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ENGLISH TEACHING INSTRUCTION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY TELESECONDARY TEACHERS IN A RURAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

This research presents the language teaching practices and challenges faced by teachers in rural telesecondary schools in Mexico since they face different limitations in the English instruction. Among these limitations, it was revealed the minimum or even absence of specialized training in ELT, the lack of adequate materials for the students' level and context, and the insufficient and outdated technological equipment. However, the collected data also revealed how teachers survive and develop their sense of agency, understood as a situated act intertwined with the context and the social aspect, in which teachers get involved, seek wellbeing, make choices, and solve problems (Emans et al., 2025), in order to adapt and utilize all the available resources to deliver the content even when it results in a challenge for them. Therefore, this work is framed on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, with a focus on mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and sociocultural tools, since these aspects play a significant role to get insights in the field of English teaching in telesecondary schools.

For this work, a qualitative case study approach was employed, and data was collected along three telesecondaries located in Southern Puebla, Mexico. The instruments used for the data collection were semi-structured interviews (with principals), semi-structured focus groups (with teachers), classroom observations, and questionnaires (with students).

Among the main findings, it was revealed that teachers implement adaptive strategies such as scaffolding, peer mediation, and use of multimodal materials. Hence, the decisions that teachers make on their instruction are deeply influenced by the conditions of the context in their communities.

Finally, this study emphasizes the need for improved education policies that are context-aligned and address the realities of rural schools. It also advocates for specialized training in ELT for telesecondary teachers, since the context of these secondary schools possess characteristics that cannot go along with the other modalities of secondary education.

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Last but not least, I want to thank the principals, teachers and students from the telesecondaries that contributed with their participation in this project.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, Flavio, whose unconditional love, support and encouragement were the guiding light during my master's degree journey.

Dear Father,

It has been challenging to live life without your thoughts, your lessons and your words of encouragement, but at this point in my life I know that every little thing you taught me is part of me, as every piece you gave me has helped me build my philosophy of life, my identity and my love and passion for teaching.

Thank you for sharing your knowledge as a teacher, your love as a father, and your values as a human being. This thesis stands as a tribute to your lasting love, your wisdom, and the profound impact you had and continue to have on my life.

Your *Garzopetita*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Basic education in Mexico comprises early childhood education, preschool, elementary school, and secondary school. The former is optional, while preschool, elementary, and secondary school, along with upper secondary education, are compulsory as established in the third article of the Mexican Constitution (SEP, 2017a). In the country, secondary education represents the third of four compulsory stages, and serves students aged 12 to 14 (AEFCM, n.d.).

Furthermore, according to the official document *Principales Cifras del Sistema Educativo Nacional 2022-2023,* a total of 6,210,924 students were enrolled in public secondary schools in Mexico during the 2022-2023 academic year under the classroom-based instruction modality (DGPPyEE, 2023). Notably, this number represents 25 % of the total student population in basic education within this modality, thus making secondary education the second most in-demand educational level in the country, following primary education.

Additionally, data from the *Sistema Interactivo de Consulta de Estadística Educativa* indicates that, in the academic year 2022-2023, there were 35,849 public secondary schools in Mexico, enrolling a total of 5,614,204 students (SEP, 2023). The Mexican Ministry of Public Education (SEP – according to its acronym in Spanish) categorizes public secondary education into three modalities: *Secundaria General* (general secondary), *Secundaria Técnica* (technical secondary), and *Telesecundaria*, which will be referred to as 'telesecondary' in this study (SEP, 2017a). The aim of implementing different modalities of secondary education in the country was

to meet the need to provide education adapted to different social contexts in order to guarantee basic education to all Mexicans (AEFCM, n.d.; SEP, 2017a).

In terms of the educational model, all three types of secondary schools in Mexico – *Secundaria General, Secundaria Técnica,* and *Telesecundaria* – are aligned under the same framework, the *Modelo Educativo para la Educación Obligatoria* (henceforth *Modelo Educativo*). The subjects included at the secondary level are: Mother tongue (Spanish), Mathematics, Sciences and Technology, History, Geography, Arts, Civic and Ethical Education, Tutoring and Socioemotional Education, Physical Education, and English (SEP, 2017a). These subjects are encompassed into one of the 11 curricular areas described in the *Modelo Educativo.* English is included in the *Lenguaje y Comunicación* area (Language and Communication).

With regard to English instruction, all three secondary school modalities follow the same guidelines established in the *Modelo Educativo* (SEP, 2017b). They also adhere to the principles and parameters outlined in the document *Estrategia Nacional para el Fortalecimiento de la Enseñanza del Inglés* (SEP, 2017c). However, despite these shared guidelines, Hernández (2019) highlights significant differences between the three types of secondary schools:

> A key distinction in English Language Teaching (ELT) between *Secundaria General* and *Secundaria Técnica* compared to *Telesecundaria* lies in the teaching personnel. In both, general and technical schools, each subject is taught by a specialist in that particular field. Therefore, English classes are conducted by educators who have been specifically trained in English Language Teaching (ELT). These teachers are expected to possess both the pedagogical expertise required for language instruction and the linguistic proficiency necessary to implement the curriculum effectively.

> In contrast, ELT in *Telesecundaria* operates under a different model. Here, instruction is provided by a *tele-teacher* and a *tele-monitor* (SEP, 2010). The former is a subject specialist who delivers lessons via pre-recorded TV programs with no direct contact with students; while the latter is the teacher who coordinates the activities that occur before, during and after the televised lessons, acting as the monitor of the students' punctuality, attendance and behavior, moreover, the *tele-monitor* evaluates and fill out reports related to the students' progress (SEP, 2010).

Consequently, the approach to ELT in telesecondary does not rely on the same pedagogical and linguistic qualifications as in general and technical secondary schools. From the discussion above, it is clear that researching the challenges related to English teaching in secondary schools is highly significant. Another important consideration is the number of secondary schools in Mexico. According to SEP (2023), in 2023 there were 35,849 public secondary schools in Mexico, of which 18,807 were telesecondaries. Furthermore, the records indicate that 18,294 language teachers were instructing in secondary schools, which might have included teachers of indigenous languages, French or English. Surprisingly, out of this number, only 19 language teachers worked in public telesecondaries in Mexico.

This panorama highlights the need for greater attention to the challenges faced by telesecondary teachers, as they are required to conduct English lessons and support students' needs regarding English instruction without having the specialized ELT training in most of the cases.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study is twofold. First, it aims to analyze, from a sociocultural perspective, the challenges faced in semirural telesecondary schools due to the absence of specialized ELT training for teachers. Second, it seeks to identify how these teachers cope with contextual, professional, and working conditions. Additionally, the study explores the resources teachers employ to manage the absence of formal training in English teaching while meeting institutional and national curriculum requirements in telesecondary. These issues are examined through the lens of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the strong connection between the social environment and the decisions and actions of the members of a community.

1.2 Rationale

In the context of English Education in Mexico, several authors (Vargas, 2012; Ramírez et al., 2017; Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019; Hernández, 2019; Romero, 2021) have explored the Mexican educational panorama of ELT in secondary education. However, only a few studies (Vargas, 2012; Hernández, 2019; Romero, 2021) have specifically addressed the situation in telesecondary schools.

In their study, Ramírez et al. (2017), point out that in the world ranking of English proficiency known as English First (EF), Mexico was placed in the 43rd place among the results of 72 countries. The results revealed a low level on a 5-level scale ranging from "Very high," "High," "Medium," "Low" and "Very low" (Ramírez et al. 2017). This indicates that English language education is a national concern.

Furthermore, Ramírez et al. (2017) argue that this issue is mainly rooted in factors related to the experiences of students during their school programs. Additionally, the authors highlight

that in 2015, only 3% of secondary education graduates possessed the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the B1 level as outlined by the CEFR, while 79% of students lacked any basic understanding of the language (Ramírez et al., 2017). It is necessary to clarify that even though the authors (Ramírez et al., 2017) highlight important themes regarding ELT, their work is rooted in information provided by the report *Sorry: El Aprendizaje del Inglés en México* (Sorry: Learning English in Mexico), which was conducted by the organization *Mexicanos Primero.*

Sayer (2015) critically analyzed the *Sorry* report and noted that "the president of the *Mexicanos Primero* organization, Claudio X. González Guajardo, is an ex-board member of Televisa, and that the foundation is funded by Televisa" (p. 2). In this sense, the author remarks that the report was politically motivated by the Mexican broadcaster *Televisa*, intended to undermine the reputation of the Programa Nacional de inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB) and was merely "political propaganda dressed up as educational research" (Sayer, 2015, p. 2). This calls attention to the need for more objective, high-quality research that addresses the real challenges facing English education in Mexico.

What is true is that there is an evident mismatch between the educational model and the real conditions in schools. The current ELT policy is homogeneous and inflexible, failing to account for the significant differences in context, resources, and equity across Mexican primary public schools, which are heterogeneous, socially inequitable, and different in contexts (Holliday, 1993 as cited in Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019). Although the authors focus on primary education, it is equally applicable to secondary education, as they both fall under the umbrella of basic education in Mexico.

This issue becomes even more relevant in secondary education, where the *Modelo Educativo* is not adapted to the specific needs of different types of secondary schools that exist in

Mexico, particularly in ELT. While telesecondaries represent 53.15 % of public secondary schools in Mexico, only a few studies (Vargas, 2012; Hernández, 2019; Romero, 2021) have focused on ELT in this context. Moreover, data from the *Plan Nacional de Evaluación de los Aprendizajes* (in its achievement modality) in 2017 shows that telesecondary students consistently achieve lower learning outcomes compared to other secondary school modalities, with 48.8 % students scoring 'insufficient' in the language and communication domain (Rivera & Zavala, 2020).

It is important bearing in mind that in the *Modelo Educativo,* the *Language and Communication* includes the subjects: mother tongue (Spanish or an indigenous language), second language (Spanish, in communities where an indigenous language is spoken) and foreign language (English). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the Ministry of Education (SEP) establishes different levels for English that follow the CEFR, with levels B1.1, B1.2, and B1.3 assigned to first, second, and third grades of secondary education, respectively (SEP, 2017b).

In addition, the *Modelo Educativo* outlines the profile of English teachers, stating that teachers must be proficient in English, knowledgeable about students' developmental stages, and skilled in foreign language didactics (SEP, 2017b). However, telesecondary teachers or *tele-monitors*, are expected to discuss, evaluate and provide feedback on videotaped lessons, as well as support students across all subjects to create the conditions for learning, including English (Hernandez, 2019).

Nonetheless, in most cases telesecondary educators do not have the expected proficiency in English and may not possess the necessary methodology to teach the language. As a result, this creates a significant challenge, as these educators must not only deliver lessons but also address students' questions and concerns about English (Hernández, 2019). Consequently,

national ELT policies fail to align with the realities of telesecondary schools, where teachers often do not meet the subject specialist requirements outlined in the *Modelo Educativo.*

In light of this, and given Mexico's diverse educational contexts, it is crucial to develop a curriculum that is adapted to these different environments, this study seeks to address the gap in research on ELT in telesecondaries by analyzing the specific challenges faced by teacher, who are required to teach all subjects, including English, as part of their work as *maestros generalistas* (SEP, 2017b). Moreover, most of these teachers have only basic English proficiency and often lack specialized professional training in the target language instruction.

For these reasons, this study aims to investigate the ways in which telesecondary teachers navigate these challenges and adapt to the lack of specialized ELT training in order to meet institutional and national curriculum requirements.

1.3 Context

The study i conducted in three rural telesecondary schools; two are located in different communities in the municipality of Izúcar de Matamoros[1], and one is located in a community in the municipality of Epatlán.[2] Both municipalities are in the state of Puebla, situated in Central México. In terms of population, Izúcar de Matamoros is characterized by having mostly an urban population, with 85 % of its inhabitants residing in urban areas, while the remaining 15% live in rural zones. In 2020, the population of Izúcar de Matamoros was 82,809, with 47.8% men and 52.2% women (Gobierno de Izúcar de Matamoros, 2021).

[1] A municipality situated in the southwestern region of the state of Puebla, Mexico.
[2] A municipality in southwestern Puebla, Mexico, located approximately 60 kilometers from Izúcar de Matamoros.

In contrast, Epatlán registered a total population of 4,943 inhabitants in 2020, with 49 % of the residents being men and 51% women. Concerning economy, 11.2 % of the population lives in extreme poverty, while 46.7% lives in moderate poverty (H. Ayuntamiento del Municipio de Epatlán, 2020).

To explain the concept of 'rural' for this research, it is crucial to consider the following definitions. In Mexico, the current definition of 'rural' dates to 1930, with a minor update in 2005. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, by its acronym in Spanish), localities were classified based on the population size: those with less than 2,500 inhabitants were considered rural (2005). Then, in 2005, a more detailed classification was introduced, defining those localities with population between 2,500 to 4,999 as 'extended rural', and those with more than 5,000 inhabitants as 'non-rural' (INEGI, 2005; Soloaga et al., 2021).

Given this classification, it has been argued that the concept of 'rural' needs to be redefined to better capture Mexico's diverse regions and guide public policies more accurately (Soloaga et al., 2020). Soloaga et al. (2021), assert that a new conception of the term must encompass the heterogeneity existing in the country, fostering a more nuanced operationalization of the rural-urban spaces. Additionally, the authors remark that the current definition of *ruralidad* underestimates the rural population existing in Mexico, which leads into a skewed perception of the country. Therefore, this definition mistakenly suggests that Mexico's regions are more urbanized than they truly are, contributing to inaccurate comparisons between rural and urban areas, particularly regarding inequities and disparities (Soloaga et al., 2021). Hence, this research adopts Unikel's (1978, as cited in INEGI, 2005) definition of 'rural', which classifies localities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants as 'rural', 5,000 to 9,999 as 'rural-mixed', 10,000 to 14,999 as 'urban-mixed', and those with more than 15,000 as 'urban'.

For the purposes of this study, each telesecondary school is labeled with the letter A, B or C. telesecondaries A and B are located in two different communities in Izúcar de Matamoros, while *Telesecundaria* C is located in a community in Epatlán. In terms of the number of inhabitants, the community of *Telesecundaria* A has 3,459 inhabitants, the community of *Telesecundaria* B has 2,732 inhabitants, and the community of *Telesecundaria* C has 1,163 inhabitants (INEGI, 2020). Thus, according to the definition of 'rurality' adopted in this work, all three communities are considered rural.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, a total of 340 students were enrolled across the three telesecondary schools. Of these, 130 students were enrolled in *Telesecundaria* A, 97 in *Telesecundaria* B, and 113 in *Telesecundaria* C. In terms of class structure, the demand of students is covered by six groups in each school, with two groups for each grade level (first, second and third). Class sizes typically range from 18 to 22 students per group. Moreover, the academic staff at each school consists of a principal, six generalist teachers, one administrative staff member, and one cleaning staff member.

In terms of ELT, English is part of the curriculum at the three grade levels (first, second and third), adhering to the guidelines outlined in *Aprendizajes Clave para la Educación Integral: Lengua Extranjera Inglés*. According to these guidelines, English classes are scheduled three times a week – on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays – one hour each day, typically held after the break time. It is essential to acknowledge that, in telesecondary schools, English instruction is the responsibility of the generalist teacher assigned to each group. These lessons are intended to be structured around a student's book and a textbook called *Inglés (I, II or II): Apuntes,* which serves as a shared resource for both teachers and students. Additionally, video-recorded

materials, which are accessible online without time restrictions, are intended to be used, offering teachers flexibility in their use.

In the *Modelo Educativo,* the subject of English is referred to as English as a Foreign Language (EFL), which in basic education comprises four cycles. Cycle 4 covers the first, second and third grade of secondary education, with the aim that students will be able to participate in diverse communicative situations using oral and written texts. In addition, the expected competences for each grade are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In secondary education, level B1.1 corresponds to first grade, B1.2 to second grade, and B1.3 to third grade (SEP, 2017b). Besides, the SEP (2017b) outlines that by the end of secondary education, students are expected to meet these proficiency levels. Thus, the teacher responsible for teaching English plays a fundamental role in the student's academic path for achieving the expected outcomes in this subject.

In this regard, Hernández (2019) notes that there is a significant gap between the educational model and the reality of how English is taught in telesecondary, as the teacher (tele-monitor) must discuss, evaluate, and give feedback based on the video-recorded lessons. Nevertheless, without proper ELT training, this may become a serious challenge. This suggests that ELT in telesecondary schools has been largely left behind in the national educational policy (Hernández, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to identify the obstacles faced by telesecondary teachers in order to shed light on the existing challenges they encounter when teaching a language without adequate training in ELT.

In a similar vein, Romero (2021) found that "the creation of teaching curricula for these schools [telesecondary] is crucial for teachers to develop and make use of appropriate techniques and strategies in the classroom and for students to be able to reach the educational standards

proposed by SEP" (p. 88). In light of this, the present study aims to shed light on the strategies employed by telesecondary teachers to cope with the challenges of teaching English without professional ELT training, while also examining how sociocultural factors are linked to the instructional decisions teachers make.

1.4 Research Questions

This research explores the following questions:

1. How do sociocultural factors influence telesecondary teachers' experiences and practices in navigating challenges in foreign language teaching in rural contexts?

2. How do telesecondary teachers cope with teaching English in rural areas without specialized training?

3. What local or institutional resources do telesecondary teachers implement to teach English in rural contexts?

4. How do telesecondary teachers scaffold their teaching to support both their own and their students' learning?

1.5 Methodology

This study takes the character of a qualitative research since it is described as "...a systematic activity oriented to an in-depth understanding of educational and social phenomena to the transformation of socio-educational practices and scenarios..." (Sadín, 2003, p. 123). Besides, qualitative studies are carried out in natural contexts, and the researcher seeks answers for actual situations (Sadín, 2003). Thus, this research type matches with the characteristics and aims of the

studied issue, making it suitable for this thesis, as it seeks answers to the issues that telesecondary teachers face by researching in their natural contexts (telesecondary schools).

Furthermore, this thesis is aligned with the characteristics of a case study. In this respect, Creswell (2013) underlines the importance of conducting case studies, as they enable researchers to investigate a contemporary, clearly defined real-world setting over time by gathering rich data from a variety of sources. Hence, the aspects of case study are essential for this work since the issue is researched during a period of time by employing three different sorts of data collection: class observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and questionnaires for in-depth data collection. The purpose of using different sources for collecting data is to gather relevant information from different techniques in order to triangulate the data and validate the accuracy in this study (Creswell, 2013).

