tiene esa persona porque si hubiera alguien de idiomas ahí, en ese puesto, yo estoy SEGURA que sería OTRA COSA, debe ser un abogado, debe ser un pedagogo, algo así, alguien que no tiene nada que ver con el INGLÉS [. .]. pero definitivamente no debe de ser del área, definitivamente no. Te digo esto por la poca disponibilidad de mejorarla, actualizarla, de hacerlo vivencial, vaya! Se supone que como ellos dan los temas, lo vivencial lo debe hacer el maestro, AJÁ SÍ, pero siempre y cuando te den las condiciones TAMBIÉN. Imagínate, me estoy quejando yo que vivo en una ciudad. ¿Qué pensará el maestro de la sierra, que no tiene ningún apoyo? [AC. 06.04:388-401]

TEACHER YOLANDA (P. 228)

Mis grupos son de 52, 50, 48 estudiantes. Se ha pedido que los grupos sean de 40 pero llegan y llegan y llegan y no se puede aunque se pida un promedio alto para poder entrar aquí pero pues después va bajando y se llegan a quedar los 42-48 [. . .] me gustaría que los grupos fueran chicos. Nuestros salones son muy incómodos, no podemos hacer dinámicas de grupo porque en lo que estamos haciendo una dinámica ya se acabó la hora o en lo que movieron bancas, NO hay espacio más que para que el maestro esté al frente, sólo para que los alumnos estén en filas. [MY.06.04:203-224]

TEACHER ALEJANDRA (P. 229)

Hemos tratado mucho de ver si se puede actualizar [el libro de texto] pero la verdad no le han hecho nada. . . el libro de texto yo creo que nadie lo lleva al 100% . . . y eso tienes que hacerlo porque si no entonces te duermes tú y se duermen ellos [los alumnos]! MA. 03.05: 392-400]

TEACHER YOLANDA (P. 230)

Hay muchos niveles [de inglés] dentro del mismo grupo. Hay jóvenes que han tenido la oportunidad de tomar cursos de inglés o los están cursando en otras instituciones y este bueno se ve MUCHO la diferencia entre esos jóvenes y los que NO han tenido la oportunidad. Esto a mi me representa un RETO porque SÉ que ellos, lo que yo estoy enseñando, ellos ya LO SABEN. [MY.06.04: 076-090]

TEACHER GISELA (P. 231)

La SEP mandan diferentes casetes y videos para TODAS las materias pero para inglés NO hay NADA, te digo porque yo he preguntado “qué novedades para inglés” y dicen “no, pues no hay nada” porque a veces hasta para descansar de la rutina del salón de clases podría decir “bueno ahora vamos a ver una película” o hacer algo diferente, no? y no hay NADA, NADA. PERO yo pienso que eso

no es culpa de la Dirección sino más bien de la Secretaría que es la que manda el MATERIAL. Hay MUCHO de Biología, hay mucho de Historia hay muchas cosas, hay casetes para otras materias pero para INGLÉS NO, no hay NADA [G.06.04: 374-387]

TEACHER NADIA (P. 231)

Pues [las condiciones de trabajo para los maestros de secundaria] no son muy adecuadas porque para empezar, por ejemplo, los CONTACTOS en los salones NO sirven, entonces si queremos trabajar con la grabadora tenemos que comprar PILAS y es un gasto ENORME estar comprando PILAS entonces yo la verdad NO utilizo la grabadora por lo mismo. NO tenemos un lugar, un locker donde podamos guardar nuestro material, NADA. Tenemos que venir cargando este TODO nuestro material, entonces es pesado y aparte de dar las clases estar CARGANDO como que no vaya! Y ahorita, por ejemplo, en este año entraron demasiados alumnos a primer año que son los que van a pasar a segundo año y ya NO hay AULAS GRANDES yo no sé qué va a pasar, vamos a dar clases con los alumnos (.) AMONTONADOS, van a estar como SALCHICHAS ((risas)) de por si hay grupos con los que no puedes trabajar en rueda o en grupos, porque son TANTOS que NO caben. Aparte el RUIDO fuerte que hacen porque arrastran las sillas y todo y luego da pena porque hay otros maestros abajo que están trabajando (.) vaya son como que situaciones DIFÍCILES. . . [MN.06.04: 027-056]

RAÚL (P. 232)

La materia que yo he escuchado que menos quieren los alumnos o que MÁS les choca es el INGLÉS pero NO porque seas UN IDIOMA diferente o difícil de aprender SINO porque es una materia en donde NO aprendes ABSOLUTAMENTE NADA ((muy enfático)) es que una cosa es el IDIOMA y otra muy diferente son las CLASES en las secundarias y las prepas de gobierno. [R.03.05: 406-418]

HEADMASTER (P. 233)

Mire en las clases de inglés realmente no logramos obtener un avance, el avance que quisiéramos. En el aprendizaje del inglés normalmente es un, diría yo, un 30%, 40% cuando más de lo que se ve en el programa de estudios. Razones: las condiciones en las que trabaja el maestro de inglés son con grupos de 50-60 alumnos. Por ejemplo, en mi salón yo tenía grupos de 62, en Cempoala grupos de 63-65 alumnos. Entonces en donde hace bastante calor los salones son reducidos, están, este muy abrumados y no se puede trabajar, eso es primero. Segundo, hay alumnos que no están motivados para estudiar inglés [. . .] es muy difícil con grupos muy numerosos, muy difícil. Luego porque quieras o no cuenta mucho el dominio del idioma del maestro, o sea, yo en lo personal no tengo un dominio del idioma. [HM.06.04: 036-057]

CHAPTER SIX

SECTION 6.2

PEPE (P. 240)

El idioma inglés me encanta, es muy bonito. La clase sí me gusta pero el idioma inglés es algo que me gusta mucho. [P.06.04:058-059]

JIMENA (P. 241)

Bueno creo que el inglés es un idioma básico (.) con respecto aquí a la escuela a lo mejor no hemos progresado [. . .] o sea no, no, bueno al menos a MÍ NO me gusta como se dan las clases AQUÍ de inglés. [J.06.04: 003-014]

MARISSA (P. 241)

N: ¿Y cómo te sentías en tus clases de inglés aquí?
M: ¡Ay, pues muy aburrido!
N: ¿Te gusta el inglés?