In this sense, semi-structured interviews gather information to know the principals and teachers' perceptions towards English, the challenges faced in English teaching, and information about the context. Regarding class observations, they are used to gather information concerning the teaching strategies, class dynamics, and the resources employed by teachers. Finally, the questionnaires administered to students collect data about the context conditions, the manner students learn and the students' perceptions towards English.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented relevant aspects to understand the issues studied in this work. Thus, an overview concerning ELT in secondary education was addressed as the starting point for this work. Similarly, it provided information related to the context and methodology for a better understanding of the issue studied. Additionally, features related to the issues related to

ELT in telesecondary were addressed to accentuate the importance of this work. This study consists of four additional chapters. Chapter II presents a discussion based on bibliographic information to set the framework for this study. Chapter III describes the methodology used for exploring the issues studied. Chapter IV presents the data gathered from interviews, focus groups, class observations, and questionnaires. Also, the findings concerning teaching strategies, resources and teachers' ways to cope with ELT, are comprehended in this section discussed from a sociocultural view. Chapter V answers the research questions based on the literature and the data gathered. Furthermore, it presents the limitations and implications of the study and directions for further research.

Chapter 2: Context

2.1 Public Education in Mexico

The education system in Mexico is structured into three main stages: basic, middle higher, and higher education. According to their nature, education is classified into two main branches, private and public. The former refers to the schools not funded by the Mexican government. In contrast, the latter refers to the schools administered and financially supported by the Mexican Ministry of Education (henceforth SEP).

2.1.1 Basic Education

Basic education comprises the educational stages of early childhood education, preschool, primary, and secondary education. This research is developed around the context of the third stage, where telesecondary is encompassed.

2.2 Secondary Schools in Mexico

In Mexico, secondary education represents the third stage of basic education, and this level covers the demand of students aged between 12-15 years. It consists of three academic years, which are divided into first, second, and third grade. Nonetheless, since its creation, secondary education has undergone remarkable transformations. Hence, the current system is a result of political, social, and historical transitions throughout Mexican history.

According to Zorilla (2004) and Dorantes (2019), the earliest conception of secondary education arose in 1865 within the *Ley de Instrucción de 1865.* This law enacted the underpinnings for education in the empire of Maximiliano de Habsburgo, which aimed to end the social backwardness, ignorance, illiteracy, and low schooling that characterized most of the Mexican population at the time (Dorantes, 2019). Clearly, there was an urgent need for Mexican

society to cope with those problems and fight against the remarkable social differences through education.

As a result, secondary education emerged, although there was a law to support it, the difference between secondary and middle higher education was not well recognized. Secondary education was divided into two types of schools, *Liceos* and *Colegios*; and they both lasted in total between 7 to 8 years. The former comprised the first four years of study, while the latter was divided into *Colegio Literario* and *Colegio de Artes*. In other words, the term *secondary education* entailed both secondary and high school level education (Memoria Política de México, n. d.).

It was in 1867, during the government of president Benito Juárez[3] when the secondary instruction was formally bounded to the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* (henceforth ENP) (Dorantes, 2019). Due to this shift, the duration in secondary instruction was reduced to five years instead of 7 or 8 years (Dorantes, 2019). However, even though these major transformations, the panorama in Mexico was still uncertain and the development of secondary education in Mexico was still in its early stages.

On the one hand, in public institutions, both secondary and high school students were treated equally; hence, the program did not distinguish between adolescents and youths nor implied cognitive and physical differences (Guerrero, 2021). On the other hand, private instruction offered subjects oriented to students' formation according to their age (Guerrero, 2021). Hence, it was visible that the necessity to define and distinguish secondary education from primary and high school education.

[3] President of Mexico from 1857 to 1871.

The institutionalization of political and economic aspects in the country was beginning, and the country was just starting to gain character as a nation (Murillo-Garza, 2014; Dorantes, 2019; Guerrero, 2021). Thus, in the second decade of the 90s, the necessity of having citizens educationally more competent came to light due to establishment of foreign enterprises in the country, which demanded skilled workers, or at least people that could read and write (Guerrero, 2021).

Consequently, the institutionalization process led to important transformations. In the educational field, schooling became a priority to literate Mexicans and strengthened the national political, social, and cultural aspects (Dorantes, 2019). A crucial character in this transformation process was Moisés Sáenz, who during the government of the Mexican president, Plutarco Elías Calles (1924 to 1928), contributed significantly to the transformation of education in the country (Murillo-Garza et al., 2014; Guerrero, 2021).

Hence, the foundation stone for secondary education was laid in 1915 during the *Pedagogic Congress of Veracruz*, from which derived the *Ley Popular del Estado* (Zorilla, 2004). This event traced the beginning of recognizing secondary education independently from high school education. However, despite the distinction, the objectives were not established yet at that moment.

It was until 1923 that the undersecretary of education, Bernardo Gastélum, made a motion to the University Council to reorganize and orient the purpose and objectives for secondary education. As a result, in 1923, José Vasconcelos, who was Minister of Public Education at the time, promulgated the project of Gastélum (Zorrilla, 2004). After some time, the department of secondary schools was created thanks to Moisés Sáenz (Zorrilla, 2004). Nonetheless, there was still not an exclusive curriculum for secondary education.

Later on, as a result of the decrees 1847, 1848 and 1849 promulgated in 1925, the project became more solid. The former decree authorized SEP the creation of secondary schools and to organize them appropriately, while the latter enabled SEP to create the *Dirección General de Escuelas Secundarias*, where the organization and administration of them would be carried out (Zorrilla, 2004; Murillo-Garza et al., 2014). These events represented a step forward for the whole nation; the consolidation of secondary education led to the formation of adolescents who were aware of their reality and agents of social transformation.

2.2.1 First Curriculum for Secundarias.

Despite the formalization of secondary education and its differentiation from the ENP in 1925, the curriculum for secondary school remained unformalized. However, there was a shift in content and orientation of the subjects taught during the three years of education. This time, the subjects were adapted according to the student's age and needs. Besides, they were divided into three blocks, which were further divided into compulsory, elective, and free-choice subjects (Guerrero, 2021). These actions represented the first steps to creating an official curriculum; subsequently, it was one year after, in 1926, when the curriculum for secondary schools was formally established (Guerrero, 2021).

In 1993, secondary education was established as compulsory in the Mexican constitution; and the demand of students at this level increased (Zorrilla, 2004). Hence, the state had to guarantee access to education to all Mexicans. Therefore, the secondary school curriculum had to be transformed and adapted to the diverse contexts and social needs of the Mexican population (Dorantes, 2019). This led to the creation of different secondary school modalities in order to provide education to the different population sectors in the country. Due to this demand the three

types of secondary schools emerged – *Secundaria General, Secundaria Técnica* and *Telesecundaria.*

2.2.2 Secundaria General.

Until 1958, there was only one type or modality of secondary education, which was later called *Secundaria General* (Zorilla, 2004). The general secondary modality aims to offer basic education that is humanistic, scientific, artistic, and technological so that the graduating students acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to become productive subjects and contribute to the nation's development (Ducoing, 2018).

2.2.3 Secundaria Técnica.

The *Secundaria Técnica* was created at the end of 1970. It offers education in science and humanities, including technological activities to prepare students for work (Zorrilla, 2004). Besides, this type of secondary school offers a bivalent option of study; students complete the curriculum of secondary education, and at the same time they are trained in a technological area. Thus, they graduate with a secondary school certificate and a technical assistant diploma in a particular specialty (Pieck, 2005).

2.2.4 Telesecondaries.

After the end of the Mexican revolution in 1917, most of the population in the country lived in rural areas under poor conditions. Due to the lack of educational opportunities across the whole territory, the educational backlog became a severe issue. Thus, from 1964 to 1970, Agustín Yánez, who was directing SEP, motivated by the need to increase the capacity of the educational service at secondary level, introduced the modality of telesecondaries (Zorilla, 2004; Dorantes, 2019).

Furthermore, it was urgent to bring education to marginalized areas since educational institutions were mainly established in urban areas (Hernández et al., 2006; Dorantes, 2019). Besides, it was necessary to cover the growing demand derived from the accelerated growth of the population during those years and due to the considerable expansion of primary education, whose graduates became a substantial social pressure to continue studying (Zorrilla, 2004). For these reasons, telesecondary education was ideal for bringing access to education to a more significant number of students in rural and isolated communities, requiring fewer administrative and personal resources than the other two types of secondary schools.

2.3 Creation of Telesecondaries in Mexico.

In order to design an official telesecondary program, extensive research was first conducted by the Mexican government. This study was carried out among other countries where television was used for educational purposes (SEP, 2010). The results revealed that different countries, such as the United States, Spain, France, and Brazil, had implemented courses guided by television, yet these programs did not fully coincide with the objectives intended in the Mexican context (SEP, 2010).

In contrast, Portugal did employ a program with greater coverage through televised education for the first two years of secondary education; which matched the objectives set in Mexico. Moreover, the educational program in Italy matched even more to the objective of creating a program to fully cover secondary education through televised education. Thus, the Italian *telescuola* became the model for the Mexican *telesecundaria* (SEP, 2010).

After the research was concluded, the next phase began. The plan for telesecondary schools was created and piloted by a group of 25 people to evaluate the project's viability. The

piloting culminated, and the results were positive; 24 out of 25 participants approved the academic year. The results led to 82 collaborations conforming to the *Alfabetización por Televisión* course (SEP, 2010).

On September 5th, 1966, the experimental phase began; this time the classrooms were equipped with a television and school furniture, and the classes were broadcasted live by the *Dirección General de Educación Audiovisual*. In this phase, there were 81 participants, who were divided into four groups. Three groups were coordinated by a teacher, while one performed the work independently, without the assistance of a teacher. At the end of the first semester of work, it was concluded that the best levels of school achievement were obtained by the students who participated in the groups that received the support of a teacher monitor (SEP, 2010).

Based on the results from the experimental phase of the recruitment and training process for *telemaestros* and *maestros monitores*, the functions of both figures were defined to launch the project at national level. On the one hand, *telemaestros* were defined as specialized persons in diverse areas of the curriculum, who oversaw adapting the content and sequence of the topics according to the curriculum. Moreover, they had to integrate the topics in a class lasting 20 minutes, and finally they had to broadcast their lesson live. On the other hand, *maestros monitores* were in charge of coordinating the activities in-situ*;* before, during and after the classes were transmitted on television. In addition, they oversaw the evaluation and administrative tasks (SEP, 2010).

To sum up, the main characteristics of telesecondary schools are the following: “using television to carry most of the teaching load, and using one teacher to cover all subjects, rather than the subject matter specialists used in general secondary schools” (Wolff, et al., 2002, p. 145).

Then, in 2003, according to Rivera and Zavala (2020), it was carried out research about the effectiveness of the telesecundaria system was carried out. Based on the results from two evaluations, ENLACE (Evaluación Nacional de Logros Académico en Centros Escolares) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment); demonstrated that students' learning was below expectations. Hence, through the analysis of the operation, organization and resources available for telesecondaries in rural and marginal areas of Mexico, it was concluded that these educational centers were reproducing the initial social disparities.

Due to the results obtained, in 2011 a reformulation of the educational model for telesecondaries took place (Rivera & Zavala, 2020). The main shift was on the centrality given to teachers; they were now responsible of the teaching-learning processes. Besides, other tools were incorporated such as pedagogical resources, teacher training, infrastructure, and equipment (Rivera & Zavala, 2020).

2.3.1 Demographic information

According to the *Sistema Interactivo de Consulta de Estadistica Educativa,* in the academic year 2022-2023, the total number of students enrolled in the telesecondary modality was 1,319,563, of which 1,317,155 belongs to the number of students in the public sector (SEP, 2023). There is a total of 18,836 telesecondary schools in Mexico of which 18,807 belong to the public education system. In terms of the number of schools in this modality, Puebla occupies the 4th place in the country, right after Veracruz, Oaxaca and Chiapas, with a total of 1,429 telesecondary schools (SEP, 2023).

2.3.2 Red Satelital de Televisión Educativa, Edusat

The *Red Satelital de Televisión Educativa* (Edusat) arose from the desire to incorporate the television media into educational processes. Thus, SEP launched an educational project to incorporate programs to meet the needs of the curriculum content in the three levels in basic education – preschool, elementary, and secondary (Hernández, 2006).

Edusat began its test transmissions in September 1994, and one year later – in December 1995 – it was formally inaugurated by Ernesto Zedillo, who was the Mexican president at the time (SEP, 2010). This educational television system made it possible to significantly increase the potential of the media and to make information and communication technologies more efficient (SEP, 2010). Moreover, information and communication technologies (ICTs) acquired a higher pedagogical potential than in previous years. As a result, it led to the development of open and distance educational programs, and it influenced other levels of schooling modalities (SEP, 2010).

The immediate predecessor of the *Edusat* network was the analog platform on the *Morelos II* satellite, which was digitalized in *Solidaridad I*. The network, *Solidaridad I,* considerably increased its capabilities, allowing the transmission on 16 channels with continental reach (SEP, 2010). The main purpose of this network was to meet the growing demand for educational services and to help reduce the backlog in this area.

Hence, telesecondary schools greatly benefited from the services of *Solidaridad I* network, especially those schools located in remote areas. Nonetheless, during its implementation, it was challenging to guarantee the distribution of satellite dishes and decoders in telesecondary schools, and the necessary training for their correct operation (SEP, 2010).

2.4 The First Steps of English Teaching National Policies

In Mexico, there have been events which have led to the interest of improving the foreign language learning (Roux, 2012). The watershed emerged from the results obtained in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2006 (Roux, 2012).

There is no reference date to indicate when English was introduced in the curriculum of public schools in Mexico (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019). However, the teaching of foreign languages in Mexico has existed mainly in secondary and high school education. In 1865 in the *Reglamento de la Ley de Instrucción Pública* it was stipulated that secondary education – which comprised what currently is known as secondary and high school education – had to cover the subjects of Greek, Latin, French and English, among other subjects (Memoria Política de México, n.d.). Then, with the foundation of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* (ENP) there was a focus on languages in the curriculum. For instance, there were subjects focused on language such as Spanish Grammar, Latin, Greek, French, English, German, and Italian (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019). Remarkably, due to the recommendations from the funder of the ENP, Gabino Barreda, English was taught after French (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019).

In 1923, with the official separation of secondary education from high school education, there was a restructuring of the curriculum. Thus, in 1926, English was implemented as a subject in the secondary school curriculum (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019, García-Landa, 2021). Since this event, English has become part of the curriculum in secondary education (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019).

2.5 English Teaching in Basic Education in Mexico

Since 1990, there have been different types of EFL programs to incorporate English teaching in primary schools (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019). First, these programs were initiated as state programs, in an attempt to incorporate English in secondary education. Then, federal programs arose such as *Inglés Encyclomedia*, the National English Program in Basic Education (PNIEB, by its acronym in Spanish), the Program for Strengthening the Quality of Basic Education (PFCEB, by its acronym in Spanish), and the National English Program (PRONI, by its acronym in Spanish) (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019, García-Landa, 2021).

2.5.1 National English Program for Basic Education (PNIEB)

Since 1993, and since English language instruction became mandatory in secondary education, some states have developed initiatives, through the creation of State English Programs (PEI by its acronym in Spanish), so that students in primary education and in some cases in preschool, receive training in a foreign language prior to secondary education. Hence, the PEIs were created in response to the demands of the community (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020).

In the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, 21 states (Aguascalientes, Baja California, Coahuila, Colima, Chihuahua, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Puebla, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas and Veracruz) had implemented the PEIs profile (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020). Nevertheless, the proposals implemented by each federative entity were different, since each state determined the covered grades, the number of classes per week, the

type of hired teachers, salary, benefits and the teachers' academic profile (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020).

In this context, the National English Program for Basic Education (PNIEB in its Spanish acronym) emerged. It began in 2009 as a piloting phase in the 32 states of the Mexican Republic. (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020). It covered from the 3rd grade of preschool to the 6th grade of elementary school. In 2011, the trial stage in 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade of secondary school began; continuing until 2015 with the expansion phase, which covered from 3rd grade of preschool to 3rd grade of secondary school (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020).

Through the program, English language proficiency was promoted in students, thus achieving the ability to communicate in English, allowing them to approach different cultures, in addition to promoting social mobility, generating greater opportunities for better paid jobs and facilitating access to information and the production of knowledge (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020). Through PNIEB, it was expected that students were able to discuss effectively, communicate fluently and naturally in English, use Information and Communication Technologies to obtain, process and interpret information. Besides it was pretended that students used the language as a tool to get closer to the student population of different cultures in the world (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020).

2.5.2 The Mexican National English Program (PRONI)

In the 2016 fiscal year, PRONI was incorporated into that year's Federal Expenditure Budget, which primarily focused on producing and distributing educational materials for both teachers and students, as well as enhancing the professional development of language teaching personnel (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020). Furthermore, PRONI was based on the

curricular proposal endorsed by the University of Cambridge (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020).

The English curriculum of PRONI was structured in four cycles (Cycle I: 3rd year of preschool, and 1st and 2nd year of elementary school; Cycle II: 3rd and 4th year of elementary school; Cycle III: 5th and 6th year of elementary school; and Cycle IV: 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of elementary school; Cycle III: 5th and 6th year of elementary school; and Cycle IV: 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of elementary school) (Diario Oficial de la Federeación, 2020).

Besides, the program established an exit profile for students, aiming for them to achieve a B1 level on the CEFR scale by the end of secondary education. This level would allow them to understand the main ideas of clear, standard texts; write simple and coherent texts on familiar subjects; describe experiences, events, desires and aspirations, and provide brief justifications for their opinions or explain their plans (Diario Oficial de la Federeación, 2020).

Furthermore, it results noteworthy that in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*[4] for the fiscal year 2021, PRONI's operating rules considered preschool education, regular primary education, and secondary education – in the modalities of *secundaria general* (general telesecondary) and *secundaria técnica* (technical secondary) (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020). Even though telesecondary schools are part of the basic education sector, they were not covered or even mentioned in the PRONI program.

[4] It is the organ of the Constitutional Government of Mexico, which has the function of publishing in the national territory: laws, regulations, agreements, circulars, orders and other acts issued by the powers of the Federation, so that they may be properly observed and applied in their respective areas of competence.

2.5.3 La Nueva Escuela Mexicana (NEM)

According to SEP (2024), the educational model *La Nueva Escuela Mexicana* (NEM) is a model that seeks for an integral and equitable education for all students in Mexico, recognizing the diversity in terms of culture, linguistics and society. This model focuses on transforming education through a curriculum that considers the local and regional context of the communities across the country, with the integration of the society and families of the students. This model is structured in four formative areas (*campos formativos) –Lenguajes* (Languages); *Saberes y Pensamiento Científicos (Knowledeges and Scientific Thinking); Ética,Naturaleza y Sociedades (Ethics,Nature and Society), and De lo Humano y lo Comunitario (from Human to Community*. According to the NEM, in secondary education, English is integrated in the *campo formativo*: *Lenguajes* along with the subjects of Spanish and Arts. It is worth mentioning that regarding to the English teaching curriculum, it remains as the *Programa Nacional de Inglés (PRONI)* previously presented in the section above.

2.6 ELT Curriculum in Secondary Schools

In general educational terms, the three types of secondary schools are aligned to *the Modelo Educativo.* The subjects considered for secondary education are Mother tongue, Mathematics, Sciences and Technology, History, Geography, Arts, Civic and Ethical Education, Tutoring and Socioemotional Education, Physical Education, and English (SEP, 2017a). These subjects are encompassed within one of the 11 areas described in the *Modelo Educativo.* In the case of English, it is included in the area titled as Language and Communication.

Although the three modalities of secondary education in Mexico are designed for different contexts and student populations, they are all required to follow the same English curriculum. In the *Modelo Educativo,* the English subject is referred to as English as a Foreign

Language (EFL), which comprises four cycles for basic education. Cycle 4 encompasses the first, second and third grades of secondary education. By the end of this cycle, students are expected to engage in interactions and adjust their language use across a range of oral and written texts in different communicative contexts.

In addition, the English level for each grade is established based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference). In the case of secondary education, level B1.1 corresponds to the first grade, B1.2 to second grade, and B1.3 to third grade (SEP, 2017b). At the end of the secondary education, students should demonstrate those competences in the English language. It means that the teacher plays a fundamental role in achieving the expected outcomes in ELT since they are specialists in the English language.

2.6.1 English teaching in Telesecondaries

There exist challenges in English teaching, mostly they are related to "the lack of a clear legislation about the purposes of English as subject in the Basic Educational Level, the optimum working conditions for English Teachers, and the deficit of specialized English Teachers" (Galeana Tapia, 2018, p. 16). As there is no difference in the curriculum between the three types of institutions for secondary education – general secondary, technical secondary, and telesecondary – all of them are aligned in the *Programa Nacional de Inglés* (PRONI).

In telesecondary, as well as in the two other types of secondary schools, English subject is part of the curriculum, which is aligned to the official document *Aprendizajes clave para la educación integral: Lengua extranjera inglés*. However, in telesecondary, English should be taught by the generalist teacher in charge of each group. Therefore, to conduct the instruction, the English lessons should be guided by an English student's book, and a common guide for both

teachers and students called *Apuntes Inglés* which are divided into levels *I, II* and *III.* In addition, the classes should be guided by audio visual-recorded materials, and audio materials which can be accessed online by the teacher without time restrictions (SEP, 2017a).

2.6.2 English Teaching Resources in Telesecondaries

There are diverse resources to support teachers and students in the teaching-learning process of English in telesecondaries. These resources consist of three main tools, the *Apuntes Bimodales* divided into levels *I, II* and *II*, an English student's book, and audio-visual materials provided by SEP *Telesecundaria.* Regarding the *Apuntes Bimodales Inglés I, II,* and *II;* they are books that have been developed in a manner that teachers and students can share the same material based on project work, case studies or problem-solving situations (SEP, 2017a).

Besides, there is an additional English book for students. However, it results surprising that there are several options of English books for each level from different book editorials. For instance, for the academic year 2021-2022 on the telesecondaries official webpage, the digital version of each book is available. For first grade there are 14 different English books, for second grade there are 9 different books, and for third grade there are 6 different English books. Another resource available for teaching English is a series of audio-visual materials (Telesecundaria, n.d.).

2.7 Teachers' Training for Telesecondaries

The training program for telesecondary teachers is offered in the *Escuelas Normales.* The bachelor's degree program offers preparation for future teachers who want to work in either *telesecundaria* or *telebachillerato* (Rivera & Zavala, 2020).

2.7.1 Estrategia Nacional de Inglés in Escuelas Normales

The *Estrategia Nacional de Inglés* was implemented in 2018 (SEP, 2018). It is essential to mention that, in the document it is remarked the fact that due to English teaching would be introduced for the first time for telesecundaria and telebachillerato students, appropriate and relevant multimedia materials would be developed. Also, it is stated that the existing materials would be reviewed to ensure their alignment with the pedagogical approach and curricular elements of the subject in the curriculum. However, the existing multimedia materials for teaching English in telesecondary remained the same.

2.7.2 SEPA Inglés

SEPA Inglés is a self-instructional English language course delivered in an open and distance modality. It is primarily designed for adults who are unable to access face-to-face training options or attend classes regularly at a fixed location. In this regard, the program is offered to telesecondary teachers who are interested in studying English. The program is structured in four levels: Beginner, Basic, General I and General II. Each level includes a workbook with activities, as well as audios and videos that support teachers to consolidate their comprehension, writing, reading and social use of the language (Telesecundaria, n.d.).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the underpinnings of this research project. The study focuses mainly on investigating aspects related to English instruction, nevertheless learning also becomes a central subject. Furthermore, the main concepts of the Vygotskian sociocultural theory, which frame this research, are discussed for a complete understanding of the study.

3.1. Teaching and Learning: An Overview

In the past, learning and instruction were regarded as independent processes, consequently they were studied in isolation (Schunk, 2014). According to Schunk (2014), there were different reasons behind this concept. Some of them were based on the existing tradition that learning was researched by psychologists, while studies on instruction were conducted by educators. Other arguments were sustained by the idea that teaching was an art rather than a science; and some other reasons were based on the lack of adequate methods to investigate learning and instruction simultaneously.

Later, the integration of both terms in theories and research was possible by a change in perspective. As Highet (1950) argues in his book *The Art of Teaching*, learning and instruction started to be conceived as interdependent processes. Then, teaching began to be regarded as the process of creating learning settings to help students to implement cognitive activities to build up skills and reasoning abilities (Schunk, 2014).

3.2 A Sociocultural Perspective in Human Learning

There are different educational theories – behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, humanism, and connectivism. This work is framed around Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (henceforth SCT). Since each theory conceives the learning process from diverse outlooks, it is fundamental to give an overview of the SCT to grasp how it emerged among other educational theories and what its theoretical foundations are.

3.2.1 Origins of the Sociocultural Theory

In the early decades of the 20th century, it took place a crisis in psychology, which originated from the diversity of perspectives and objects of study (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Fahim & Haghani, 2012). At that time, approaches were distinguished mainly in two broad categories. On the one hand, there were those approaches that comprehended the environment of the individual as the origin of the mental processes (behaviorism). On the other hand, there were those approaches that understood a biological specification in the mind of the person as the origin of the mental processes (innatism), and which focused on the understanding of mental activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Fahim & Haghani, 2012; van Compernolle, 2014). Subsequently, sociocultural theory arose a holistic approach to overcome that issue by incorporating aspects of both perspectives.

The epistemological tenets of this learning theory are rooted in the work of the Russian psychologist and educator Lev Vygotsky, along with his collaborators Leontiev and Luria (Johnson, 2009). Sociocultural Theory (SCT) views development as a dialectical interplay between innate biological factors and culturally shaped experiences (van Compernolle, 2014). Furthermore, it considers learning as a dynamic social activity situated in the physical and social

environment which is mediated by cultural tools, language, and interpersonal interaction (Johnson, 2009; Cabaleiro, 2017).

In contrast to other learning theories such as behaviorism or cognitivism, Sociocultural Theory states that advanced human learning originated within social contexts (Johnson, 2009). Hence, learning is conceived as a dynamic process that unfolds through social activities, in which human thinking is generated by social relationships and is shaped by culturally developed tools and symbols, referred to as semiotic artifacts (Johnson, 2009; Sung & Zhang, 2021).

According to Vygotsky, in SCT adults contribute to children's learning by introducing symbolic mediational tools – such as language, literacy, numeracy, and logic – and guiding them in how to use these instruments to regulate their innate psychological functions (Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Cabaleiro, 2017). For Vygotsky (1980), the activity of the individual cannot be understood without considering the society in which they have developed (Cabaleiro, 2017). Consequently, knowledge construction is viewed as emerging through interaction among members of the speech community, the use of artifacts – which serve as bridges between individual and collective experiences – and communicative exchanges shaped by specific contexts (Cabaleiro, 2017).

Hence, the study is grounded in the foundations of the SCT, since the context and culture in the telesecondary play a significant role in the manner English is learned and taught by teachers, and how it is learned by students. Moreover, even though this work is not focused on young learners, the social conditions are highly relevant as telesecondary schools have the characteristic of having one teacher per group, who teaches all the subjects established in the curriculum, where English is part of it.

3.2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Sociocultural Theory

SCT is grounded in the theory of constructivism. Nonetheless, there is a focus on the social environment as a facilitator of learning and development (Schunk, 2014). Vygotsky's theory holds that the mental process is mainly mediated and organized by cultural artifacts, activities, concepts, signs and symbols, known as semiotic artifacts (Martínez, 1999; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Cabaleiro, 2017). Additionally, the theory holds that humans use pre-existing cultural tools to develop new ones, which serve to mediate their biological functions and behavior (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). According to Lantolf and Thorne (2007) "language use, organization, and structure are the primary means of mediation" (p. 197).

However, the sociocultural domain does not trigger innate mental processes; instead, it is the main source of cognitive development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). It is therefore that "developmental processes take place through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family life and peer group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling, organized sports activities, and workplaces" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p.197). In this regard, Lantolf and Johnson (2007) emphasize that the interactions (in this case in the context of telesecondary schools) are the process through wich human cognition of its members is formed.

Vygotsky acknowledged the necessity of having a completely new conception of human mental development in order to create a truly integrated psychology (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Accordingly, this theory centers on advanced cognitive functions such as higher-order thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, planning, and the construction of meaning (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). Moreover, SCT conceives social relationships and culture fundamental in the transformation of psychological capacities – biologically endowed – into distinctly human forms of mental activity (van Compernolle, 2014).

Vygotsky's theory also recognizes that the human brain operates on two distinct neurobiological levels. The first consists of basic neurological functions, while the second involves more complex, higher-order cognitive abilities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Moreover, the theory emphasizes that human consciousness enables individuals to intentionally shape and regulate their environment through the use of advanced cultural tools – such as language, literacy, numeracy, classification, reasoning, and logic – which serve as mediators in the interaction between the individual and their surroundings (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

3.3. Sociocultural Model in Education

Even though sociocultural theory was associated with education, in the 90s a few studies that focused on education were framed around this theory (Moll, 1990). It was until the end of the 90's when SCT began to gain ground in the field of education (Martínez, 1999). To broaden the understanding and knowledge of SCT in the educational field, different authors (Brunner, 1978; Moll, 1990; Martínez, 1999, Razfar, et al., 2011) have contributed with their perspectives. In the following segment, different standpoints and contributions to SCT in the field of education are presented.

To begin the discussion, it is meaningful to talk about why the author behind SCT began his interest in the educational field. Before Vygotsky became a psychologist, he was first an educator. This made him aware of the existing educational issues at that time. As a result, he claimed that psychology had to go beyond theory, to act in human life in order to help in molding it (Moll, 1990). Following this reasoning, Vygotsky's followers ensured that the socialist state succeeded, and they also contributed to the development of concrete solutions to problems in education (Moll, 1990). This study follows that string by investigating issues found in the context of *Telesecundaria* in order to contribute to this educational community.

Regarding SCT in education, Brunner (1987) claims that Vygotsky's theory of education can be described as a theory that encompasses development as well as cultural transmission. Hence, according to the author, the significance of education extends beyond the development of a person's potential to that of the expression and growth of human culture from which man develops (Brunner, 1987). Another author who agrees with that concept is Martínez (1999), who highlights that from the perspective of the sociocultural approach, the psychological processes result from the interaction of the individual and its culture, the author also argues that in this developmental process, the construction of meanings is the key to psychological functioning, specifically, in the meanings we attribute to objects, words and actions of others (Martínez, 1999).

Besides, "SCT conceptualizes learning not as a linear process of moving from the basics to the advanced or from simple words to more complex ones but rather as a shift in the object/action to meaning ratio" (Razfar, et al., 2011 p. 201). Hence, according to the theory, knowledge construction occurs in a classroom in a social, active, communicative manner through the notion of appropriation (Martínez, 1999). Furthermore, SCT considers that the individual elaboration of meanings relies on the social construction we share with other members of our social and cultural context (Martínez, 1999). This aspect is relevant in the field of education since the school becomes the social shared context in which its members interact, and they construct meanings linked to it.

As a final remark, it is worth mentioning that "the study of educational change represents the reorganization of a key social system, and associated modes of discourse, with potential consequences for developing new forms of thinking" (Moll, 1990, p. 2). Based on this, the present work attempts to research on the relationship between the sociocultural factors in the

educational community of telesecondaries and the way English instruction shapes learners' identities and practices.

3.4 Sociocultural Model and Language Learning

Vygotsky and his collaborators were pioneers in formalizing and applying the sociocultural perspective to language teaching and development (Cabaleiro, 2017). Nevertheless, despite Vygotsky's theory being accepted in the field of education, it was not valued in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (Ohta, 2017). It was until the mid-1980s when SCT started to gain popularity among the members of the second/foreign language community thanks to Lantolf and Frawley's work (Masuda & Arnett, 2015; Ohta, 2017). Hence, Lantolf and Frawley began to trace the path, spreading in the interest between SCT and second language (L2) (Ohta, 2017).

According to Vygotsky, the development of human cognitive abilities is the result of the internalization of social based learning through artifacts that are socially constructed (Matusda & Arnett, 2015). Motivated by this principle, research on L2, which has been grounded in SCT, has explored the associations of second language learning and instruction (Matusuda & Arnett, 2015; Ohta, 2017).

As a result, research in this field has made significant contributions to the understanding of how language and other semiotic tools function in L2 development and education (Ohta, 2017). Thus, this theory applied to L2 learning allows the understanding of the development of the individual and the role of social interaction for the learners; in which dialogue acts as a mediator of mind that encompasses developmental processes that are formative and transformative. Hence, the context functions as the source of mental development (Ohta, 2017).

SCT has its own way to comprehend the components and participants of language interactions. Thus, according to this theory, grammar is not about a set of rules to be memorized, but rather as conceptual knowledge that might support learners in creating meanings more effectively to express their communicative aims (Masuda & Arnett, 2015; Lantolf, 2010). Additionally, in SCT the learner is presented as an active agent who is engaged in situated meaning making (Razfar et al, 2011, p. 200).

3.5 Mediation and Mediation Tools

A central concept in SCT is mediation. To further explain what it refers to, interpretations from different authors are presented in this section. To do that, an illustrative example from Swain et al. (2015) will be used:

> Sometimes, our interactions are direct: a bee stings and we swat the bee. In this unmediated interaction, we use no tools or mediational means; nothing comes between us and the physical sensations (sting) and action (swatting). At other times, the interactions are materially or symbolically mediated. A bee circles, we take a book and swat the bee. In this mediated interaction, we use a material tool (the book) to extend our reach and protect us from the bee's sting. Yet another time, a bee circles, and we recall what we have read about bee behavior and move the plate of pineapple away. In this last scenario, we use a symbolic artifact – language written in a book about bee behavior – to plan and direct (mediate) our interaction with that annoying bee. That is, these material and symbolic artifacts mediate our interaction with bees (p. 2).

From the discussion above, it is important to identify a key term, artifact (also referred to as 'tool'). Swain et al. (2015) highlight that in SCT, artifacts are all human-made objects, which

can be either material or symbolic (Swain et al., 2015). Li (2020) presents a similar conception, the author claims that “artefacts and tools are utilised by individuals in sense-making, meaning negotiation and collaboration in activities” (Li, 2020, p. 6).

For instance, artifacts could be “tables, clothes, books, numbers, languages, concepts and belief systems” (Swain et al., 2015, p.2). However, it is fundamental to stress that not every artifact could be catalogued as a mediating means, yet they do have the potential to become one (Swain et al., 2015). To become a mediation tool, artifacts must “act as shapers of our interaction with the world” (Swain et al., 2015, p. 2). Additionally, the authors discuss that “when used as a mediational means (tool), we need to consider the artifact itself and the where, why, when and how of its use” (Swain et al., 2015, p. 2).

Now, bearing in mind what artifacts are, the question is, what is the difference between a material tool and a symbolic artifact? On the one hand, Swain et al. (2015) argue that a material tool, as its name refers to, is a tool that consists of a physical object. On the other hand, a symbolic artifact consists of abstract elements such as concepts, knowledge, beliefs, and other mental constructs that are internally developed and constructed in order to mediate thought and behavior (Swain et al., 2015).

In the classroom tangible artifacts can be “materials, technological tools and other products that the teacher and students make in the process of teaching and learning” (Li, 2020, p. 35). Regarding symbolic tools in the classroom “a teacher’s use of interactional resources, including pointing, paraphrasing, eye contact and simplification, together with psychological tools, such as pictures, objects and diagrams, are mediational means in assisting language development” (Li, 2020, p. 36). Besides, Li (2020) adds to this list the use of gestures as a symbolic artifact.

In Sociocultural Theory, language use, organization, and structure are seen as the main tools for mediation, through which new cultural artifacts are created. This means that taking part in cultural, linguistic, and historically shaped contexts supports the development of higher psychological functions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Therefore, symbolic tools play a role in managing and reshaping the natural psychological functions humans are born with (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). This capacity is what differentiates humans from other species, since humans have the capacity to plan their actions before acting on the objectives of the plan and according to Vygotsky, this is referred to as consciousness (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

Furthermore, SCT states that persons can use either a material tool, a symbolic artifact or even both, to mediate the actions that happen around them (Swain et al., 2015; Li, 2020). The authors emphasize that mediation acts in a shaping, planning, or directing manner when an individual experiences a social event (Swain, et al., 2015). Hence, "through mediation the social and individual are brought together in dialectic unity" (Swain et al., 2015, p. 2).

To complement the mental image of mediation, it is worth bringing Lantolf and Thorne's (2007) conception. They point out that mediation can take various forms, including regulation, mediation through symbolic artifacts, and mediation through a second language. In particular, mediation by symbolic artifacts refers to the human capacity to use symbols – such as language or numbers – as tools to think, learn, and control their own mental activities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

Other authors such as Masuda and Arnett (2015) argue that SCT emphasizes that even though "human mind does not always interact directly with the world, the mind can use physical and psychological tools to mediate the world" (pp. 11-12). In this case, concepts act as a tool to mediate verbal thinking (Masuda & Arnett, 2015). Swain et al., (2015) agree with this, since they

claim that “all forms of human mental activity are mediated by material and/or symbolic means that are constructed within and through cultural activity” (Swain et al., p. 2, 2015).

In this work, it is essential to bring the concept of mediation into the field of language learning. Thus, in order to do so, it is vital to remark that language acts as a mediator of thinking and can be either written or spoken (Masuda & Arnett, 2015). Furthermore, language is closely connected to the concept of mediation, which sees language not as something internal to the mind, but as a tool that is shaped through interaction with others and used to achieve goals in real-life situations (Razfar et al., 2011).