M: ¡Ah SÍ! [M.06.04:036-044]

ESTHER (P. 242)

E: Bueno pues, a mí sí me gusta el inglés así como idioma y pues las clases ya es dependiendo de cómo se den.

N: Pero si hablamos de tu experiencia en la secundaria y en la prepa sin tomar en cuenta tus clases particulares=

E: =Pues no, no me gustan las clases. [E. 03.05: 319-0327]

JIMENA (P. 245)

N: Bueno Jimena empecemos. Dime acerca de tu experiencia en cuanto a la materia de inglés aquí en la secundaria, por favor.

J: Bueno creo que el inglés es un idioma BÁSICO. Con respecto aquí a la escuela eh a lo mejor no hemos progresado mucho por lo mismo de que eh a veces las clases no nos duran (.) bueno es muy poquito tiempo y somos muchos alumnos entonces este es muy difícil eh apren(.) NO aprender pero pues tratar de entenderlo porque por lo mismo de que somos muchos a veces no sé, no se imparte la materia bien en todos. Entonces creo que eh nos ha faltado eh nos ha faltado, no sé, este (.) TIEMPO para que se pueda dar la materia (.) o sea no, no, bueno al menos a MI no me gusta como se dan las clases aquí de inglés. Nos falta .o LES falta a los maestros este (.) un poco más de, de no de (.) conocimiento porque, bueno si lo tienen pero (.) de que nos expliquen bien los temas, de que nos den un poco más de tiempo hacia la materia de inglés porque como es un idioma básico que lo vamos a ocupar a donde quiera que vayamos, entonces este creo que este creo que NOS ha (.) que LES ha faltado más tiempo y más dedicación hacia lo que es la materia de inglés porque por ejemplo se imparten muchas materias más, lo que es español, matemáticas y ahí si le dan todas las horas que se puedan pero lo que es al inglés, o sea NO, le falta tiempo y por eso muchas veces este SI nos salimos con algo, con algo de inglés, o sea si aprendemos algo, pero creo que nos falta, nos falta un poco más de tiempo y dedicación hacia lo que es este (.) el inglés aquí en la ESCUELA, en la secundaria. [...] como le digo, lo

que es Matemáticas, Español y las demás materias, o sea, si TAMBIÉN tenemos que tener no sé bastante tiempo para eso pero creo que es un poco más importante lo que es el inglés. Si nos queremos ir a estudiar (.) no sé a, a los Estados Unidos, este y no sabemos hablar inglés, pues va a ser muy difícil podernos comunicar. En cambio con las matemáticas, o sea si SÍ lo podemos, porque creo que desde chiquitos, desde el kinder, o si no es que desde la primaria las llevamos, entonces es muchísimo más fácil, no sé (.) hacer algo con matemáticas casi que hablar el inglés, para podernos comunicar (.) es BÁSICO. [J.06.04:001-063]

IGNACIO (P. 249)

La materia de inglés yo creo que es básica pero psss a mí en lo particular no me gusta pero siento que me va a servir en adelante y que la tengo que aprender.[I.06.04: 001-013]

(P. 249)

Yo creo que es por la manera en que se imparte aquí en la escuela (.) no me agradó mucho en tercero (.) en segundo sí porque la maestra nos daba más expresión verbal que estar escribiendo todo el tiempo y si quieres ir, si quieres viajar debes de saber el, el LENGUAJE. [I.06.04: 020-026]

PATRICIA (P. 251)

N: ¿Cuando tú dices básica, a qué te refieres exactamente?

P: A que es ya muy importante para nuestra formación [P.06.04: 184-0185].

IGNACIO (P. 251)

cuando digo básica es porque pienso que todos lo [inglés] deben de tener. [I.06.04: 023-024]

MANUEL ALBERTO (P. 252)

yo estudié inglés en la primaria pero no fue tanto por eso que he aprendido. Yo creo que fue más bien independientemente más por mi PARTE porque yo de chiquito tenía la ((inclinación)) a los VIDEO JUEGOS entonces hubo una ocasión en que compré una revista y este venía toda en INGLÉS y me puse a leerla y con lo poco que sabía pues empecé a leer y agarré un diccionario y así fue ESA fue la primer COSA que hice en sí que me dio este bastante (.) que me AYUDÓ y fue cuando yo por mi parte empecé a aprender NO fue porque yo quisiera sino se fue dando por CASUALIDAD [...] pues en ese entonces no sé si era por pequeño pero el inglés no era tan necesario (.) bueno yo no lo sentía de ese MODO ya pss nada más era porque si yo quiero tocar la guitarra tengo que aprender a tocarla, si yo quiero jugar NINTENDO tengo que aprender inglés porque todos los juegos están en INGLÉS [...] y las clases de inglés [en tercero de secundaria] pues casi NO me ayudaron
[...] aparte pues yo seguí con los video juegos y como todos son en INGLÉS y todo eso pss yo mismo seguí desarrollando algo más. [MA.03.05: 024-137].

FERNANDA (P. 253)

Por ejemplo, la temporada pasada, el año pasado hubo una temporada de Basketball de los Halcones entonces venían chavos²⁴ extranjeros que no hablaban español y yo así de parada viendo qué podía yo decir porque no sabía yo hablar INGLÉS ((risas)) entonces, este, siento yo que independientemente de que salga a viajar a los EUA pues hay que saber inglés para otras cosas más IMPORTANTES ((risas)) y no quedarse ¿“y ahora qué?” [F. 03.05:341-350].

ERNESTO (P. 254)

E: Pues, este, pues a esta edad ((risas)) ahorita pues este los jóvenes de ahorita les gustan así ((risas)) las GROSERÍAS en inglés.

N: ¿Tú crees que a los estudiantes les gustaría aprender a decir groserías en inglés?

²⁴ *Chavos* means boys or young men in colloquial Spanish in Mexico.

- E: SÍ ((risas)) porque les gustan decirlas en español y pues también quisieran aprender a decirlas en inglés ((risas)).
- N: ¿Crees que las niñas también quieran aprender a decir groserías en inglés?
- E: Pues UNAS SÍ ((risas)). [E.06.04:087-097]

VÍCTOR (P. 255)

Por ejemplo, este nosotros decimos ‘maestro mejor traiga, no sé, música y escuchamos música y SÍ ponemos atención’ Y ah no, pues eso no porque ahorita están trabajando algunos y eso les molesta. Y bueno pues entonces “traiga tarjetitas y jugamos memorama” y dice que no porque va a ser un relajo y que no vamos a hacer nada y no. Bueno entonces traiga algo más dinámico y no, él dice: ‘vamos a trabajar con el libro de texto y, este, y ya, con el libro de texto’ y todos así como que todos decimos “ay bueno”, ya qué (.) la mayoría de las veces se hace lo que el maestro quiere. [V.03.05:195-208]

SECTION 6.3

SECTION 6.3.1 PEPE

(P. 260)

Me gustaría utilizar más el inglés, ocuparlo más porque hablamos, la mayoría hablamos español, este, hablamos 100% casi puro español y pues la verdad siento que se aprendería más hablando más inglés. [06.04:081-084]

(P. 260)

definitivamente clases particulares no ,no, para nada (.) clases particulares yo NUNCA [03.05:181-182].

(P. 261)

es muy raro (.) luego venía un maestro extranjero, americano y, a veces, se ponía a hablar con nosotros pero hablaba puro inglés y me costaba trabajo entenderle porque no domino 100% el inglés. [06.04: 30-33].

(P. 261)

Pues la maestra llega, pasa lista y nos pone ejercicios o nos los dicta o los escribe en el pizarrón y luego nos pone a copiarlos, luego de que nos los pone a copiar nos pone a pronunciar o luego pone ejercicios y los revisa. [06.04: 023-026].

(P. 262)

P: Es más lo odiaba, no quería tener que ver nada con el inglés, no quería hablarlo.

N: ¿Por qué?

P: Se me hacía, no sé, no lo consideraba necesario. Pero en sí, en primer año de secundaria me empezó a gustar, me empezó a llamar la atención, empecé a investigar por mi PROPIA CUENTA [03.05:040-046].

(P. 262)

Pues fíjese que yo entrando, entrando a la secundaria mi mamá me quería meter a un curso de inglés y yo le decía 'no, a mi no me gusta' [06.04: 001-012]

(P. 264)

a veces, uno ve películas que vienen en inglés y vienen, así, subtituladas en español y se aprende como dicen algo [en inglés], también es de oído y así se aprende también más. . . [06.04: 018-.022]

(P. 265)

- N: ¿Aparte de tu libro de texto?
 P: Si, la música.
 N: ¿Dentro del salón de clases?
 P: Fuera, por mi cuenta. Si, siento que así se aprende, se aprende rápido.
 N: ¿Cómo le haces para aprenderte una canción?
 P: Se busca en el Internet o se busca la letra de la canción y se escucha y luego se traduce al español y así se va aprendiendo más.
 N: ¿Dónde consigues las letras de las canciones?
 P: En los CDs. [P.06.04:116-127].
 N: ¿Qué esperas encontrar en clases de inglés en la Preparatoria?
 P: Un inglés más avanzado, espero.
 N: Por avanzado quieres decir=
 P: =un poco más difícil. Hay que ver cómo está pero pienso que va a ser un poco más complicado, debe ser bonito [el curso de inglés en prepa].
 N: ¿Qué tipo de actividades te gustaría que hubiera?
 P: No sé, me gustaría innovar [. . .] me gustaría innovar, ver algo diferente [06.04: 187- 203].

(P. 266)

- N: Hola P. Cuéntame por favor ¿cómo sentiste, en general, tu cambio de la secundaria a la preparatoria?
 P: Extraño, porque, en la secundaria me sentía yo lo máximo, me sentía yo grande pero acá vengo y es como empezar de cero.
 N: ¿Por qué te sentías grande? ¿De edad? ¿Como estudiante? ¿En qué sentido?
 P: Me sentía yo grande de edad comparado con los demás niños que estaban en primero o en segundo (.) pues era de todo porque ahí en la Secundaria cuando uno está en tercero se siente lo mejor! ¡Se siente el rey!
 N: ¿Y cuando llegas aquí?
 P: Empezar de cero. Empezar a construir todo de nuevo otra vez! [03.05:001-0015].

(P. 268)

Pues llego y la maestra nos pone un examen y lo acabo rápido como en diez o quince minutos y me dice 'a mi no me gusta que anden presumiendo que saben inglés' bueno, se lo entregué y me resultó con que tenía muchas cosas mal, que lo que aprendí en la secundaria ella me vino a decir que estaba mal! [03.05: 0083-0090].

(P. 269)

N: ¿Cómo sentiste ese cambio de 10 a 7?

P: Pues me dio coraje. Más que nada me dio coraje (.) sentí que era injusto porque la maestra nunca nos enseñó cosas nuevas.

N: ¿La de aquí?

P: Ajá, la de aquí, nunca nos enseñó cosas nuevas, cosas que no hubiéramos visto en la secundaria, vimos exactamente lo mismo [09.03: 110-119]

(P. 269)

P: No, no. Siento que estoy igual, no avanzo, estoy igual que cuando llegue porque en sí no he aprendido, no he aprendido cosas nuevas.

N: ¿Y eso que te hace sentir?

P: Me siento (.) en lugar de avanzar siento que voy para atrás! [03.05: 152-156].

(P. 270)

Por ejemplo, yo soy un caso de esos que me encantaba el inglés, lo adoraba pero al entrar a clases con esta maestra no, como que le pierdo el amor al IDIOMA [03.05:279-284].