On this subject, the authors Masuda and Arnett (2015) highlight that “the mediated mind is critical for language learning and instruction in L2 development” (p. 10). Besides, they discuss that language is an essential artifact for mediation since apart from being a tool for thinking, it can also be used for boosting conceptual development (Masuda & Arnett, 2015). Other authors who support this claim are Razfar et al. (2015), who argue that “for Vygotsky and those working from a SCT position, language is a means to concrete ends, and language serves as a mediational tool for solving problems” (p.200). Therefore, in SCT, speaking and thinking work in a dialectical relationship; that is, one talks to oneself to understand what one is doing to understand a concept (Masuda & Arnett, 2015).

3.6 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

One of the most recognized concepts in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Masuda & Arnett, 2015; Swain et al., 2015; Ohta, 2017). To have a broader vision of it, it is relevant to point out how it was introduced as a concept in SCT. The concept emerged from a necessity of solving the issues Vygotsky encountered in educational

psychology (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). These issues were related to the assessment of the intellectual abilities of a child and the evaluation of instructional practices (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). The problem arose from the use of testing techniques to assess only the actual development level, ignoring the potential abilities of the child (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). As a result, Vygotsky focused on the potential abilities of a child, suggesting that psychology should center on them (Fahim & Haghani, 2012).

According to Ohta (2017), the first authors to associate the ZPD with L2 education were Aljaafreh and Lantolf in 1994 and Donato in 1994. In the case of Aljaafreh and Lantolf, they demonstrated how learners are in different developmental stages even though they seem to be at the same stage (Ohta, 2017). Donato illustrated this concept through his research on the origins of the ZPD, observing how it emerged during collaborative work in a French L2 classroom, where students supported one another in the co-construction of L2 forms (Ohta, 2017).

Now, having explored the background of the concept, it is vital to grasp its meaning. The concept of the ZPD has been defined by different authors from different standpoints. Swain et al. (2015) compile a series of different definitions and interpretations of the ZPD:

> It has been called a metaphor by John-Steiner and Mahn (1996); an opportunity for learning by Swain and Lapkin (1998); a heuristic by Del Rio and Álvarez (2007); the distance between being and becoming (Holzman, 2002); and a dialectical (balanced tension) unity of learning and development by Dunn and Lantolf (1998) (p. 16).

Hence, to define how the ZPD is approached in this work, it is essential to first consider Vygotsky's original conception, followed by other interpretations. Vygotsky's notion starts with his vision regarding learning. According to the author, learning awakens different internal

processes of development which can operate when the child interacts with others in his environment and in collaborations with his peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, the processes become part of the child's developmental achievement when they are internalized (Vygotsky, 1978).

From this view, Vygotsky claims that learning and development are not the same; however, he believes that when learning is well organized, it results in mental development and triggers a series of developmental processes that would be impossible without learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, "developmental processes do not coincide with learning processes. Rather, the developmental process lags behind the learning process; this sequence then results in zones of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90).

Hence, the ZPD believes that "children could co-construct their learning and their eventual development with the assistance of an 'expert' and appropriate mediating artifacts" (Swain et al., 2015, p. 16). The ZPD occurs when the child interacts with more capable others self-regulating the predetermined natural order of the development (Razfar et al, 2011).

From the point of view of Swain et al. (2015), the ZPD is "the difference between what an individual achieves by herself and what she might achieve when assisted" (p. 16). Other authors who have similar ideas about the ZPD are Masuda and Arnett (2015), who claim that the ZPD refers to "the different levels between the internal focus of an individual and his assisted performance within a surrounding social structure where growth happens through social interaction" (p. 11). Hence, ZPD can be understood as a collaborative process, in which learning shifts from inter-personal to intra-personal (Masuda & Arnett, 2015). Besides, "from a SCT point of view, the construction of knowledge, growth, and development is borne out of active

engagement between the learner, the goals, and more competent others" (Razfar et al., 2011, p. 199).

According to Razfar et al. (2011), "although Vygotsky emphasized the significance of signs, symbols, and language as preeminent mediational tools, ZPD has nothing to do with language per se but rather problem solving and interaction" (p. 197). Therefore, ZPD does not emerge as a predetermined form, but it is the result of the shared problem-solving activity of the participants. (Razfar et al, 2011).

As presented in this section, the concept of ZPD is mostly related to children. However, Li (2020) recognizes that the concepts of ZPD and mediation have also implications for teacher learning, mainly through collaboration. Hence, Li (2020) recognizes four possible sorts of collaboration in teacher development: "collaboration with fellow teachers, between teachers and university-based researchers, with students, and with others involved in teaching and learning – administrators, parents, supervisors and so on" (p. 281). The author emphasizes that it is through collaborative talk how teachers engage and start developing and acquiring new forms of thinking (Li, 2020, p. 281). Thus, "when teachers develop a deliberate reflection, with support from their community, they develop expertise" (Li, 2020, p. 281).

3.7 Sociocultural Model on Language Teacher Education

To further explain the significance of teacher education in this research, it is relevant to consider that teachers are also learners, since they are always learning new aspects from the subjects they teach and finding new paths to help their students to learn (Highet, 1950; Hawkings, 2004). Therefore, since the main actors of this study are telesecondary teachers, it is

central to grasp from a sociocultural outlook how they have managed to learn English and then teach it in their educational context.

Regarding this subject, Li (2020) argues that language teacher learning has the aim to empower teachers through the understanding of their teaching practice in their real contexts. Thus, "the sociocultural view of teacher cognition expands the concept from considering teachers as individual meaning-makers to participants who engage in historical cultural practice with others" (Li, 2020, pp. 278-279). Hence, it is meaningful to study this phenomenon through the lens of Sociocultural Theory in order to understand how the context of telesecondary influences the beliefs and decisions that teachers make to take action in their teaching practice.

Besides, teacher learning is an ongoing process that is situated in broad sociocultural contexts and is the result of social interaction (Li, 2020). Johson and Golombek (2011b) have a similar view, they claim that "human cognition is mediated by virtue of being situated in a cultural environment and it is from this cultural environment that we acquire the representational systems, most notably language, that ultimately become the medium, mediator, and tools of thought" (p.1). Consequently, cognitive development is a process that needs interaction, which is mediated by different factors such as culture, context, language, and social interaction (Johnson & Golombek, 2011b).

Furthermore, Li (2020) is aware about the complexity of teaching, arguing that it is a system rather than an event, which becomes complex because of different factors including "the environment in which the teacher works, the educational system, curriculum and school culture, and whom the teacher works with—the students, colleagues, subject leaders and the school management team—as well as parents" (p. 279). However, the author underlines that teaching is

also very individual, since “every teacher has their own needs and background, learn most of the time differently and use the prior knowledge as a method to appropriate the new knowledge” (Li, 2020, p. 279).

After three decades of educational research, teacher learning is conceptualized as a long-term developmental process arising from participation in the social practices and contexts associated with teaching and learning (Johnson & Golombek, 2011a). Besides, teacher learning is a process in progress which is interactive, reflexive and experiential, becoming essential for the interaction with peers and others as well as negotiation in the community (Li, 2020). However, further research on professional development is still needed to understand how to best support teachers' professional development, or the relationship between teachers' professional development and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which that development occurs (Johnson & Golombek, 2011a).

From the discussion above, it should be emphasized that this research attempts to shed light on how professional development occurs on telesecondary teachers from a sociocultural perspective, since the context of *telesecundaria* is interconnected to the manner in which instructors teach but also learn.

3.8 Professional Development

The concept of professional development also becomes relevant in this research, as teachers need to update themselves in order to meet the demands of the curriculum and institutions. In this sense, professional development is a result of institutional goals, but it is also a result of the personal goals of teachers (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In this sense, when teachers

seek professional development, they are growing both professionally and personally at the same time (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In the context of the Mexican education system, telesecondary teachers are required to teach all subjects included in the secondary school curriculum, regardless of their initial training or specialization. This unique characteristic of the telesecundaria modality makes it particularly relevant to discussions on professional development, as it places teachers in situations where they must constantly adapt, acquire new knowledge, and strengthen areas where they may have limited expertise. For many educators, this challenge becomes a motivating factor to engage in professional growth; for others, it represents a necessary response to institutional demands. In either case, the need to teach across disciplines, particularly subjects like English, becomes a motivator for ongoing learning, reinforcing the idea that professional development is both a personal and institutional requirement.

Therefore, in order to meet curriculum requirements, telesecondary teachers are often faced with the challenge of teaching English. This task frequently becomes a significant barrier, pushing educators to seek out strategies and resources to strengthen their skills in this area. For those who recognize English as an area for improvement, this process becomes an opportunity to engage in meaningful professional growth. By seeking to improve their English teaching skills through self-study, training, or collaboration with colleagues, teachers engage in a continuous process of professional development. As Johnson and Golombek (2011b) affirm, professional development has no fixed beginning or end; rather, it unfolds continuously throughout a teacher's career, often driven by the practical demands and challenges encountered in specific educational contexts.

To understand what professional development refers to, it is important to define the concept. On the one hand, for Johnson and Golombek (2011b), there are different paths and means for professional development that could take place in different moments:

> A novice teacher entering the classroom for the very first time is involved in professional development; a pre-service teacher taking academic coursework in a teacher education program is involved in professional development; an in-service teacher participating in a workshop is involved in professional development; an experienced teacher attempting to understand and overcome a persistent classroom dilemma is involved in professional development (p. xi).

On the other hand, Richards and Farrell (2005) begin to define the concept of professional development by focusing first on the differences between the concepts of training and development. According to them, training encompasses those activities that are focused on the current responsibilities of a teacher, which are aimed at short term and immediate goals. Besides, training entails understanding concepts and principles to apply them in the teaching practice (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Furthermore, teacher training content is determined by experts, and it also includes trying out innovative strategies in the classroom with the supervision, monitoring and feedback from others on the teacher's practice (Richards & Farrell, 2005). From the discussion above, it can be drawn that although training can be part of professional development, it is a process that occurs under different conditions.

For the authors, development usually refers to growth in general terms, not focused on a specific job, seeking growth about teaching and about themselves as teachers (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In addition, development involves examining a teacher's practice, making it a

reflective practice and a bottom-up process (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Moreover, while individual initiative may play a significant role in teacher development, teamwork with other educators fosters individual growth and advances the institution's overall objectives. (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In line with this view, a shift toward *insider* methods rather than *outsider* ones has been a significant trend in teacher development in recent years. *Outsider* methods refer to methods that rely on expert knowledge and general theories or principles that teachers are expected to apply to their own teaching contexts. In contrast, *insider* methods are locally based approaches that encourage teachers to investigate their own contexts and construct personal knowledge and understanding of what happens in their classrooms (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Within this framework, self-directed learning plays a key role since educators take ownership of their learning process, set personal goals, and actively regulate their professional growth (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Richards and Farrell (2005) identify a range of activities, methods, and procedures integral components of professional development in the field of language teaching. These include workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups, teaching journals, peer observation, teaching portfolios, critical incidents analysis, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, and action research. For the purposes of this work, the focus will be placed on three specific approaches: workshops, self-monitoring and teacher support groups.

3.8.1 Workshops

Richards and Farrell (2005) describe workshops as in-depth, brief learning sessions that are intended to provide participants with the opportunity to acquire specialized knowledge as well as skills. Likewise, the authors highlight that by working on projects like creating protocols

for action research or classroom observation, participants are supposed to gain practical expertise in the subject matter and acquire something that they may use in the classroom later on (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Hence, in order to reflect on their own teaching methods, workshop participants may also get the chance to explore their opinions and views about education. A person who is regarded as an expert and has significant experience in the topic leads the sessions, which can address issues connected to both individual growth and improvements for institutions (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

3.8.2 Self-monitoring

Regarding self-monitoring, Richards and Farrell (2005) claim that a teacher's awareness of their existing knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, as well as their use of this information as a foundation for self-evaluation, are crucial first steps in the development of teachers. Based on classroom observations, student comments, interviews, and other sources of information, a manager or supervisor can provide an evaluation of performance, which offers an outsider's viewpoint on the present level of performance in an institution (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Teachers can, however, frequently reach their own conclusions about their own instruction based on the data they gather. For this reason, actions in which information about one's teaching is captured or recorded in order to examine or evaluate teaching are referred to as self-monitoring or self-observation (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

3.8.3 Teacher Support Groups

Teacher support groups is what Richards and Farrell (2005) define as spaces for working together to accomplish individual, shared, or both goals. They underline that this type of group is

based on the idea that group work tends to be more effective than individual work. Additionally, teachers typically gather in a support group to talk about their objectives, worries, issues, and experiences (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Furthermore, in a teacher support group, instructors may work together on developing curricula and resources, as well as in planning, organizing, and conducting activities like action research, peer coaching, team teaching, and classroom observation, everything done in a safe atmosphere provided by the group (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Likewise, teachers who participate in support groups get to know their peers better and start operating as a cohesive team rather than people doing their work in isolation from one another (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

A support group, however, is not the same as a staff meeting or an in-service program like a workshop. It should not turn into just another forum for discussing issues related to staff, administration, policies, and difficulties at the school (Richards & Farrell, 2005). A support group is not an appropriate place to discuss or address issues that impact the entire school because it is a volunteer activity that does not include all instructors (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Nevertheless, a group may bring up topics that may be discussed at a staff meeting. Other names for support groups include learning circles, teacher networks, and study groups (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

3.9 Teachers' Identity

Another relevant concept in this research is identity. In terms of sociocultural theory, teacher learning is defined as an increase in the socially organized processes that help teachers grow as professionals. In this way, the formation of a teacher's identity and their learning are closely related (Li, 2020). As social languages are closely linked to socially situated identities,

language learning and teaching is always about developing new identities and modifying existing ones in an environment that values and builds on learners' previous identities (Hawkins, 2004). Identity is therefore more than a matter of individual action; it is part of a dialectical system that links the person and the social framework (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

In terms of human learning and development, subjects in an activity not only produce visible results that are eventually reintegrated into the activity system, but they also produce and reproduce their own identities as subjects in the system in the process of realizing the object/motive of the activity (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Therefore, language instructors illustrate the constant creation and deconstruction of 'who they are' in the social space (Li, 2020). The school and classrooms are examples of social spaces in which teachers build their professional identities via interactions with colleagues, pupils, resources, educational policies, and curriculum (Li, 2020).

Furthermore, identity emerges from teachers' practice, but it also influences how teachers perceive and respond to the challenges and opportunities they encounter in the classroom (Li, 2020). Besides, teachers grow themselves professionally as individuals-acting-in-context when they make choices and comprehend situational and sociocultural restrictions and opportunities (Li, 2020).

While social structures and human interactions within those systems define identity, a person still has some control over how they express and depict their "self." Many second language academics take a poststructuralist approach to identity, seeing it as an element that evolves, splits and disputes, rather than something that is permanent (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). The psychological self-image of a teacher in the process of 'becoming and being' a teacher

is a social process that occurs in an institutional environment, where the professional context defines and is affected by teachers' positioning and agency (Li, 2020). Teachers must recognize that identity is a complex and multifaceted human and social phenomenon that influences pedagogy and instructional practice (Li, 2020).

In regard to the sociocultural theory of teacher learning, teachers are active meaning-makers who build their cognition, knowledge, and identity in practice (Li, 2020). Furthermore, teachers' knowledge and beliefs are determined by numerous sociocultural and educational environment elements, such as socio-educational ethos, institutional culture, and teacher education, becoming teacher learning a process of meaning negotiation with these settings (Li, 2020). Thus, sociocultural theory is valuable to teacher educators because it reveals important aspects of the mental processes at work in teacher learning, such as how teachers learn; how different concepts and functions in teachers' consciousness develop, and how this internal activity transforms teachers' understandings of themselves as teachers, of their students, and of teaching activities (Li, 2020).

3.10 Teachers' Ideology

When addressing themes related to human behavior among social groups, it is crucial to consider the concept of ideology. Traditionally, ideology refers to systems of beliefs and values that help individuals interpret and respond to their social realities (Eagleton, 1991). However, the interpretation of ideology has evolved across time and disciplines. As Apple (2019) notes, ideology is not merely a neutral set of ideas but a complex system that organizes meanings, shapes practices, and often hides how power really works. Ideologies influence how social

groups justify their behaviors, interpret social phenomena, and maintain or contest dominant structures.

Building on this understanding, Apple (2019) offers a more detailed categorization of ideology that is particularly useful for analyzing the beliefs and practices within specific communities. According to Apple (2019), the phenomena under ideology can be grouped into three main categories: the first category refers to the rationales that justify why a particular group does certain activities. The second category encompasses those rationales from political programs and social movements. Finally, the third category comprehends the rationales that are worldviews or viewpoints. This research focuses on the first and third category, since I investigate the ideology that drives the community of the *telesecundaria* and how the particular vision of this social group influences the manner they conceive the English language.

Beyond categorization, Apple emphasizes the functional dimension of ideology, particularly its role in shaping perceptions of reality and masking power relations. In terms of function, ideologies are not just a set of ideas, but something that goes beyond, since they influence and shape the way people and social groups conceive their reality, hiding real power dynamics and social inequalities (Apple, 2019). Nonetheless, in terms of social situations, ideology also helps to make comprehensible what seems to be incomprehensible (Apple, 2019). Hence, exploring the ideology of a social group is a means to understand what is beyond words and ideas and go deeper to see what is behind them.

While Apple highlights the functional aspects of ideology, he also traces its conceptual development through historical traditions. There are also other conceptions of ideology. For Apple (2019), ideology can be classified according to their historical traditions. For the author, the first type, the *interest theory* – rooted in the Marxist tradition – claims that ideology is mainly

about powerful groups attempting to keep the balance in favor of their interests. And the second type, the *strain theory* – associated with Durkheim (1912) and Parsons (1951) – states that ideology serves as a source of meaning in problematic situations by helping groups and individuals act (Apple, 2019).

Complementing this historical perspective, Ruiz Carrillo and Estreval Rivera (2008) propose a more functionally oriented framework that broadens our understanding of ideology. Expanding the discussion further. According to them, ideology can refer to one's identification with a social group; to a set of beliefs and values maintained by society; or to a concept that is applied to a sign. This broader functional approach highlights the diverse ways in which ideology can be understood, beyond strictly historical or political frameworks.

To further examine how ideology functions in social contexts, Apple (2019) identifies three defining features that help explain its influence and persistence: legitimation, power conflict, and style of argument. According to Apple (2019), 'legitimation' is about justifying why a social group does what it does so that others accept it. 'Power conflict' is about how ideology is linked to conflicts over power, whether in a narrow political sense or in a broader context encompassing various spheres of activity; and 'style of argument' refers to the clear and strong oral capacity of convincing others and sticking together as a group (Apple, 2019).

This functional view of ideology aligns with Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony, which explains how dominant ideologies are maintained through consent rather than force. These ideologies become accepted as "common sense," shaping what is seen as natural or morally correct. In this light, educational spaces like telesecondaries can either reproduce or challenge such ideologies, especially in relation to language hierarchies and globalization.