(P. 270)

P: Me es muy útil [inglés] fijese que mi novia habla inglés ((risas)) [...] Es de Mexico pero vive en Texas. [...] Ella habla en español y en inglés pero luego me escribe cada cosa en inglés que a veces si le entiendo pero a veces me cuesta un poquito más de trabajo y a veces tengo que usar mi diccionario pero ESO es lo que más me motiva a seguir aprendiendo más. [03.05: 167-175].

(P. 271)

Me sigue gustando el inglés pero no las clases inglés, el inglés es mi vida pero las clases están de MUERTE ((risas)) [03.05:287-290].

SECTION 6.3.2 CECI

(P. 271)

Te puedo decir que de primero a tercer año no aprendí NADA. Te voy a decir que no aprendí NADA, CEROS, así CEROS y este y ya, pues pienso meterme ahorita a un curso en ((nombre de institución privada)) porque no aprendí NADA y para entrar a prepa con una idea no? ((risita)) [06.04: 014-018].

(P. 272)

Ella me ayudaba en algunas materias y yo le ayudaba en otras. En inglés luego me explicaba así, no? y luego en los exámenes nos ayudábamos ((risas)), o sea no? nos ayudamos en los exámenes, o sea ella me pasaba lo de inglés, su examen de inglés y YA, yo le ayudaba en otros, [en otras materias en las que yo soy buena] y así [06.04: 051-064].

(P. 273)

Siento que los maestros tienen una idea, como que saben, o sea, los de inglés, siento que tienen una idea buena de mí porque mi hermana estuvo en esta escuela y fue una excelente alumna, salió con 9.99 de promedio y le ha ido muy bien en la prepa, va muy bien, ha tenido becas y así, es así excelente mi hermana, no? ((risas)) y yo ((risitas)) yo heredé ((risas)) su (.) cómo se dice? [su reputación] como que me vieron igual que a mi hermana, no? Entonces como que [la maestra de inglés] tiene una idea de mí, de cómo si yo fuera igual de buena que mi hermana no? a veces hasta, me dice el nombre de mi hermana “tú, Paty” [...]. Haz de cuenta que dio una idea de mí QUE YO NO SOY, no? [...] y como realmente mi hermana si le echó muchas ganas pues pensó que soy igual que ella en inglés ((risas)) pero para nada! [06.04: 317-337].

(P. 274)

Entonces dice la maestra ‘tienen tanto tiempo para contestar esas páginas del libro’. Y llega el momento y dice “Ya voy a tomar participación” Y va al azar la maestra, va al azar, o sea, PERO como que siempre al azar es como que más o menos en el orden de su lista, no es totalmente al azar, entonces como que yo MÁS o MENOS sé cuando me toca, no? [...] mi amiga... ella sabe que yo no sé nada, pero como nos ponen participaciones cuando contestamos en el libro y entonces yo le pregunto ¿qué va aquí en el libro? [...] ella me dice las respuestas antes de que pase yo, de que me diga la maestra ‘Ceci, participación’ y le digo, ‘en estos que siguen no sé ninguna de las respuestas [...] PERO en estos que SÍ me van a tocar dime cuáles son cada una de sus respuestas’ y así, no? Entonces [la maestra] dice ‘Ceci, qué sigue después de este enunciado?’ Y ya, este, yo lo completo la oración o algo así, no? y ya me gano la participación ((risas))... [06.04: 105-167].

(P. 275)

Mi amiga a la que le pido ayuda, que sabe inglés porque ella estudió desde antes [de llegar a la secundaria] te puedo decir que yo saco 10 y ella saca 8, yo saco 9 y ella saca 8 PERO siempre va peor que yo y ella sabe MÁS o sea, yo me quedo así

como ¿qué? ((risa)) y luego mi amiga como que dice 'no, pero es que CÓMO, si yo te ayudo a ti verdad', y yo digo SÍ pero ((risas)) bueno, es que ella es un poco más descuidada con sus cosas de trabajo, así cosas EXTRAS aparte del examen. Es así como que más DISTRAÍDA en la clase y yo como que trato de seguir con atención a la clase a pesar de que NO entiendo [. . .] pero siento que está MUY MAL de parte MÍA porque o sea la que, a la que me perjudico es a mí, no? y no voy a aprender NADA, sólo estoy pasando una materia así como que a lo TONTO, no? ((RISAS)) [06.04:78-93].

(P. 276)

Después de la secundaria voy a empezar un curso INTENSIVO y voy a aprenderlo. Y ahorita como que, ahorita, este, digo "no pues ya pase, ya que?" Y como [mi amiga], no va a ir a la misma que yo, mi plan es meterme ahorita [en las vacaciones] a un curso de inglés [. . .]. voy a tratar de, de, aprender inglés ahorita en las vacaciones y ((risas)) que mi hermana me ayude, tengo videos y voy a ponerme intensivamente, me voy a apurar porque sé que SÍ tengo que aprender inglés. [06.04: 198-228].

(P. 276)

Siento que SÍ he aprendido en todas las materias pero en INGLÉS estoy en CERO así, en ceros y pienso que es que todavía no encuentro a la persona que me 'agarre la ONDA' para que yo pueda aprender inglés porque en todas las otras materias voy bien, hasta salgo en el cuadro de honor pues, porque de verdad soy muy buena para las otras materias pero no para inglés, no? ((risas)) [06.04:604-612].

(P. 278)

Pues es que siento que no avanzo, no? porque como que te quedas en la misma laguna, así como que te quedas en lo mismo y vuelves a lo mismo y pues no avanzas, no? así como que no hay un proyecto que seguir, no? sino como que vuelves a lo mismo y lo mismo y ya o avanzas un poquito y otra vez te regresan

y así como que NO (.) como que avanzas pero así no tanto como quisieras, no? [03.05: 084-090].

(P. 278)

Pues para empezar en las clases de inglés [en el instituto] vas para aprender a HABLAR el inglés, no? Y vemos de todo [las 4 habilidades] y con muchas dinámicas diferentes y son menos alumnos, no? No hay como 50 estudiantes en una sola clase entonces los maestros te ponen más atención y aparte te pueden aclarar tus dudas, no como aquí que luego así como que ven todo rápido y quieren (.) tenemos que ver de tal tema a tal y no sé cómo PERO los tenemos que ver y vamos rapidísimo, no? Y allá [en el instituto] es más claro, como que te explican mejor y entiendes mejor las cosas, con más lógica y se te hace más fácil [aprender] [03.05: 140-153].

(P. 279)

Pues el maestro lleva unas hojas. Como medio módulo se la pasa regañando, que acomoda el salón y todo [. . .] No o sea, y como sólo estamos enfocando a (..) a escribir, a leer y ya pero no nos pone un, este, una grabación y otras cosas, no? porque también en el [nombre del instituto] hacemos eso, no? pero aquí vienes y es más que nada dos cosas leer y escribir y hasta eso leer como que no tan bien, así como que, está muy DESABRIDO [03.05: 290-295].

SECTION 6.3.3. ANA

(P. 280)

Sí, es que en la primaria también tuve inglés, TODA la primaria, los 6 AÑOS! [. . .] pero cuando llegas a la secundaria no toman en cuenta lo que ya sabes, todos empezamos igual. Entonces al llegar a la secundaria te sientes, pues muy mal! Es pasar por lo MISMO realmente y en tus clases SABES más de lo que los compañeros saben pero como que te sientes MAL porque te dices 'esta calificación que saco NO es porque en realidad aprendí ALGO aquí en la escuela

sino porque YA lo sabía, es algo por lo que ya PASÉ! NO es justo! [06.04:068-080]

(P. 281)

En primera, pues los maestros muchas veces se molestan que tú sepas cosas que NO te han enseñado, por ejemplo, o que les preguntes cosas que dices bueno yo creo que están mal y entonces se enojan o sea luego también los compañeros dicen “bueno ya sabe inglés por eso saca puros 10s y por eso causa muchos problemas el saber inglés [06.04: 082-89].

(P. 282)

Los primeros DOS años si fueron así como que más vagos, generalmente más vagos en el sentido de que no había un tema a seguir. Se iba saltando UNIDADES presentaba algo del principio luego se iba al final y así se iba ‘saltando’ y como el grupo era mucho más numerosos que los demás ÉRAMOS 55 entonces casi nadie podía AYUDAR tanto. La maestra no se daba abasto y en zero formó un ‘GRUPITO’ de los que sabíamos de los que habíamos ido a alguna escuela a tomar o había tomado clases particulares y pues nos ponía en un lado y los que iban mal aparte y nos ponían a nosotros a que a los que tenían dudas NOSOTROS les explicáramos de ALGUNA MANERA porque es más la confianza que se tiene entre ALUMNO-ALUMNO a MAESTRO-ALUMNO y ESO creo que fue lo ÚNICO que me gustó en toda la secundaria porque cuando tienes que explicar TÚ a tus compañeros te ayuda a repasar y a no olvidar lo que ya sabes si no pues HASTA lo que ya sabías antes de entrar se te podría olvidar no? [06.04: 227-241].

(P. 283)

En cuanto al inglés en la prepa yo siento que NO fue muy DIFERENTE porque, o sea, sorprende como bueno vengo de la secundaria en donde vi en primero temas súper sencillos pero la SORPRESA es que entras a PRIMER semestre en la PREPA y siento que VES LO MISMO o sea te vuelven (.) a lo mismo.[

. . .] NUNCA hablamos en inglés en la clase JAMÁS! NUNCA pusimos en práctica lo oral o sea nos basamos nada más en el libro y verdaderamente el libro no SIENTO que sea BUENO fue hacer simplemente lecciones para buscar así REFERENTES y CONECTORES o cosas así! [03.05: 298-316]

(P. 284)

AQUÍ no hay ningún objetivo a perseguir y si ya quieres APRENDER inglés en serio entonces MÉTETE a un CURSO aparte y ahí sí vas a aprenderlo. De hecho hay VARIOS lugares en donde ofrecen cursos de inglés y están LLENOS. Por ejemplo, aquí se dieron unas becas para estudiar inglés en ((nombre del instituto)) y bueno AFORTUNADAMENTE a mi me tocó una. Ahí en el grupo hay niños más grandes que yo, hay de secundaria, prepa, algunos son hasta de UNIVERSIDAD y NO SABEN! y ya pasaron por secundaria, por prepa y hasta por la universidad y NO APRENDIERON NADA! Por eso ahora están ahí tomando cursos de inglés en clases privadas. Pero si no fueran a esas clases . . . [03.05: 403-421].

(P. 285)

Además mis clases particulares de inglés en la tarde son MUY BUENAS y son todas en inglés [. . .] entonces yo siento que si en las SECUNDARIAS y en las PREPAS NO se va a enseñar bien el inglés pues entonces prefiero que NO lo enseñen o sea si no vamos a APRENDER NADA pues NO creo que debemos de llevar la materia, o que PREPARARAN a maestros que en VERDAD pudieran dar la MATERIA o que de plano fuera una optativa! [03-05:363-372].

CHAPTER SEVEN

SECTION 7.2

(P. 293)

Bueno, sinceramente, yo siento que es una actividad, al menos en el medio en el que estamos nosotros, es una actividad un tanto INGRATA, digamos (risitas), porque, pues sí se le echan ganas. Al menos en MI experiencia, yo trato de echarle las más ganas que se puedan. NO siempre, DESAFORTUNADAMENTE, se obtienen los resultados que uno quisiera, por la CALIDAD de alumnos, por las limitaciones que tiene uno también aquí [en la escuela] [MC.03.04:001-010].