Similarly, Ruiz Carrillo and Estreval Rivera (2008) emphasize that language reflects the underlying beliefs of its users and evolves according to the values of different social groups.

This research explores teachers' ideologies to better understand the belief systems that guide their teaching practices and decisions. These ideologies shape not only how English is viewed and taught but also how local communities see their role within a multilingual and unequal global landscape.

3.10.1 Linguistic Ideology

As it was previously introduced, ideology is expressed through language, which by expressing ideas and values, proposes, and constructs a vision of a world view (Ruiz Carrillo & Estrevel Rivera, 2008). Similarly, in a study carried out in the Mexican territory, it was found that linguistic ideologies are conceptual frameworks or fundamental beliefs that associate language concepts to social, cultural, or political aspects in a way that serves the interests of a particular social group (Despagne Broxner & Sánchez Martínez, 2021). In their study, Despagne Broxner and Sánchez Martínez (2021) discovered that Mexican students are not given the autonomy to select the language they want to learn when learning English in the classroom, which emphasizes how crucial it is to take the linguistic ideologies into account in the context of education.

As stated by Van Dijk (2006), there are three dimensions to the concept of ideology. First, the cognitive aspect encompasses beliefs related to cognition; the second aspect is the social, which includes beliefs related to conflicts, interests, and group struggles; and the third aspect is the discourse, which is understood as a vehicle for the spread of ideologies through the educational system. Furthermore, Van Dijk (2006) emphasizes that discourse is the means by

which ideologies are acquired, spread, or resisted. Some ideologies, such those pertaining to science, politics, or religion, come from 'the top' and are learnt, or acquired more explicitly.

According to Despagne Broxner and Sánchez Martínez (2021), linguistic ideology can explain the reasons behind why a language has the role it has. In their study, the authors identified three main ideologies regarding the English language in the Mexican academic context: the first position has a positive perception of English, in which it is conceived as a natural phenomenon that brings progress and benefits to humanity. The second ideology is more critical, it reflects on the economic and political consequences of adopting only one language, in this case English. This vision understands English as an imposed language. Finally, the third vision is a middle ideology, which is similar to the second ideology since they both support multilingualism and hold that languages define distinct worldviews and knowledge systems that need to be preserved. Therefore, for this ideology it is essential to recognize English as the universal language and safeguard linguistic diversity.

3.11 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the Classroom

The integration of technology in education as highlighted by Li (2020) and Bautista (2022), presents a transformative impact on teaching and learning. According to Li (2020), computer technologies play a vital role in educational reform supporting global integration into teaching practices. This idea is echoed by Bautista (2022), who emphasizes the essential nature of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in fostering continuous and meaningful learning experiences.

Li (2020) argues that applying technology in teaching is not just a trend but a fundamental drive with potential benefits for learning. Research suggests that technology can

reduce anxiety, increase learner's motivation, and enhance linguistic gains (Li, 2020). Bautista (2022) aligns with this perspective, emphasizing the necessity of ICT in promoting meaningful learning while eliminating deficiencies in the operation of these tools.

However, despite the recognized benefits, the challenges in the implementation of ICT, as discussed by Ayala Sánchez (2018), reveal a complex reality; telesecondary education faces obstacles such as a higher workload, shortage of materials, insufficient internet access, and a lack of technical support. Teachers incorporating ICT often do it spontaneously, without proper training, and are aware of the associated risks (Ayala Sánchez, 2018). The invisible integration of ICT in telesecondary teaching, as noted by Ayala Sánchez (2018), raises concerns about the effectiveness and awareness of such implementations.

In the Mexican educational context, Cruz García and García Higuera (2023) point out that the impact of ICT on student learning depends on how teachers incorporate it into teaching-learning practices and the level of pedagogical appropriation. The lack of clear proposals for integrating ICT into the curriculum leaves decisions to educational centers and teachers, potentially leading to disparities in implementation (Cruz García & García Higuera, 2023).

3.11.1 The Role of Technology

As previously mentioned, technology has a crucial role in educational reforms and curricular innovation, encouraging teachers globally to integrate technology into their teaching practices (Li, 2020). This drive is underpinned by the argument that the application of technology in teaching will inherently benefit learning outcomes (Li, 2020).

According to Li (2020), research suggests that technology has the potential to reduce anxiety, increase learner motivation, and enhance linguistic gains. However, realizing the full

benefits of technology depends on how teachers utilize it and their skills and attitudes towards its integration into the curriculum. Despite these potential advantages, studies (Cruz García & García Higuera, 2023; Bautista, 2022; Ayala Sánchez, 2018) indicate that teachers, especially in language classrooms, are reluctant technology users (Li, 2020).

Furthermore, educators are increasingly under pressure to use technology to prepare students for a technologically interconnected, globalized world (Li, 2020). Li (2018) argues that it is nearly impossible for language teachers to teach effectively without integrating technology; otherwise, it creates a limited learning environment for students.

On a similar vein, Bautista (2022) highlights the transformative impact of ICT on education. These technologies have altered the ways in which we relate to each other and play a crucial role in social transformation. Bautista emphasizes the need to adopt a constructivist approach, where students achieve their learning through technology. However, the author underscores the significant role of teachers in designing this construction process appropriately.

Bautista (2022) underlines the role of teachers in adopting a constructivist approach through ICT, transforming the nature of education, and altering the roles of both teachers and students. Besides, through the use of ICT, the aim is for students to become more autonomous and self-directed in their learning (Bautista, 2022). Similarly, Li (2020) notes that language teachers find it almost impossible to teach without integrating technology, emphasizing the role of technology in creating an enriched learning environment.

Ayala Sánchez (2018) sheds light on challenges faced in the implementation of ICT in telesecondary education. The *Modelo Educativo para el Fortalecimiento de Telesecundaria* (educational model for strengthening telesecondary education) aimed to redefine teaching

competencies, incorporating new knowledge, skills, and competencies. The internal organization of teaching work underwent modifications, and ICT became a central element. However, challenges such as a higher workload, shortage of materials, and insufficient internet access were reported (Ayala Sánchez, 2018).

The policy of incorporating ICT in telesecondary education, as described by Ayala Sánchez (2018), was not mandatory but treated as a voluntary and gradual activity. Teachers often incorporated ICT spontaneously, without proper training, and faced challenges due to the lack of resources and technical support. In his study, the author found that the integration of ICT in telesecondary was often invisible, not explicitly described in lesson planning.

In the Mexican context, Cruz García and García Higuera (2023) point out the coexistence of projects aimed at narrowing the digital divide in schools. However, the lack of clear proposals for integrating ICT into the curriculum leaves decisions to educational centers and teachers. The impact of ICT on student learning is conditioned by its use in teaching-learning practices and the level of pedagogical appropriation by teachers.

In conclusion, the discussion among Li (2020), Bautista (2022), Ayala Sánchez (2018), and Cruz García and García Higuera (2023) highlights both the potential benefits and challenges associated with the integration of technology in education. While technology presents opportunities for enhanced learning experiences, the reluctance of teachers, challenges in implementation, and disparities in access and training need to be addressed for effective and equitable utilization of technology in education.

3.12 EL Curriculum in Teachers' Training Programs for Telesecondary Teachers

The origin of the degree for telesecondary teachers dates to 1975, its beginning arose two years before, in December 1973, when the new federal law for education was enacted. This law intended to achieve coherence between the social issues in the country and the educational sector in order to address the problems of education. As a result of this law, educational reform was born. This reform aimed, among other goals, the creation of a new curriculum, the changing of teaching methods and sillabi, and the training of teachers (SEP, 2010). After the demand of *telemaestros*, who were motivated by the necessity of having a better preparation for teachers in telesecondary modality, they promoted the creation of a specialty with the level of a bachelor's degree in which they also were accredited to teach in this modality (SEP, 2010).

Hereafter, through the *Acuerdo 11765* in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* (DOF) the bachelor's degree for telesecondary teachers with the name *licenciatura para maestros de educación secundaria por television* was established (Javier, 2014; DOF, 1975). This agreement demanded as essentially the adequate training of active secondary school teachers who were already teaching by television, as well as of the teachers in charge of coordinating secondary school television studies. Moreover, it was established in the *Dirección General de Educación Normal* established the organization and teaching of the courses for teachers of secondary education by television (DOF, 1975).

Something significant in this agreement was the curriculum for the bachelor's degree. The program was divided into three annual periods. Among the subjects, two related to foreign language were found: *Lengua extranjera y sus procedimientos didácticos* and the *Taller de Lengua extranjera.* The former is addressed to the foreign language and its didactics, while the latter is addressed to a workshop related to the foreign language. It is also worth mentioning that

both subjects were offered in each of the three years of the program (DOF, 1975). The program aimed to encourage teachers to adopt more effective study techniques and move away from memorization-based evaluation (SEP, 2010). Even though the creation of the degree represented a step forward, in 1979 it was observed that less than half of in-service teachers had studied for the degree. Therefore, the bachelor's degree was closed that year.

In 1982 the first national meeting of telesecondary took place. This meeting aimed to evaluate the service, identify problems, and establish mechanisms for improvement. At the meantime, national and local meetings were organized following the same guidelines. From these meetings the lack of specialized preparation for telesecondary teachers was identified, therefore it was necessary a training course for teachers, especially for the new teachers. Henceforward, during the 80's a course with the length of 30 hours was implemented with printed materials and televised programs. Likewise, in 1984, the Mexican state of Tlaxcala created the *Centro de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación Educativa de Tlaxcala,* which became the main teacher training institution with the specialization in *telesecundaria.* Besides courses for in-service teachers were implemented (SEP, 2010).

The modification made to the 1999 pedagogical model meant important changes with respect to its direct predecessor of 1993. These were mainly due to a reflection on the relevance of the traditional scheme. In this sense, it was considered that the teacher's position should be more flexible so that the students could learn better in a context that was more meaningful to them. In other words, the modifications implemented in 1999, in terms of materials, were intended to make the proposals considered in the 1993 educational reform more effective (SEP, 2010).

The fundamental objective of the new pedagogical model of the *telesecundaria* in 1999 was to contribute to the formation of critical and reflective individuals, within the framework of a scientific and humanistic education, considering the context in which the educational process took place so that it would have an impact on the integral development of rural communities. This model had a series of characteristics in line with its objectives; it was interactive, participatory, democratic, and formative (SEP, 2010).

These changes, and among others, made the telesecondary system grow. Consequently, in 1999, the SEP established the *Licenciatura en Educación Secundaria con Especialidad en Telesecundaria* (LESET) as part of the bachelor's degree in Secondary Education in some states of the country (SEP, 2010; Javier, 2014). Two years after its opening, the specialty was chosen by almost a thousand students (SEP, 2010). The curriculum for the LESET is divided into eight semesters. The subject related to English was called *estrategias y recursos para la enseñanza del inglés,* however, it results noteworthy that the subject was taught only in the sixth semester and that it consisted of four hours per week.

The main and most remarkable change took place almost two decades after, in 2018 with the educational reform where the bachelor's degree shifted its curriculum, and its name was modified to *Licenciatura en Enseñanza y Aprendizaje en Telesecundaria* (LEAT). The new curriculum was congruent with the *Estrategia Nacional de Inglés* which presented a national plan to make Mexico a bilingual country in a period of 20 years since its implementation. From this view, the curriculum for telesecondary training programs included the English subject in the first six semesters of the bachelor's degree, and it has to be studied six hours per week (SEP, 2011).

Then, in 2022, due to the implementation of the basis of the educational plan framed in the model *la Nueva Escuela Mexicana*, the curriculum for the LEAT suffered some modifications. Among them the number of hours in the English subjects was reduced to four hours per week, however the teaching of it remained in the first six semesters (DOF, 2022)

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical foundations that support this study, using a sociocultural perspective to understand how learning happens through interaction and mediation. Key concepts like cultural tools, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and the role of social context were explored to connect theory with classroom realities, especially in English language teaching.

The chapter also covered aspects of teacher development, such as workshops, self-monitoring, and support groups, which reflect the importance of collaboration and reflection in teaching practice. Topics like teacher identity and ideology were included to show how personal beliefs shape professional decisions. Technology was also discussed as a mediational tool that supports learning in meaningful ways. Finally, the current English curriculum in Telesecondary teacher training programs was reviewed to place this research within a relevant and familiar context.

Altogether, these concepts offer a solid framework for analyzing the findings of this study from a perspective that values human connection, context, and continuous growth in education.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the course of this study. A comprehensive description is offered on the elements and processes involved in conducting this research, which are described in-depth. First, a description of the research design is presented. Then, the context and participants are described. Following this, a thorough description of the instruments and the data collection process is provided in order to allow the reader to comprehend how the data was gathered and then analyzed. Finally, to wrap up the chapter, a conclusion is presented.

4.1 Qualitative Research

Due to the nature of the phenomenon, the study followed the orientation of a qualitative research approach. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative studies seek to explore and comprehend a social problem and the meaning that its members have attributed to it. That said, the objectives of this research fit with this approach, as it focuses on investigating the issues that telesecondary teachers (the social group) encounter in their teaching practice, specifically when they teach the English subject and in most of the cases without having prior preparation to impart the subject (the social issue).

4.1.1 Case Study

To conduct this work, it was decided to frame it under the parameters of a case study. This methodological choice entails the exploration and investigation of existing real-life phenomena through a meticulous and comprehensive analysis of pertinent issues and their

interrelationships within a specific context (Zainal, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2015). Moreover, Zainal (2007) underscores that case studies manifest at a micro-level, signifying an in-depth qualitative exploration that excels the quantitative paradigm. This qualitative approach is distinguished by its exhaustive examination of data from a limited number of individuals concerning a given social phenomenon (Zainal, 2007).

4.1.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

For conducting the process of data analysis, it was followed a content analysis. According to Bernard et al., (2017), content analysis is a set of methods for systematically coding and qualitative data analysis, which emphasizes its applicability across the social sciences and humanities. Krippendorff (2004) positions content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to their contexts of use. Highlighting content analysis as a scientific tool, Krippendorff (2004) emphasizes its role in providing new insights, enhancing researchers' understanding, and informing practical actions.

Furthermore, content analysis is defined as a research technique designed to draw reliable and valid conclusions from texts to understand the contexts in which those texts are used (Krippendorff, 2004). The author also underscores content analysis as a scientific tool, emphasizing its ability to offer new insights, improve researchers' comprehension of specific phenomena, and guide practical decision-making. In essence, Krippendorff (2004) portrays content analysis as a methodical approach that contributes to replicable and valid interpretations, making it valuable for scientific inquiry and practical applications.

Historically, content analysis has experienced a significant transformation, transitioning from its roots as a quantitative method for examining written texts (Dörnyei, 2007). According to Dörnyei (2007), this shift involves an inductive process, where categories are derived from the

data analyzed . This departure is significant as it contrasts with the conventional approach to quantitative analysis, which relies on predetermined categories. In essence, qualitative content analysis allows categories to emerge organically from the data rather than predefined (Dörnyei, 2007).

The process of qualitative data analysis initiates with coding, but Dörnyei (2007) argues that this statement is only partially true. The author states that pre-coding is a crucial move, it involves reading, reflecting, and noting impressions before the formal and structured coding process. Hence, this preliminary reflection shapes subsequent coding, making it a thoughtful and informed procedure (Dörnyei, 2007). Then, in the coding stage Dörnyei (2007) remarks that this phase involves highlighting extracts and labeling them to facilitate identification, retrieval, or grouping. It is important to highlight that Dörnyei (2007), defines ‘code’ as a label attached to text for operationality and adaptability, which adds clarity to the coding process.

4.2 Research Context

The investigation was conducted across three telesecondary schools situated in the southern region of the Mexican state of Puebla, within central Mexico. These educational institutions are situated in distinct communities encompassed by the municipalities of Izúcar de Matamoros and Epatlán, both integral components of the *Mixteca Poblana* region. This geographical area in the south of Puebla is distinguished by its shared attributes, including similar flora and fauna, climatic conditions, and socio-economic characteristics (Gallardo, 2021). In the context of this study, each telesecondary school is denoted by the letters A, B, or C. Notably, telesecondary schools A and B are situated in Izúcar de Matamoros, whereas telesecondary school C is located in Epatlán.

During the academic year 2022-2023, a total of 340 students were enrolled across the three telesecondary schools. Among these, 130 students were enrolled in telesecondary A, 97 students in telesecondary B, and the remaining 113 students were enrolled in telesecondary C. The student population in each telesecondary is distributed among six groups, with two groups assigned to each educational level (first, second, and third grade), maintaining an average of 18-22 students per group. The instructional staff in each school comprises a principal, six teachers (generalist teachers), one administrative personnel, and one cleaning personnel.

4.2.1 Classroom Layout and Equipment

In terms of facilities and equipment, telesecondary schools present both commonalities and distinctions, as detailed in Table 1. Telesecondary A is equipped with essential items such as a teacher's desk, student desks, a whiteboard, an old model television, and Wi-Fi connectivity. Some classrooms are additionally equipped with fans, projectors, and desktop computers, notwithstanding only a limited number of them are operational. Some instructors supplement these resources by bringing their personal laptops, speakers, or recorders into their classrooms. In contrast, telesecondary B features classrooms equipped with a teacher's desk, student desks, two whiteboards (one situated at the front and another at the back wall), a flat-screen television, a fully functional projector, a speaker, and a fan. Lastly, telesecondary C is equipped with a teacher's desk, student desks, two front whiteboards, an old television, a functional projector, a speaker, English-Spanish dictionaries, three fans, and provides water for student use.

Table 1

Classroom Layout, Equipment and Resources

	Telesecondary A	Telesecondary B	Telesecondary C
Desk for teacher	1 per classroom	1 per classroom	1 per classroom
Desks for students	1 arm chair desk for each student	1 arm chair desk for each student	1 desk and chair for each student
Board	1 whiteboard	2 whiteboards	2 whiteboards
Television	Non-working televisions	1 television per classroom	Non-working televisions
Projector	1 per classroom, only a few of them work	No projectors	1 per classroom
Internet connection	Yes	Yes	Yes
Computer	1 mini laptop per classroom	No computers	1 desktop computer per classroom
Posters in English	In one classroom	No posters	No posters
Dictionaries	Some English-Spanish dictionaries in each classroom	No dictionaries	Some English-Spanish dictionaries in each classroom
Books in English	Some books in the library	Some books in the library	Some books in the library
Ventilation	2 classrooms with a fan	1 fan per classroom	3 fans per classroom

4.2.2 English in the SEP Curriculum

As stipulated by the basic education curriculum, the English subject is an integral component across all three educational levels—preschool, elementary school, and secondary school—outlined in the document *Aprendizajes clave para la educación integral: Lengua extranjera inglés.* For secondary schools, English classes are instructed to be conducted three days per week, with each session lasting one hour. Within the telesecondary context, it is the responsibility of the generalist teacher for each group to deliver the subjects outlined in the secondary school curriculum, encompassing the English subject.

4.2.3 Materials for Teaching English in Telesecondary

The materials provided by SEP for teaching English are a student's book and video-recorded material. Regarding the student's book, there are books from different editorials; for 1st grade, there are 14 different English books; for 2nd grade, nine, and for 3rd grade, seven different books. Besides, the instructor has the capability to access video-recorded content from an online platform without time limitations.

4.3 Participants

The participants involved in this project comprised 16 teachers from telesecondary institutions, ranging in age from 26 to 59. Additionally, two school principals and 73 third-grade students. Among the educators, three female teachers and one male teacher belonged to telesecondary A, five female teachers and one male teacher belonged to telesecondary B, while six female teachers belonged to telesecondary C. Additional contextual details about the participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant's background information

	Participant	Age	Gender	Academic Background	Teaching Years in *Telesecundaria* System
Telesecondary school A	PA1	50	Male	BA *Normalista* in Mathematics	16
	PA2	50	Female	BA in foreign language teaching Master's degree in Educational Development	8
	PA3	38	Female	BA *Normalista* in Spanish	8
	PA4	34	Female	BA *Normalista* in *Telesecundaria*	10

Telesecondary school B	PB1	46	Female	BA *Normalista* in Natural Sciences	23
	PB2	59	Female	BA *Normalista* in History	25
	PB3	26	Female	BA *Normalista* in *Telesecundaria*	2
	PB4	49	Male	BA *Normalista* in Natural Sciences Master's degree in Higher Education	23
	PB5	56	Female	BA *Normalista* in History	27
	PB6	38	Female	BA *Normalista* in *Telesecundaria*	12
Telesecondary school C	PC1	40	Female	BA *Normalista* in *Telesecundaria*	14
	PC2	33	Female	BA *Normalista* in *Telesecundaria* Master's degree in Science Education	4
	PC3	29	Female	BA *Normalista* in *Telesecundaria*	7
	PC4	35	Female	BA *Normalista* in Biology Master's degree in Mathematics	13
	PC5	48	Female	BA *Normalista* in Social Science Master's degree in Educational Development	27
	PC6	54	Female	BA *Normalista* in Natural Sciences	26

4.4 Instruments

To find out about the issues regarding English teaching in telesecondary schools, four instruments were used. The first two instruments were two semi-structured interviews in Spanish, one was designed for teachers, and one for the school principals. In the case of semi-structured interviews for teachers, they were conducted using a focus group technique. The third

instrument was a class observation format. Finally, the fourth instrument consisted of a questionnaire for students in third grade.

4.4.1 Instrument Design and validation

The semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were designed in Spanish to prioritize the comfort and sense of safety of the participants during the data collection process. To attain the definitive iteration of each instrument, three distinct versions were made. The first and second drafts were for piloting purposes, based on the feedback received from experts, appropriate modifications were made to develop the final edition of both instruments.. Moreover, the instruments were meticulously structured to align with the foundational concepts and components of sociocultural theory, as well as the secondary school curriculum delineated within the *Modelo Educativo.*

Concerning the semi-structured interview for teachers (Appendix A), it was organized into three main sections. The first segment was dedicated to the collection of demographic data from the participants. This component was intended to be distributed in written form to each participant prior to begin the focus group questions. This section included items related to age, gender, years of experience in the Telesecondary system, academic background, years of experience teaching English, and the educational level instructors were teaching at that moment. The second part of the semi-structured interview included an introduction, which explained the purpose of the research. Finally, the third segment comprised nine questions to help the researcher guide the focus group.

Question one asks about professional development of the teachers, which is based on the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. This concept refers to the difference between what individuals can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with support from

others. Hence, professional development activities should aim to scaffold educators' learning experiences, providing support and guidance to help them progress within their ZPD. This may involve mentoring, peer coaching, and ongoing feedback mechanisms that facilitate continuous growth and improvement.

Question two asks about the physical and technological resources utilized by instructors to teach English, which is based on the concept of mediation tools of the SCT. Additionally, this question also pretended to find out about the implementation of ICTs and digital resources designed for telesecondary modality (SEP, 2011).

Question three asks about the the *Programa Nacional de Inglés* and its implementation in telesecondary. Question four asks about collaborative learning which is an important element in sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interactions and collaboration in learning. Through these collaborative activities, educators can share knowledge, experiences, and instructional strategies, thereby enhancing their professional practice.

Questions five and six ask about students and parents, since SCT highlights the importance of social interactions and cultural contexts in shaping individuals' development and learning experiences. Besides, according to SEP (2017a), it is preferable that the adults surrounding a student, including parents, tutors, and teachers, demonstrate aspirations towards the student's potential and set demanding expectations for its achievement. Question seven asks about returning students from the USA, since SCT underscores the importance of the participants in a community and how this directly shapes its individuals. Finally questions eight and nine ask about teacher’s beliefs, which are connected to sociocultural theory, as they are shaped by social interactions, cultural perspectives, participation in communities of practice, and consideration of students' ZPD.

In the case of the class observation format (Appendix B), it included three sections, which were designed addressing the main concepts and elements of the sociocultural theory, as well as the main concepts and constructs of the *Modelo Educativo.* The first part focused on the teacher, here, each of the elements to observe were based on the ideal profile for English teachers at secondary level described in the *Modelo Educativo* (SEP 2017a), as well as the available resources and materials in the telesecondary modality, described in the *Modelo educativo para el fortalecimiento de telesecundaria* (SEP, 2011). The second section was dedicated to students, where attitude, participation and interaction were observed.

These elements, according to sociocultural theory, are highly important in a learning context, since they depend directly on the participants, mediation tools, and the context. Finally, the third section of the class observation included items related to the classroom's layout, furniture, materials and resources, that according to SEP (2011), telesecondary schools are equipped with technological resources such as computers, televisions with access to the satellite network *Edusat* and resources available online. Besides, SCT states that mediation tools are shaped by the participants of a social group.

Regarding the semi-structured interview for the telesecondary principals (Appendix C), they consisted of seven questions focused on the context and sociocultural conditions of the locality and the school. Question one asked about the spaces in the school – such as library, laboratories, cafeteria, etc. Question two asked about the amenities of the classroom (television, computer, projector, etc.), this question is relevant since SEP (2011) describes the resources and amenities in telesecondary schools. Question three asks about the school principal's perception towards the socioeconomic context in the community where telesecondary schools are. This question is based on the aspect of the SCT that addresses the relevance of context in a social

group in shaping learning. Question four addresses the participation of parents, as well as question five in the semi-structured interview to conduct the focus groups. SCT states that both parents and students play crucial roles as social agents in the learning process. Besides, it is remarked that interactions between parents and children, as well as among peers, contribute to the construction of knowledge and understanding. Finally, questions five, six and seven address the beliefs of the school principal regarding the sociocultural and context conditions of the school and the community.

The last instrument is the questionnaire addressed to students (Appendix D). This instrument is organized in three parts. The first one focuses on the context, since SCT underscores the importance of the context and how it highly influences learning. The second part asks about the way students learn English and their perception about it. In this section there are included the materials and resources that are provided by the Mexican ministry of education (SEP) are included, as well as the most used mediation tools in the EFL classroom. Finally, the third section includes aspects related to perceptions and beliefs students have towards the usefulness of English in the future. Here it is explored the concept of identity in the SCT, since it is stated that the elements and participants in a social community shape the identity and beliefs of a person.

After all the instruments were designed, each of them was validated by experts. First two professors from the Master's degree in English Teaching at BUAP revised them and gave feedback to the researcher. Then, some significant changes were made to best structure and align each of the instruments to the researching goals of this work.

4.5 Data Collection Process

The data collection was carried out in three different stages. The first one consisted of having a focus group in each school. To set the date and time for each focus group, the collaboration of the principals was necessary. In the case of telesecondary schools B and C, there was coordination between the researcher and the school principal, and in turn, the school principals communicated with their supervisors in order to ask them if the focus groups could take place during school hours. Then, with their supervisor's consent, the school principals asked the teachers for their time availability. Then the date, time, and physical space were established for the focus groups.

4.5.1 Instruments' Application Timeline

This section illustrates and details the data collection process carried out in each *telesecundaria,* which describes the phase, the activities, the school, the date and time, the location and the participants. Table 3 below summarizes this process.

Table 3

Research Activities Conducted in Telesecondary Schools A, B, and C

Phase	Activity	School	Date / Time	Location / Details	Participants
1	Focus Groups / Interviews	Telesecondary B	2nd or 3rd week of May 2023, 12:30 p.m.	School library	Group of teachers
1	Focus Groups / Interviews	Telesecondary C	Next day, 12:30 p.m.	Classroom	Group of teachers
1	Individual Interviews	Telesecondary A	Same period	During class hours	All teachers (no group focus)
2	Class Observations	Telesecondary B	4th week of May 2023, 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.	Classrooms	6 teachers
2	Class Observations	Telesecondary C	4th week of May 2023,	Classrooms	2 teachers

2	Class Observations	Telesecondary A	8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. 4th week of May 2023, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Over two days	4 teachers
3	Principal Interviews	Telesecondary A	2nd week of October 2023	Principal's office	1 principal
3	Principal Interviews	Telesecondary C	2nd week of October 2023	Principal's office	1 principal
4	Student Questionnaires (3rd grade)	Telesecondary A	2nd week of October 2023	Classrooms	36 students
4	Student Questionnaires (3rd grade)	Telesecondary C	2nd week of October 2023	Classrooms	37 students

The focus groups were held between the second and third week of May 2023. The first focus group took place in telesecondary B at 12:30 p.m. in the school library. The second focus group was held the next day in the telesecondary C at 12:30 p.m. in a classroom. As regards telesecondary A, the dynamic was different. First, the researcher asked the school principal about having a focus group with the teachers; however, the principal did not consent. For that reason, the researcher conducted individual interviews with each teacher. These interviews took place in each teacher's classroom during class hours at different times.

The second phase of the investigation consisted of conducting class observations. In order to carry them out, the teachers were invited by the school principals and the researcher. In this stage, 12 teachers agreed to participate. The class observations were held during the fourth week of May 2023. From telesecondary A, four teachers participated; from telesecondary B, six teachers, and from telesecondary C, only two teachers agreed to participate. After confirming the participants, the researcher in coordination with the school principal of each telesecondary, set the date and time for the classroom observations. The first observations were held in

telesecondary B, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The second series of observations were held in telesecondary C, from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., and the final series took place in telesecondary A over two different days, between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

The third stage focused on collecting data related to the context, social and economic conditions of the telesecondary schools. Hence, the school principals from telesecondary schools A and C agreed to participate. The semi-structured interviews took place during the second week of October 2023.

Finally, the fourth phase of the project gathered information from the students through the administration of questionnaires. For this stage, only students in third grade were considered, since it was important that they had attended all three levels to know their experience with the subject of English in the *Telesecundaria* system. In this phase students from telesecondary schools A and C participated. The questionnaires were administered during the second week of October 2023. From telesecondary A there were 36 students, while from telesecondary C there were 37 students.

4.5.2 Ethical Implications

In accordance with Creswell's (2009) assertion that "as researchers anticipate data collection, they need to respect the participants and the sites for research" (p.94), formal written requests were submitted to each educational institution to secure requisite permissions for conducting the research. Furthermore, comprehensive briefings about the research's purpose and focus were provided to teachers by both the school principal and the researcher. To maintain anonymity, participants were assigned codes consisting of letters and numbers.

In order to start with the instrument's application, first each of the three telesecondaries was visited and there was a meeting with the director of each school, the thesis director and the researcher to explain the project, the process and to agree with the dates in which the instrument could be applied.

4.7 Data Analysis

The initial stage involved the recording, transcription, and subsequent analysis of data obtained from interviews and focus groups. Following the completion of the project's second stage, a similar analysis was conducted on the data collected from the class observation formats. The following paragraph provides a detailed description of the process undertaken for content-based analysis (Mayring, 2000). The approach involves initiating the process with predetermined constructs (pre-coding) and utilizes a systematic yet adaptable coding procedure to analyze the data (coding). This process of coding allowed the identification of themes related to agency, medication, identity formation, and the appropriation of tools and practices. This strategy assured that the categories were based on the theory and at the same time, that they matched the participants' responses and their sociocultural realities.

To initiate the pre-coding process, the recorded interviews and focus groups underwent transcription. In the case of the data gathered from the student's questionnaire and the class observations, the information was organized in charts to make the interpretation of the data more understandable and simpler. Subsequently, sets of categories were made with different codes based on concepts from the theoretical framework. Then, in the coding phase, codes were identified after reading and re-reading the transcripts of focus groups, interviews, and the data from the questionnaires and classroom observations. As the last step, data was analyzed and interpreted in the following chapter.

4.8 Conclusions

This chapter outlines the research design, which is aligned with a qualitative content analysis methodology characterized by categorization. Furthermore, it describes in depth the context, the participants, the ethical implications, and the data analysis process. This chapter sets the stage for the upcoming section of the research in which the outcomes of the described data analysis process are discussed.

Chapter 5. Findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings resulting from the data collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups. The data was analyzed through the lens of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT), highlighting the role of mediation, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in the experiences of telesecondary teachers as they navigate the challenges of English language teaching (ELT) without formal training.

The discussion is presented based on the chronological application of research instruments. Hence, in each section the data gathered from teachers is first analyzed, which involves the findings from the focus groups and the class observations; second, the data gathered from students' class observations and questionnaires is presented, and in the last part, the data collected from principals through the interviews is discussed.

5.1 Distance Learning vs In-Situ Instruction

A key finding in this study is the way in which distance learning and in-situ instruction interact in the telesecondary context. While the official model is designed to function as a hybrid approach, with televised lessons working as the primary source of instruction, the reality in many classrooms differs from what is expected. In practice, teachers are the ones who finally bridge the gap between pre-recorded materials and students' actual learning needs.

In theory, the *telesecundaria* model was created to provide educational access to students in rural and marginalized communities, using pre-recorded lessons to compensate for the lack of specialized subject teachers (SEP, 2010; Navarrete-Cazales & López-Hernández, 2023).

However, in practice, the effectiveness of this model depends entirely on the teacher's ability to mediate and adapt content, as these pre-recorded lessons alone do not sufficiently address the diverse learning needs of students (Navarrete-Cazales & López-Hernández, 2023).

As Vygotsky (1978) asserts, learning is inherently social – it is not simply about accumulating and collecting information but rather about developing knowledge through interaction, scaffolding, and guided support. The data clearly shows that teachers act as mediators, because they interpret, contextualize and teach the televised content to make it relevant and comprehensible to their students. For instance, teachers were observed bringing additional material as worksheets and realia, and providing additional explanations adapted to students' levels. These actions demonstrate how teachers scaffold learning and adjust the instruction to match their students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). However, when mediation is limited or absent, students are left to navigate language learning without adequate support, making it difficult for them to fully grasp and internalize new concepts.

5.1.1 Teachers' views

For the telesecondary model to function as it is intended, teachers must have access to technological tools that allow them to deliver pre-recorded lessons effectively. However, the reality in many schools is quite different, since teachers report numerous obstacles that make it difficult to fully integrate these resources into their daily instruction. Among the most common challenges are frequent technical failures, inadequate infrastructure, and limited technological training, all of which hinder the use of distance learning materials in the classroom. For instance,

participant PB1 reflects on this issue, explaining how technical breakdowns disrupt lesson delivery:

> *"Hay veces que… esta materia no la doy [English]. No la doy, ¿por qué? Por falta de tiempo u otras razones como que el cañón se descompone o el internet de la escuela falla…"*
>
> Sometimes… I do not teach this subject [English]. I do not teach it, why? Because of the lack of time or any other reasons like the fact that the projector is damaged or the internet in the school fails...(my translation).

Similarly, participant PB4 highlights the lack of proper equipment, which limit them from incorporating additional learning materials into their lessons as follows:

> *"Tengo lo que son CDs, pero no los he traído porque no tengo dónde reproducirlos."*
>
> I have CDs, but I have not brought them because I do not have where to play them (my translation).

For some teachers, technological limitations are not only related to resources, but also about training and familiarity with these tools. For instance, participant PA2 acknowledges that their lack of experience with projectors forces them to rely on more traditional teaching methods:

> *"¿Uso de recursos tecnológicos? Casi no, no les proyecto nada con el proyector, porque casi no le sé [usar], así que les pongo mucho en el pizarrón."*
>
> Use of technological resources? Rarely, I do not project anything because I don't know how to use it, so I use the whiteboard a lot" (my translation).

However, not all teachers abandon the hybrid model entirely, for example, participant PB2 describes how they modify their approach, combining televised lessons with in-person reinforcement strategies to ensure students can recall key vocabulary:

> *"Recurro a los videos de telesecundaria, pero también hago mis tarjetas con palabras que mis alumnos tienen que recordar"*
>
> I rely on the televised lessons, but then I make flashcards with words that my students have to remember (my translation).

The experiences above highlight a critical issue: while the *telesecundaria* model assumes that teachers have both the necessary technological tools and the proficiency to use them effectively, in practice, many lack either one or both. This suggests that distance learning elements are not often utilized, leaving students without the full benefits of a blended instructional approach.

At the same time, these findings suggest that, despite the limited formal training, many teachers are actively mediating students' learning by contextualizing distance content through in-situ adaptations. The televised lessons may provide an initial cultural artifact, but it is through teachers' supplementary actions – whether through flashcards, board work, or verbal explanations – that students receive the scaffolding necessary for meaningful learning (Martínez, 1999; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Cabaleiro, 2017). These challenges do not reflect a rejection of distance learning, but rather the urgent need for more training, better infrastructure, and greater support for teachers to successfully integrate hybrid instruction into their classrooms.

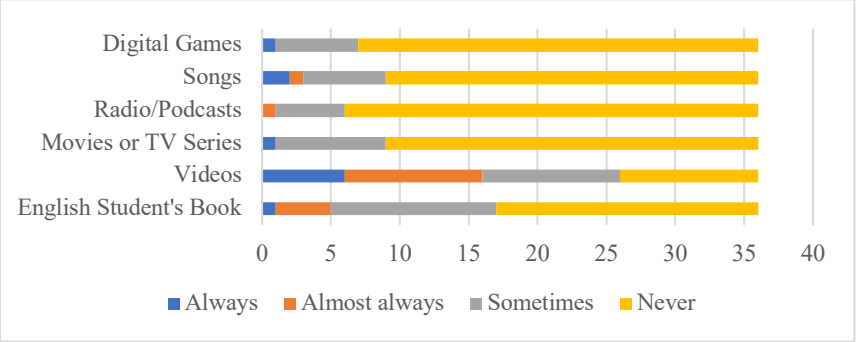
5.1.2 Students' Views

The telesecondary model is built on the principle that distance learning tools, particularly televised lessons and other digital resources, serve as the primary means of instruction, while in-situ instruction complements and reinforces learning (SEP, 2010; Navarrete-Cazales & López-Hernández, 2023). However, student responses suggest that the model of telesecondary is not fully implemented. Instead of a balanced integration of distance and in-situ instruction, students report a strong dependance on in-person, teacher-led instruction with minimal technological support. This was also confirmed during the class observations, in which only a third of the observed teachers used technological resources, mainly videos or audios, to support their lesson.