(P. 294)

. . . el panorama está un poco triste en enseñanza media porque no hay presupuesto, este, en comparación de la Universidad . . . ahí tenemos, este, pues bastantes cosas, este, aquí SÍ está un poco triste, apuradamente tenemos, este, un pedazo de gis en el pizarrón, la mera verdad, este, tenemos que andar trayendo nuestros propios plumones . . . [G.03.05:107-115]

(P. 296)

. . . que se COMUNIQUEN, que aunque tengan muchos errores, pero que LOGREN comunicarse y logren ENTENDER. Esa es la tirada, de la Secretaría de Educación. Por eso se nos dice que debe ser un inglés COMUNICATIVO. A la mera hora NO resulta NI TAN COMUNICATIVO y mucho menos tan FÁCIL poderlo hacer, en la forma en la que se nos SUGIERE [. . .] TODOS [los libros de texto] vienen de la Secretaría, ellos nos marcan lo que tenemos que hacer y por supuesto, los libros los libros están a nuestra elección; los libros de las editoriales que están de acuerdo con la SEP [. . .] tenemos que trabajar con uno de esos libros y eso es exactamente lo que manejamos, incluso HASTA el orden en el que lo debemos llevar nos dicen realmente [C.06.04: 060-093].

(P. 297)

PARA NADA. No, para nada. A nosotros sólo nos llega el programa, libro y tú haces lo que puedas. [...] Además, yo siento que el libro no está actualizado, es un libro que tiene aproximadamente como más 10 años y pues tiene unas lecturas muy viejas que no les [estudiantes] motivan para nada [A.03.05: 0142-0259].

(P. 298)

Hemos pedido mucho a ver si se puede actualizar pero la verdad no le han hecho nada. Pero, la verdad, el libro de texto yo creo que nadie lo lleva el 100% y tenemos que usar materiales extras y ESO tienes que hacerlo uno porque si no, entonces, te duermes tú y se duermen ellos! [A.03.05: 393-400].

(P. 299)

Lo hemos pedido, lo hemos pedido y SIEMPRE en nuestro reporte individual ANUAL en el que escribimos TODO lo que hicimos, y nuestras NECESIDADES para el siguiente año escolar y bueno para la academia también lo hemos solicitado LOS CONTACTOS pero pues NADA [N: 06.04: 089-093].

(P. 299)

A los maestros de bachillerato no nos llaman para pedirnos nuestra opinión. Solamente esta vez me llamaron por parte de Enseñanza Media que si quería participar con ellos pero, para la elaboración de programas porque quieren cambiar el bachillerato de inglés-comprensión de texto a cuatro habilidades [...] pero, solamente nos llamaron como a cinco maestros de todo el estado de Veracruz. . . pero después no tomaron en cuenta nuestras opiniones. Yo estuve diciendo que pues no podíamos dar un curso con cincuenta alumnos, que no tenemos grabadoras, videos, que tres veces a la semana no es suficiente pues con alumnos que vienen bastante bajos de la secundaria, pero pues, realmente allá dijeron “ nosotros tenemos que hacer el cambio y hacer un esfuerzo, hasta donde se pueda ese esfuerzo” porque de plano nos dijeron “para la educación en

el sistema medio superior no hay bastante dinero” [G: 03.05: 341-369].

(P. 301)

No, lo que pasa es que ella como comúnmente está muy ocupada pues entonces es MUY difícil que podamos este juntarnos para hablar de esos asuntos entonces [...] como ella tiene mayor carga así que ella escogió el libro y así quedó. Yo por ejemplo no conozco el libro que ella escogió para el próximo año ahorita estamos llevando el “Rally” pero el que voy a tener que llevar el próximo año todavía no lo conozco, el que ella escogió [MY. 06.04:051-060].

(P. 302)

Nora: ¿Tú conoces el programa de inglés de la prepa?

Nadia: No, no (.) bueno yo sé que hacen mucha traducción O comprensión de textos pero no conozco el programa . . .

Nora: ¿Hay comunicación entre los maestros de secundaria y preparatoria?

Nadia: NO, porque cuando tenemos juntas es por Zona es de puras SECUNDARIAS y son juntas generales no enfocadas a hablar de inglés.

Nora: ¿Y por qué crees que no se promueve la comunicación entre los maestros de secundaria y los de prepa?

Nadia: No sé, pero no nos reunimos NUNCA para que haya una SECUENCIA en el aprendizaje, no, no hay nada de eso [N.06.04: 271-287].

(P. 303)

No, yo en Secundaria no. Bueno si, si, si tengo muchos compañeros de Secundaria y si, más o menos, conozco el programa. El programa en Secundaria yo siento que está enfocado mucho al aspecto gramatical [A. 03.05: 205-212].

(P. 304)

Pues cursos de actualización pero en INGLÉS porque cada vez va siendo diferente, va siendo otro vocabulario, nos apegamos al vocabulario del libro y como que ya no, es otro. Ahora, me dice mi hijo 'es que tú no me sabes decir esto' y es que no, mi hijo está en HH y ahí aprende otras cosas y yo NECESITO pues estar al día pero ya irme a meter a un curso a estas alturas NO! [ML.06.04: 281-303].

(P. 304)

. . . se vienen los inter-semestrales y no tenemos cursos de preparación [. . .] la mera verdad hace mucho tiempo nos ofrecieron cursos de capacitación, hace quince años, cuando el bachillerato era de dos años y cambió a tres años [. . .] y más bien fue una orientación al programa porque antes se llevaba en primer año de bachillerato gramática y en segundo año traducción y se hizo el cambio a tres a tres semestres de comprensión de texto. Entonces para, como estábamos acostumbrados a llevar traducción y gramática, nos 'orientaron' como se tenía que dar una clase de lectura y comprensión PERO en realidad no fue una capacitación SINO informarnos del nuevo el programa. Y en realidad aquí en enseñanza media yo nada más he recibido un curso, un curso de computación en todos estos años [MG.03.05: 107-215].