The questionnaire results reveal that videos, movies, and digital learning tools are rarely used in English classes, despite being central to the telesecondary's model. Figure 1 illustrates how often students engage with different learning materials in their English classes.

Figure 1.

Frequency of the use of different learning materials in English classes



(Own source)

As shown in Figure 1, digital learning resources, which should play a key role in distance instruction, are rarely incorporated into students' English lessons:

- Videos are a central component of distance education; however, they are not utilized. While these should serve as primary instructional tools, only five percent of students reported that videos are "always" used, whereas a ten percent of students indicated that they are "never" used.
- Movies, TV series, and digital games, which could serve as engaging reinforcement tools, are rarely present. More than 75 % of students reported that these materials are "never" used in class, indicating that the expected balance between distance learning and in-situ instruction is not being met.
- Traditional materials, such as the English student's book, remain dominant, yet not entirely used. While textbooks are considered part of in-situ instruction, the fact that

many students report never using them suggests inconsistencies in lesson planning and resource use.

From a sociocultural perspective, learning should be mediated through cultural artefacts (e.g. videos and textbooks) and social interaction (e.g. teacher guidance and peer collaboration) (Vygotsky, 1978). However, the absence of digital tools in the English language curriculum suggests that the mediation process may not be fully addressed.

Lantolf and Thorne (2007) emphasize that mediation allows students to engage with the use of instructional tools in meaningful ways; nevertheless, the limited use of distance learning resources suggests that students are not receiving adequate exposure to mediated instruction. In an ideal *telesecundaria* environment, televised lessons should introduce content, while teachers scaffold and contextualize that knowledge through in-situ instruction. However, the data indicates that, in instruction, teachers are the primary instructional source, with little support on pre-recorded materials or digital learning tools.

The scarce use of videos, movies, and digital tools in English instruction raises concerns about whether telesecondaries truly operate as a hybrid model of distance and in-situ instruction. The data suggests that:

- Distance learning tools are largely absent from instruction. Instead of televised lessons acting as the basis of learning, teachers rely primarily on in-situ instruction, often without technological support.
- Teachers are the primary mediators of instruction, rather than digital tools. While the *telesecundaria* model was designed to blend teacher-led support with pre-recorded materials. Students' responses indicate that teachers are taking full responsibility for

content delivery, often compensating the absence of functional distance learning resources.

- The lack of integration of distance learning materials weakens the hybrid model. Instead of complementing and reinforcing one another, distance and in-situ instruction appear to function independently, with in-situ instruction dominating English learning.

These findings align with Johnson and Golombek's (2011), who argue that effective instruction requires both structured guidance and opportunities for students' engagement. In the current *telesecundaria* model, distance learning should provide students with exposure to content, while in-situ instruction should facilitate comprehension and application. However, the low use of videos and digital resources suggests that distance learning is not playing its intended role, leaving teachers to take full responsibility for instruction without the necessary technological support.

5.1.3 Directors' Views

While the telesecondary model is designed to balance distance learning through televised lessons and in-situ instruction led by teachers, school directors provide a unique perspective on how this model functions in practice. Their insights highlight critical infrastructure limitations, challenges in technological access, and the realities of instructional distribution, all of which impact the balance between distance and in-situ instruction.

As previously stated, according to theoretical perspectives on mediation (Vygotsky, 1978), learning is facilitated through cultural tools and teacher guidance. In telesecondary schools, these tools include projectors, digital materials, and pre-recorded lessons, which, in theory, should allow teachers to act as mediators between students and the content. However,

school directors indicate that, in many cases, these technological resources are outdated, inaccessible, or underutilized, disrupting the intended hybrid instructional model.

5.1.3.1 Technological Limitations in Distance Learning

One of the most persistent issues identified by school directors is the limited functionality of technological tools in classrooms. For instance, the principal of telesecondary A, describes how, despite having projectors, they do not work properly, and televisions do not work as they should:

> *"Cada salón tiene su propio proyector. Tal vez no funcionan al 100 porque la imagen a veces no se ve clara, a veces se calienta [...] No tenemos pantallas, no tenemos televisiones, son televisiones que ya no son funcionales."*
>
> Each classroom has its own projector. Maybe it is not 100 % completely functional because the image sometimes is blurred, sometimes it overheats [...] We do not have screens, televisions, they are televisions that are not functional (my translation).

This reflects a disconnection between the theoretical model and its practical application. Distance learning tools cannot meet their purpose if they are outdated or non-operational. This aligns with Swain et al. (2015), who emphasize that mediation through digital tools requires both accessibility and proper integration into classroom practices. Therefore, without functional equipment, the problem of content delivery shifts entirely to in-situ instruction, weakening the intended hybrid approach.

Similarly, the principal of telesecondary C, highlights that, while classrooms have projectors and computers, many teachers prefer to use their own laptops, as the devices provided by the school are outdated:

> *"Aquí cada salón tiene computadora y proyector. Sí, en algunos salones la computadora ya no la quisieron los maestros porque son un poquito atrasadas, pero utilizan su laptop personal para utilizar el cañón."*.

> Here, each classroom has its own computer and projector. Yes, some teachers did not want the computer in some classrooms because the computers are not updated, but they use their personal laptop to use it with the projector (my translation).

This raises another issue. For example, if teachers must rely on personal devices, then technology is not equitably accessible across classrooms and schools. According to Johnson and Golombek (2011), effective instruction requires consistent access to pedagogical tools, yet in telesecondary, the technological gap between teachers who have personal resources and those who do not creates inconsistencies in instruction.

5.1.3.2 The Role of In-Situ Instruction in Compensating for Distance Learning Deficiencies

Given these technological limitations, school directors note that teachers play a central role in compensating for the lack of functional distance learning tools. Instead of relying on televised lessons or pre-recorded materials, teachers frequently deliver content through traditional, face-to-face and teacher-lead methods. This is especially true in telesecondary C, where the principal recognizes that teachers have autonomy to choose their own teaching strategies, which increases the use of in-situ instruction:

> *"Se les da la libertad a las maestras [...] Algunas utilizan el Duolingo, algunas utilizan material de internet y YouTube. De los libros de inglés se utiliza muy poco, muy poco."*
>
> Teachers are given the freedom [...] Some of them use Duolingo, others use material from internet and YouTube. English books are used a little, a little (my translation).

This practice – where teachers adopt alternative tools and in-person methods due to their autonomy – aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which states that when learners do not have access to structured instructional tools, teacher mediation becomes even more critical (Vygotsky, 1978). However, the effectiveness of such mediation varies and it depends mostly on the availability of digital resources and other materials such as textbooks.

Furthermore, telesecondary A's principal emphasizes how external factors, including the participation of parents' socio-economic situations, affect how effective education is:

> *"Los padres están muy interesados en la escuela, pero de manera no bien enfocada. Se interesan por temas que, una, no son de su competencia, y dos, les falta mucho la cultura de preguntar."*
>
> Parents are very interested in the school, but not in a well-focused way. They are interested in topics that, first, are not of their competence; and second, they lack the culture of asking questions (my translation).

This example illustrates that the effectiveness of in-person instruction is influenced not just by teacher choices, but also by external social and cultural factors. According to Lantolf and Thorne (2007), institutional and community dynamics influence learning environments, and when external support systems do not match the instructional goals, students' learning experiences could be negatively affected.

5.2 Resources and Materials

One of the most characteristic features of English language in telesecondaries is the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of resources and materials. In theory, cultural artifacts such as textbooks, technological tools, and instructional materials mediate learning by allowing students to broaden their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

In this respect, Tomlinson (2011) emphasizes that instructional materials should be engaging, meaningful, and appropriate to the learners' linguistic level in order to support second language acquisition (SLA). However, when materials are too advanced, too simplistic, or difficult to integrate into classroom instruction, they fail to serve as effective mediational tools, which is precisely part of the challenges faced in telesecondaries,

where official textbooks often do not align with students' actual abilities, forcing teachers to modify or replace them with self-created materials. Such practices reflect both the capacity and the willingness of teachers to adapt materials in response to their students' real language learning needs.

In theory, the telesecundaria model is intended to integrate both distance and in-situ instruction (SEP, 2010), with televised lessons and digital resources supporting distance learning and textbooks, interactive exercises, and supplementary materials supporting in-situ learning. Nonetheless, the findings illustrate that resources are not employed regularly, technological tools are frequently unavailable or outdated, and teachers frequently balance the lack of suitable materials by creating their own resources, hence, all these factors influence how English is taught in telesecondaries.

These limitations in instructional materials and resources can be problematic in rural schools, this is pointed out by Gándara and Escamilla (2017), who note that the access to pedagogical materials is often inequitable, and this might create gaps in the quality of instruction across the telesecondaries. Therefore, the findings from this study reinforce the idea that in telesecondary schools, material use varies widely, since they largely vary depending on the individual teachers' strategies and the availability of working technology.

5.2.1 Teachers' Views

Teachers in telesecondary face significant challenges in accessing and utilizing instructional materials, often forcing them to adapt their teaching strategies and create their own resources. The telesecondary model is designed to integrate distance learning through digital tools and structured in-situ instruction (SEP, 2010), however, findings from this study reveal that teachers frequently face with outdated, very complex, or unavailable resources. These limitations

force them to find and adapt alternative methods suited to their specific classroom realities. This process is an expression of agency, which will be discussed in a later section.

A major concern among teachers is the difficulty level of the official textbooks, which do not always align with students' proficiency levels, as highlighted by Tomlinson (2011). There is no doubt that within this system, teachers often find the materials too advanced – not only for their students but sometimes even for themselves – making them difficult to use effectively in class. For instance, one teacher explains the following:

> *"No tienen el libro [los alumnos] porque nuestro libro viene como que muy avanzado, ¿no? Y en el plan y programas ya vienen más avanzados, entonces les proyecto desde lo más básico y vamos tomando apuntes."* (Participant PC3)
>
> They do not have the book [the students] because our book seems to be very advanced, right? And the plan and study programs are more advanced, so I project from the very basics and we take notes as we go. (My translation)

This extract illustrates a common issue that teachers face when they deliver the content to students, the misalignment between the official curriculum and the students' actual proficiency level. The teacher's choice to "project from the very basics" and have students take notes reflects a conscious decision to mediate the content and bridge the gap between institutional expectations and classroom realities. This not only supports Vygotsky's (1978) notion of learning as a socially mediated process, but also demonstrates the teacher's role in adjusting instruction to suit students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The teacher's use of simplified materials and scaffolded note-taking can be seen as a strategy to make the input more comprehensible and accessible, which aligns with Tomlinson's (2011) emphasis on the importance of level-appropriate and meaningful materials in second language acquisition.

Another teacher shared a similar concern, emphasizing the need to replace official materials with alternatives that better suit their specific classroom context, in order to simplify instruction and align it with students' actual proficiency levels:

> *"Los libros que anteriormente nos daban para primer grado eran muy difíciles... entonces dije, vamos a empezar de lo más básico."* (Participant PB8)
>
> The books they used to give us for first grade were very difficult... so I said, let's start from the very basics. (My translation)

From the statements above, it can be illustrated the gap that exists between the curriculum's expectations and what actually occurs in the teaching context in telesecondaries. They also stress how teachers exercise agency since they make pedagogical decisions that prioritize student understanding over prescribed materials.

This consistent effort by teachers to adjust content due to the limitations of official resources aligns with Gándara and Escamilla (2017), who emphasize that inequity in terms of resources in rural schools leads to discrepancies in instructional quality, as teachers in environments with limited resources often rely on available materials, regardless of their relevance or effectiveness.

Beyond textbooks, teachers must also deal with technological challenges that do not allow them to fully implement digital tools. While digital platforms are intended to enhance English instruction through exposure to pronunciation, listening, and interactive exercises (Hampel & Stickler, 2015), teachers report that issues with technology limit their ability to incorporate these tools regularly. One teacher expresses frustration over not having reliable equipment:

> *"Antes podía proyectar, pero ahora como seguido no sé qué tiene el proyector. La terminal se descompone y me cuesta 550, la verdad yo no lo compro, entonces lo que ahorita uso nada más es la bocinita y es pronunciación, tengo vocabulario."* (Participant PB1)
>
> Before I used to be able to project, but now there is a problem with the projector. The connector keeps breaking and it costs 550 pesos, I honestly do not buy it. So now I just use my little speaker, and it is for pronunciation. I have vocabulary. (my translation)

Similarly, while some teachers attempt to integrate Duolingo – a popular language learning application – its impact is limited by students' lack of access to mobile devices or internet connectivity:

> *"No, [Duolingo] ha sido nada más como un recurso, ya que no todos los alumnos tienen acceso a la plataforma." (Participant PC5)*
>
> No, [Duolingo] has been only a resource because not all the students have access to the platform. (my translation)

Other teachers, however, use Duolingo strategically in class to compensate their own pronunciation limitations:

> *"Duolingo, lo uso a lo mejor un poquito más porque la proyecto en clase, sobre todo por el audio, para que ellos [los estudiantes] escuchen, ya que a mí se me dificulta demasiado el hablarles, entonces para que ellos escuchen la pronunciación, les pongo el audio.*" (Participant PC6)
>
> Duolingo, I use it perhaps a bit more, because I project it in class, mainly because of the audio, to let them [the students] listen, because it is hard for me to speak to them, so it allows me to let them listen to the pronunciation, so I play them the audio. (my translation)

These findings reflect the significant agency and adaptability of teachers in telesecondaries, who, despite limited technological infrastructure, actively seek ways to integrate the available tools into their teaching practices. This is supported by Hampel and Stickler (2015), who emphasize that for digital tools to be truly effective, they must be integrated into structured teaching practices. According to this, in telesecondary schools, despite many teachers lack

training or consistent access to these tools, they find a way to integrate these tools into their lessons. Thus, many teachers show initiative by using platforms like Duolingo, PowerPoint, or YouTube when it is possible to use them.

Nonetheless, the use of technology, even when it is irregular, demonstrates a kind of "pedagogical survival". Teachers are not passive recipients of top-down policy but rather active agents who, as Li (2020) notes, navigate and respond creatively to their unique teaching contexts. Even when access is inconsistent, their decisions to include digital elements in class, even briefly, reflect a desire to modernize instruction and engage students through more dynamic formats to deliver the English lessons.

Furthermore, teachers' agencies extend beyond technology. In the absence of digital resources, they create their own instructional materials using physical objects and recycled content. One teacher illustrates this approach:

> *"Utilizamos cuaderno del alumno, utilizamos algunos materiales recortables de revistas, en lo particular recurro a los catálogos, recortamos y utilizamos materiales en donde utilizamos pegamento y tijeras."* (Participant PA4).
>
> We use the student's notebooks, also some cut-out materials from magazines, in my case I use catalogs, we cut out things and use materials where we use glue and scissors. (my translation)

This example reflects what Li (2020) calls situated agency, which will be further explained in the following section – teachers doing the best they can with what they have in their school context. They are not just following instructions; they are thinking carefully about how to help their students learn.

Another teacher shared that she always tries to make sure that students learn at least some useful vocabulary:

> *"Si intento que se lleven por lo menos un vocabulario básico [...] pienso que si no tienen nada de vocabulario, pues es muy complicada la gramática."* (Participant PC6)
>
> I try to make sure they at least take away some basic vocabulary. I think if they don't have any vocabulary, grammar becomes too difficult. (my translation)

These stories show how teachers act as mediators of learning, even without sophisticated tools or ideal conditions. As Vygotsky (1978) said, learning happens when someone more experienced helps the learner to take the next step. In this case, the teachers use the available tools they have to support learning within their students' Zone of Proximal Development.

Another teacher prioritizes vocabulary teaching over other aspects of language learning, due to the limitations of structured materials:

> *"Juntamos el total de cuántas [palabras] serían durante este bloque y les pregunto las palabras, realmente lo que yo les enseño es vocabulario, no pronunciación, algo de gramática y nada más."* (Participant PC4)
>
> We add up the total number [of words] during this block and I ask them the words. Honestly what I really teach them is vocabulary, not pronunciation, some grammar and that is all (my translation).

This demonstrates how, due to time constraints and resource limitations, instruction often becomes fragmented, with teachers focusing on isolated aspects of language teaching rather than on a comprehensive linguistic approach. Finally, some teachers completely abandon official resources and curriculum in favor of shared, adapted materials that they find more accessible for students:

> *"Bueno, pues directamente el material que utilizo es un material que me compartió la maestra del otro salón. Ella se dedicó a buscar un libro que estuviera a su nivel [de los estudiantes], que los alumnos pudieran entender… incluso creo que para nosotros también se nos hace un tanto complicado y me compartió ese material, así que me dediqué a sacarle copias para todos mis alumnos. Cada quien tiene su juego de copias."* (Participant PB3)
>
> Well, the material I use is one that a teacher from the other classroom shared with me. She took the time to find a book matched the student's level, something they could

> understand... I think that even for us, it is also a bit complicated, and the teacher shared that material with me, so I made photocopies for all my students. Each of them has their own set of copies (my translation).

This pattern of teacher collaboration and resource adaptation aligns with Tomlinson (2012), who highlights that when teachers feel that instructional materials are ineffective, they tend to create their own resources, thus creating a highly variable instructional quality between classrooms and across other schools.

The evidence above also demonstrates that despite material shortages, outdated and appropriate textbooks, and unreliable technology, teachers in telesecondaries do not let these obstacles define their instruction. Instead, they adapt, modify, and innovate – tailoring resources to fit their students' needs. They simplify complex textbooks, repurpose elementary-level materials, and integrate hands-on activities when official tools fail to meet their goals.

Technology, even when it is often inconsistent, is strategically used by some teachers, who project Duolingo exercises, play audio recordings, or encourage students to configure their devices in English. While these efforts are not uniform across all schools, they underline teachers' commitment to ensuring English is taught, no matter the limitations.

As Tomlinson (2012) points out, instructional materials must be flexible and adaptable to be truly effective. In telesecondaries, it is teachers – not the system – that ensures this adaptability. Their dedication compensates for gaps in the system; however, it is necessary to shift in order to have better resources, training, and working technology to fully support teachers' efforts.