(P. 305)

. . . se nos dice, que por ejemplo, NUNCA, se mencionen cuestiones gramaticales en nuestras clases. Sin embargo, hay chicos que hasta que NO se les dice 'esto corresponde a tal de español', al gerundio, por decir algo, entonces, 'ah, pos sí, ahora sí, ya le entendí', o sea, y por eso yo he optado por siempre AUNQUE que digan que NO se debe, YO SÍ manejo algo gramatical. [. . .] De alguna manera sí mencionar VERBOS, por ejemplo, porque según ellos dicen que no, "pues cuando tú aprendiste a hablar español, no sabías que era un verbo y también te lo aprendiste". Voy de acuerdo, pero es que SÍ hay muchos niños que si NO se les menciona eso, no lo no acaban de entender! [C.06.04:051-067-083].

(P. 305)

En el programa de Prepa ya no debe de verse gramática pero yo siento que es necesario [...] porque aunque si el alumno sabe, le sirve de práctica y el que no sabe aprende [...] entonces, yo lo que he hecho ahorita, aparte de la comprensión de un día, porque son tres días a la semana, tres horas es poco y son 50 minutos [...] Entonces lo que hago, por ejemplo, el jueves [me concentro] en aspectos gramaticales, manejo mucho ejercicio gramatical porque SÍ les sirve [MA.03.05: 221-239].

SECTION 7.3

(P. 307)

Bueno algunos de los PROBLEMAS o cosas a los que me he enfrentado, RETOS dando clases en secundaria es precisamente la EDAD de los jóvenes que están en transición física y emocionalmente. . . y pues los programas que están diseñados para la escuela secundaria no se pueden aplicar porque son grupo demasiado grandes dentro de la escuela secundaria [Y.06.04:025-033].

(P. 308)

los muchachos son MUY INQUIETOS están en el momento en que están descubriendo TODO , descubriéndose ellos, este pues están ya incluso pues descubriendo también sus inclinaciones sexuales y eso también quizá representa también un reto y pues si este a veces ellos (.) no saben a veces marcar la diferencia entre un MAESTRO y el PAPÁ, a veces quieren ver al maestro como papá o a veces cuando, por ejemplo, en mi caso somos jóvenes nos quieren ver como hermanos y a veces no pueden marcar, este establecer esa diferencia de que bueno soy tu MAESTRO y me debes RESPETAR pero también puedes CONFIAR en mí pero a veces este mezclan la confianza con que pueden BROMEAR demasiado, cosas así entonces para mí como maestra aquí ese fue uno de mis retos [Y.06.04: 303-321].

(P. 308)

Si, muchísimo, mucho, mucho, yo siento que si [están interesados en aprender inglés] y pienso que eso se debe, por ejemplo ahora, al Internet, a las computadoras, a muchas cosas modernas para las que a fuerza necesitan inglés [A. 03.05: 376-381].

(P. 309)

Fíjese que yo siento que desafortunadamente, cuando cambian de grado yo creo que debería de SUBIR el interés [de los alumnos por aprender inglés, pero es que es la EDAD de los chicos, a esa edad son MUY difíciles por mucho que uno les busque . . . [C.06.04: 563-567].

(P. 309)

Yo a veces me siento MUY DECEPCIONADA, por ejemplo, con el examen de inglés, se los apliqué el viernes pasado, el 5ª BIMESTRE, se ponen 5 exámenes se suman y se promedian al final (.) entonces les pregunto '¿estudiaron para el examen?' y entonces dicen '¿hoy toca examen de inglés maestra?' o luego se preguntan entre ellos 'oye, ¿qué examen toca, eh?' NO saben ni qué examen tiene que hacer, NI en qué DÍA andan, no saben si tienen examen hoy o SI saben NO saben de qué toca porque ni saben, ni les INTERESA, entonces pues yo me doy cuenta de todas esas cosas y dices '¿Pues qué hago, no?' realmente no sé. . . y aunque quisieras ayudarlos para que no digan 'cómo es mala la maestra' [porque reprueban algunos] pero no, no se dan cuenta que con estos niños, nada más NO puedes hacer nada! [N.06.04: 204-228].

(P. 310)

En primera PIERDES MUCHO tiempo en lo que tratas de controlarlos y SOBRE TODO me distraen MUCHO cuando yo estoy dando explicaciones, cuando estoy leyendo o estoy hablando y ellos por atrás por ejemplo se están riendo, hablando entonces MÁS que nada me INTERRUMPEN, no? INTER-

RUMPEN la clase a cada ratito, están interrumpiendo la clase a cada rato y uno tiene que estar ‘cállate por favor’, ‘siéntate bien’, ‘ya deja de dibujar’, ‘pon atención a la clase’, ‘tú deja de estar haciendo eso’, ‘tú deja de estar aventando papelitos’ así, así se va el tiempo de la clase! [N.06.04: 177-188].

(P. 311)

Cuando yo llegué aquí a la escuela había más respeto por los maestros. Los valores se han perdido mucho y los niños ya no respetan como antes. Cuando yo empecé eran niños educados y lo querían y lo apreciaban a uno de otra manera. Ahora, con forme van pasando los años, se da uno cuenta que los niños son mas pesaditos, mas irrespetuosos. Antes los niños no faltaban al respeto. Ahora, por ejemplo, HASTA le dicen a usted ‘no manche maestra’, ‘no sea gacha’, ‘abráon maestra’ VAYA, ya eso como que esas cosas, NO! [L.06.04:119-128].

(P. 311)

... BATALLANDO verdad? con los niños están muy, muy MAL EDUCADOS. .. tengo 24 años de trabajar aquí y en un principio yo trabajaba MUY BIEN pero ahorita (.) ya NO SÉ si porque ya estoy (.) por la EDAD o porque ellos vienen peor pero YO NO SÉ pero a mi a veces de veras que salgo hasta con DOLOR DE CABEZA o ESTRESADA TOTALMENTE! [N.06.04: 157-164].

(P. 312)

Pues yo creo los niños ya NO ven al maestro como a la persona que se le debe TODO el respeto del mundo, el niño te ve igual SOBRE TODO a mí que soy más joven. No me ven como la maestra así con mucho respeto NO, me ven como de TÚ a TÚ y a veces me FALTAN al respeto y son IGUALADOS son GROSEROS [G.06.04: 171-176].

F

EXAMPLES OF CLASS OBSERVATION

RESEARCH PROJECT IN PREPARATORY SCHOOLS IN 2000

Nexa
 G/M/302/14/09/00/MB
 school: Arturo

Observation Sheet
 Name of Teacher: _____

Time Interaction	Aids/Resources	Skill	Teacher activity (procedure/role) (Use of L2)	Student activity and responses (Use of L2)	Key language or activity focus	Number of boys: 5	Number of girls:	Other comments and observations
	Textbook		T calls for roll T checks homework T nominates SS to answer her questions	SS answer T's questions T-SS use L1 S nominated comit answer T's question	"El Diccionario" (Lesson in textbook)			SS raise their hand (Most students want to participate) make a classroom comit and T's question (My God! La Banda the Guerra is playing) SS read and answer questions on "The Dice" at home It's specially noisy today. I decided to move to be nearer the SS that I can hear their comit. It's really noisy but there.
			T asks How do you say "negritos" in English	Some SS raise their hands to participate Nominated S said: /boldface/ and T says: "correct"				

2

Observation Sheet

2/14/09/00/PB
Artículo 3^o

Grupo No: 302 English level: 3^o Sem

Name of Teacher: X-8150

Time of Day: 8-8:50

Number of boys: 5

Number of girls: 16

Age:

Aids/resources	Skill	Teacher activity (procedure/role) (Use of L2)	Student activity and responses (Use of L2)	Key language or activity focus	Other comments and observations
textbook		T sitting at the desk the whole class T shows the sheet with irregular verbs (Present - Past - P. Participle)	Ss sitting in rows and working individually	Parts and format of Dictionaries	I noticed that Ss are particularly participative today in comparison to the other days I was here. The reason for this is that every time a S answers a T's questions she adds "extra" points for the Ss' grades. T asks the name of the S who answers and then she writes something on her list. (After Ss answer - T asks "your last name son/daughter")
		T decides not to check the "questionnaire" because she says there's not enough time. A S says she wants to check her homework but T insisted that there's not enough time	Some Ss sitting near me are chatting T sees them and scolds them. Talks to them what she was talking about but Ss are unable to answer		This class lasted about 35 minutes!!! T arrived late and finished early

EXAMPLES OF CLASS OBSERVATION

Observation Sheet		Name of Teacher:		Number of boys: 17		Number of girls: 17	
Time of Day: 3:15		Age: 16-17		Key language or activity focus		Other comments and observations	
Time Interaction	Aids/Resources	Skill	Teacher activity (procedure/role) (Use of L2)	Student activity and responses (Use of L2)	Key language or activity focus	Other comments and observations	
1 only a few mins		R.	Passed the register Asked to open their bk, asked somebody to read in Spanish Lesson 2 P18 Read quickly and then slowly in order to answer the ?s at the end. She said they could use their dictionary Asked how many parts a dictionary was composed of then the register ^{register} of the dictionary in their, only etc. Summarized what was in bk. Asked for a volunteer to say what the 1st paragraph said I asked what she had understood. Then went on by one thru the paragraphs asking the same question	Lots of boys - sat at the back gossiping A boy and the girl in particular were playing around The others read the book. Asked again Ss reluctant to answer when I answered s he just read the paragraph. answers were very softly spoken	Recognition of parts of a dictionary. Parts of speech in flexed forms of irregular verbs definitions labels.	Only just been given the (The class began 15 min T spoke in the same to a M. politician or pr	
5 min			Asked Ss to answer the ?s Asked them to read ?s	More Ss tried to answer the questions		On the whole the answers were given by girls. The boys kept heads down in the book answers softly spoken when in fact she was on I could hardly hear the girls answer. I doubt if they noticed them up. On the whole shy and he	

(2)

Observation Sheet

Name of Teacher: _____

130E/13/09/00/BS

Group No: 3E English level

Time of Day: 8:15

Age: 16-17

Number of boys: 13 Number of girls: 20

The Action	Aids/ Resources	Skill	Teacher activity (procedure/role) (Use of L2)	Student activity and responses (Use of L2)	Key language or activity focus	Other comments and observations
			<p>Continued reading T5 and asked questions & what's right or no.</p> <p>Read the following paragraph in L2.</p> <p>Asked the T5</p>	<p>Most Ss seemed to be either listening or reading. Some played around. Ss tried to answer not always successfully.</p>		<p>once the T found a particular girl who answered the most she kept choosing her to answer. (She sat in the front)</p> <p>Most of the Ss mimicked their answers. When they giving the impression that the girls or were they just shy?</p> <p>The Ss calmed down after about 20 minutes, as the class and started to participate more.</p> <p>I doubt if the boys can be heard on the "banda de guerra" began to play.</p> <p>They (T's Ss) obviously used to play, as they continued but I could hardly hear them at all.</p> <p>Both T and Ss asked "cómo se lee".</p> <p>When it eventually stopped, she made a comment about it and the next "clase".</p>

EXAMPLES OF CLASS OBSERVATION

Barbara

16/11/30 E/13/10/9/100/135

of school: Alet 3 (Pena estada)

Observation Sheet

Name of Teacher: _____

Grupo No: 32 English level: 7 Time of Day: 18-8:45 Age: 16-17 Number of boys: 15 Number of girls: 5

Time Interaction	Aids/ Resources	Skill	Teacher activity (procedure/role) (Use of L2)	Student activity and responses (Use of L2)	Key language or activity focus	Other comments and observations
			<p>Asked them to do an exercise (20) where they had to recognize the parts of a dictionary definition.</p> <p>She suddenly stopped the class and introduced me and said I should intervene</p>			<p>I don't know if she was fed up with me (she reminds me what time) wanted to get rid; but she suggested strongly I should start the interview.</p> <p>Once the Ss realized it was an exercise to leave, they jumped at the chance.</p>