5.2.2 Students' Views

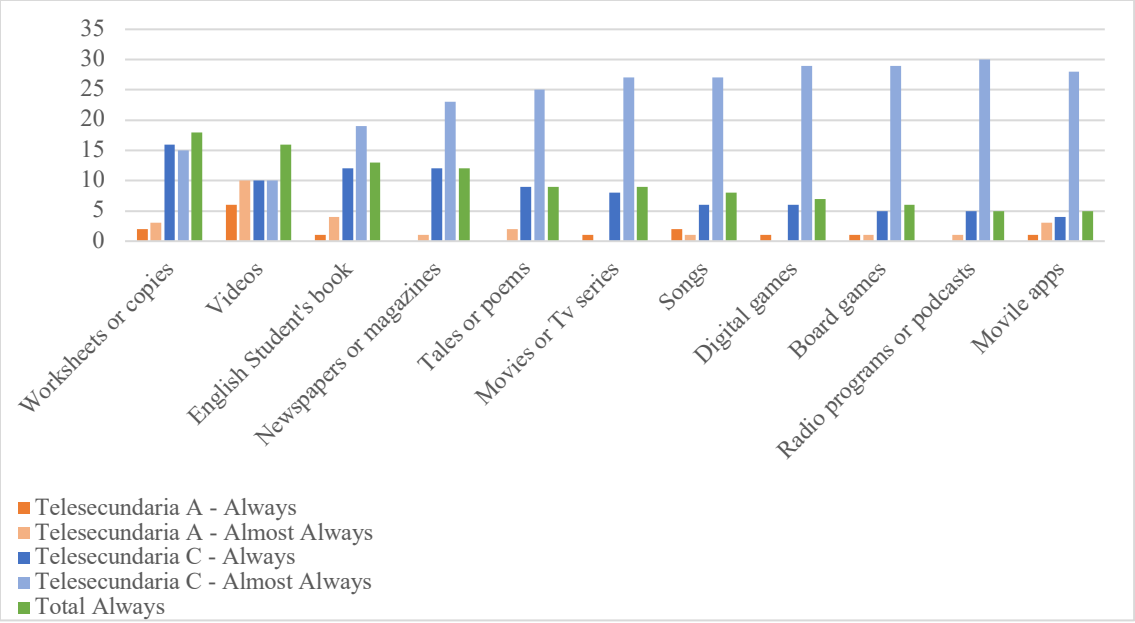
The findings indicate that students in telesecondary schools have limited exposure to digital tools, with instruction largely centered around printed materials and activities led by the teachers. Although the telesecondary model was designed to incorporate digital resources, such as televised lessons and online activities (SEP, 2010), students' responses suggest that these tools are rarely used in practice.

As Gilakjani (2017) points out, authentic exposure to spoken and written English is essential for second language acquisition (SLA), nonetheless students in telesecondaries report minimal engagement with digital platforms, audiovisual materials, or interactive learning experiences. Instead, according to the information gathered from the questionnaires and the class observations, their learning is primarily based on copying from the board, using printed worksheets, and vocabulary memorization.

Figure 2 below provides a comparative analysis of the usage of learning materials among telesecondary schools A and C, highlighting notable differences in the implementation of resources. While *telesecundaria A* relies heavily on traditional materials such as printed worksheets and textbooks, *telesecundaria C* integrates multimedia tools more frequently, with videos, songs, and digital applications being "almost always" used. This contrast suggests that technology and audiovisual resources are not uniformly incorporated across telesecondaries, reinforcing the need for structured and equitable implementation of digital learning tools.

Figure 2.

Comparison of the Usage of Learning Materials Between Telesecondaries A and C



(Own source)

This tendency emphasizes that effective instructional materials should be engaging, multimodal, and appropriate for learners' linguistic development (Tomlinson, 2012). However, the data shows notable differences in how learning materials are used across telesecondaries. On the one hand, *telesecundaria A* primarily relies on static materials such as printed worksheets and textbooks. On the other hand, *telesecundaria C* incorporates multimedia tools more frequently, using videos, songs, and digital applications almost always.

This contrast suggests that technology integration is not uniform across schools, reinforcing the importance of structured and consistent implementation of digital learning tools. Krashen's (1982) 'Input Hypothesis' states that language acquisition depends on exposure to comprehensible input, which multimedia tools can provide. However, this is inequitable, since students in *telesecundaria C* have more access to audiovisual content, and those in *telesecundaria A* remain largely dependent on traditional instruction, limiting their exposure to authentic English input.

Additionally, although some students benefit from interactive digital resources, movies, TV series, and mobile applications, they are rarely utilized in both schools. This means that even in schools where technology is used more often, it is still not being used effectively enough to create engaging learning experiences that support listening comprehension and contextual vocabulary development (Gilakjani, 2017). Hampel and Stickler (2015) argue that successful digital learning requires structured implementation, and the findings indicate that some schools such as *Telesecundaria C* is making progress in this regard, there are other schools that still have room for improvement.

5.2.3 Directors' Views

The perspectives of school principals provide a broader institutional view on the availability and implementation of resources for English instruction in telesecondaries. Their insights highlight two key contradictions; the first is that even some schools have access to technological infrastructure, its usage still remains inconsistent, and the second is that despite the existence of official textbooks and instructional materials, these materials are either too advanced for students or no longer provided by educational authorities.

5.2.3.1 Availability of Technological Resources

Both principals acknowledge that technological resources are available to some extent. In *Telesecundaria C,* all classrooms have projectors and access to a fully functional computer lab:

> *"Aquí cada salón tiene computadora y proyector. [...] Tenemos una sala de cómputo, ahí tenemos más o menos funcionando como 18 computadoras."* (Director of telesecondary C).

> Each classroom here has a computer and a projector. [...] We have a computer laboratory, there we have around 18 working computers (my translation).

Similarly, the principal from *Telesecundaria A* confirms that every classroom has a projector and that the school possesses mini laptops:

> *"Cada salón tiene su propio proyector. Tal vez no funcionan al 100 porque la imagen a veces no se ve clara, a veces se calienta, pero teóricamente cada quien tiene su proyector. La escuela cuenta con 8 mini laptops que no se les ha dado el uso que se requiere."* (Director of telesecondary A).
>
> Each classroom has its own projector. Perhaps it does not work at 100 % because the picture sometimes is not clear, sometimes it overheats, but in theory, each teacher has a projector. The school has 8 mini laptops that have not been used as they should (my translation).

Despite this availability of digital tools, various obstacles hinder their effective integration into English teaching. For example, in telesecondary A, some projectors are not completely functional, and the mini laptops remain stored instead of being regularly used in the classroom. This reflects Hampel and Stickler's (2015) argument that technology itself does not guarantee learning unless there is structured implementation and teacher training to maximize its benefits.

5.2.3.2 Textbooks and Instructional Materials

A recurring issue raised by both principals is the mismatch existing between the official English textbooks and the students' actual proficiency levels. In telesecondary C, the principal acknowledges that textbooks are rarely used because they are too advanced for the students:

> *"De los libros de inglés se utiliza muy poco, muy poco. Realmente el nivel de los libros es alto comparado con el nivel que ellos tienen de manejo del idioma, por lo tanto, ese libro queda muy alto."* (Director of telesecondary A).
>
> The English books are used very little, very little. The truth is, the level of the books is too high compared to the students' proficiency of the language, so the book ends up being too advanced for them. (my translation).

This reinforces Tomlinson's (2012) assertion that instructional materials must be compatible with students' linguistic abilities to be effective because if textbooks do not match

students' needs, then teachers are left with no choice but to abandon them and use alternative materials, which creates instructional inconsistencies across telesecondaries.

In telesecondary A, the issue goes beyond difficulty levels, for instance, official English textbooks are no longer provided:

> *"La SEP ya no manda libros de inglés. Son de las cosas que pocas veces se mencionan, pero en la actual administración ya no se imparte la asignatura de inglés."* (Director of telesecondary A).
>
> The SEP no longer sends English textbooks. It is one of those things that are rarely mentioned, but under the current administration, the English subject is no longer being taught (my translation).

This statement reveals a concerning policy shift, suggesting that English is not prioritized at a curricular level. Additionally, the lack of structured resources shows educational disparities since teachers must improvise lessons using materials they can access.

5.2.3.3 The Importance of English in a Globalized Context

Despite the obstacles faced by telesecondaries, especially in rural areas, school principals continue to highlight the importance of English in the current global context. They view the language not only as an academic subject but as a life skill, particularly valuable in communities where migration to the USA is common. One director expressed the necessity of English by connecting it to the realities of global mobility:

> *"La segunda [lengua] tendría que ser el inglés. Digo, 'tendría' porque es muy necesario, ya que estamos en una época muy globalizada, [...] tenemos muchos migrantes, llegan y ya se les olvidó el español."* (Director from Telesecundaria A)
>
> "The second [language] should be English. I say 'should' because it is very necessary, since we are living in a highly globalized era [...] we have many migrants who return and have already forgotten Spanish." (my translation)

Another principal emphasized the broader relevance of English by stating:

> *"Sí es importante, porque los alumnos en algún momento lo van a necesitar, ya sea que viajen, trabajen o simplemente para que no se les cierre una puerta."* (Director from Telesecundaria C)
>
> "Yes, it is important, because students will need it at some point, whether they travel, work, or simply so that no opportunity is closed to them." (my translation)

This view matches with the findings of Despagne Broxner and Sánchez Martínez (2021), who argue that English in the Mexican educational context is often connected to ideologies of progress and mobility. In rural communities with high rates of migration to the USA, English is perceived as a tool that would allow students survive and get job opportunities when migrating.

At the same time, this emphasis on English reflects what Apple (2019) describes as the legitimizing function of ideology in education – where certain knowledge areas, like English, are prioritized because of their perceived socioeconomic value. However, this ideological position is complicated by the lack of materials and the teachers' preparation, which limits the actual implementation of effective English instruction.

This is further supported by Ruiz Carrillo and Estrevel Rivera (2008), who explain that linguistic ideologies serve as frameworks through which communities assign value to certain languages, often linking them to identity, progress, and belonging. Van Dijk (2006) also reminds us that ideologies are distributed through institutional discourse shaping how language is framed and taught in educational settings.

While Krashen's (1982) 'Input Hypothesis' stresses the importance of exposing learners to meaningful linguistic input, directors recognize that students are rarely given consistent opportunities to engage with the language. This gap between the ideological value of English and the material conditions of its teaching remarks the structural inequalities in rural education.

Eventually, principals demonstrate a form of forced agency (Li, 2020), where they advocate for English while simultaneously acknowledging the institutional and contextual limitations that affect its teaching. This paradox reflects the wider struggle faced by telesecondaries as they attempt to reconcile national educational goals with their local realities.

5.3 ZPD and Mediation

In the context of telesecondaries, students are often limited with absence or no prior exposure to the target language. The role of the teacher as a mediator becomes essential for guiding students through their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs most effectively when students engage with tasks that are slightly beyond their independent abilities, when they receive scaffolding and support from a more knowledgeable guide – usually the teacher. However, this mediation is effective when instructional materials, strategies, and resources are adapted to the students' actual levels.

In the telesecondary context, where official English textbooks often mismatch with students' abilities (as discussed in previous sections), teachers bridge this gap by modifying and adapting content, providing additional explanations, and creating supplementary materials. This connects with Lantolf and Poehner (2014). They emphasize that effective mediation is dynamic, requiring the teacher to constantly assess and support students' evolving needs.

Moreover, Swain et al. (2015) suggest that language learning is not just about exposure, but it is also about active engagement and interaction, making the teacher guidance crucial. In telesecondaries, where access to authentic English input is limited, teachers often become the primary source of linguistic mediation, helping students navigate through new vocabulary, structures, and pronunciation over instruction that is done step by step and with interactive

activities. The following section explores how ZPD and mediation take place in telesecondaries, illustrating from the voices of teachers, students and school principals how learning unfolds when instructional support is present, and what challenges arise when it is not.

5.3.1 Teachers' View

In telesecondaries, teachers often face the challenge of teaching English to students who have very limited prior knowledge of the language. In this regard, many rely on adapted strategies that reflect the main principles of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), particularly through translation, simplified materials, and peers' collaboration. These practices are mostly informal; however, they serve as forms of mediation that aim to make English learning more accessible to students.

This section presents how rural telesecondary teachers perceive and implement mediation strategies to support students' language development within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As outlined in the theoretical framework, Vygotsky (1978) proposed that learning occurs most effectively when students are guided by a more knowledgeable other, through scaffolded interactions. Teachers' voices in this study reveal how they attempt to fulfill the role of mediators or more knowledgeable others, as described by Vygotsky (1978), despite the numerous challenges they face in their rural teaching contexts – including limited resources, students' low English proficiency, and inadequate instructional materials.

5.3.1.1 Scaffolding and Adaptation to Learners' Levels

Many teachers reported that they have to adjust the official curriculum and textbook content so they are aligned with students' actual abilities, using visual aids, repetition, translation tools, and modeling. This mirrors Vygotsky's (1978) notion of mediated learning, in which tools

– both material and symbolic – play a fundamental role in shaping students' cognitive development.

From a sociocultural perspective, these tools become meaningful when they are situated within the learners' environment and guided by interaction. As Lantolf and Thorne (2007) emphasize, mediation occurs through cultural artifacts such as language, dictionaries, and images, which are used not only to transmit knowledge, but also to reorganize the learner's psychological functions. Some teachers highlighted this by saying:

> *"Entonces, a mí me ha funcionado más tener que explicarles con el ejemplo."* (Participant PA1)
>
> So, what has worked best for me is explaining through examples. (my translation)
>
> *"… la mayoría de los alumnos no tienen ni nivel básico de inglés [...]. Incluso hay algunos alumnos que tienen deficiente comprensión lectora o no saben a veces lo básico ni del español… entonces tengo que adaptar las explicaciones y el material a su nivel para que puedan trabajar bien."* (Participant PA3)
>
> ... most students don't even have a basic level of English [...]. Some of them even struggle with reading comprehension or do not know the basics of Spanish either… so I have to adapt the explanations and materials to their level so they can work properly. (my translation)

Other teachers echoed this challenge, specifically, the mismatch between the official curriculum and students' actual language proficiency. Many students struggle not only with English, but even with basic literacy skills in Spanish, making it difficult to follow the textbook content as designed. In response, teachers adjust their instruction, often simplifying or modifying materials and activities to ensure students can engage with the content meaningfully:

> *"Es complicado porque los alumnos carecen de vocabulario, entonces no nos permite entrar y agarrar el inglés como viene en los libros. Hay que modificar las actividades." (Participant PB7)*

> It's complicated because students lack vocabulary, so we can't approach and use English as it is in the books. We have to modify the activities. (my translation)
>
> *"Los libros que anteriormente nos daban para primer grado eran muy difíciles... entonces dije, vamos a empezar desde lo más básico."* (Participant PB8)
>
> The books they used to give us for first grade were very difficult... so I said, let's start from the very basics. (my translation)

This adaptation is a clear example of scaffolding, in which the teacher mediates content and expectations to make it accessible to students. As Lantolf and Thorne (2007) point out, the learning process is not linear, but it is shaped by participation in environments that are enriched by the context. These teachers respond by creating learning conditions within students' ZPD, demonstrating both pedagogical sensitivity and professional agency.

Additionally, this practice reflects what Ruiz Carrillo and Estrevel Rivera (2008) describe as the need to align instruction with the students' sociocultural reality. According to them, language education should take into account the values, experiences, and needs of the community in which learning occurs. By adapting materials, teachers are not simplifying content; they are giving it relevance and making it meaningful for their students.

In the same vein, Despagne Broxner and Sánchez Martínez (2021) state that linguistic ideologies in Mexico often fail when considering the disparities between urban and rural education. The assumption that all students begin at the same linguistic and academic level is challenged by the teachers' voices in this study. Their decisions to adapt textbooks and to use basic vocabulary strategies reflect a grounded and responsive pedagogy that pushes back against one-size-fits-all expectations.

5.3.1.2 Mediation Through Tools

Participants reported using films, vocabulary lists, repetition, and bilingual dictionaries as a means of mediation. These practices exemplify both material and symbolic mediation tools, which Swain et al. (2015) define as essential to transforming external actions into internal psychological development. These tools are not merely aids for communication but also serve as bridges between the learner's current understanding and the knowledge they are building in a new language. In this regard, one teacher described a listening activity that involved collective interpretation of English-language film segments:

> *"Les puse películas en inglés [...] sin subtítulos [...] les dije 'les voy a poner dos minutos y de lo que están hablando necesito que ustedes me expliquen qué entendieron por equipos'."* (Participant PB3)
>
> I showed them movies in English [...] without subtitles [...] I told them 'I'll play two minutes, and you need to explain in teams what you understood.' (my translation)

This task represents a mediated learning event, which requires collaboration, negotiation of meaning, and strategic support – an example of what Masuda and Arnett (2015) refer to as learners' "situated meaning-making." In this sense, learners are not passive recipients; they co-construct understanding with peers and with guidance from the teacher, which through interaction supports cognitive development. Other teachers emphasize the use of bilingual dictionaries and vocabulary lists to enhance their learners' ability to work independently:

> *"Un logro para mí es que ellos sepan utilizar el diccionario de español a inglés, y de inglés a español [...] ahora ellos traducen pero ya saben algunas palabras, no traducen todo."* (Participant PB1)
>
> An achievement for me is that they know how to use the Spanish to English and English to Spanish dictionary [...] now they translate, but they already know some words, they don't translate everything. (my translation)

This illustrates what Swain et al. (2015) call symbolic mediation, where external tools such as dictionaries support learners' evolving ability to regulate their own language learning. It also reflects Masuda and Arnett's (2015) idea of situated meaning-making, where learners engage with language in a personally meaningful way. While the teacher does not mention an authentic task explicitly, the use of dictionaries suggests an effort to foster learners' autonomy and interaction with language beyond memorization.

> *"Siempre les pongo vocabulario, inglés-español [...] porque ellos al principio no saben nada [...] entonces si no saben nada, pues no van a poder hacer un diálogo."* (Participant PB8)
>
> I always give them English-Spanish vocabulary [...] because at the beginning they don't know anything [...] so if they don't know anything, they won't be able to make a dialogue. (my translation)
>
> *"Utilizamos materiales recortables de revistas, en lo particular recurro a los catálogos, recortamos y utilizamos materiales en donde utilizamos pegamento y tijeras."* (Participant PA4)
>
> We use cut-out materials from magazines; personally, I use catalogs. We cut out and use materials where we need glue and scissors. (my translation)

These examples mirror Li's (2020) perspective on how material tools, such as manipulatives and visual representations, are fundamental when supporting learners' cognitive and affective engagement. Especially in rural settings, where access to digital resources is inconsistent, teachers develop creative and context-adapted strategies to fill instructional gaps. These strategies reveal the teachers' agency as they shape their practice reflecting on students' actual needs and available resources – what Johnson and Golombek (2011) describe as teacher cognition shaped through practice and reflection. A further example of this is that even pronunciation is mediated creatively, for example, a teacher described how they physically model for their students how to articulate English sounds:

> *"Les digo, acá tiene que vibrar – o sea hasta su posición de la lengua, los dientes, todo."* (Participant PB8)
>
> I tell them, here you have to make it vibrate – even the position of the tongue, the teeth, everything. (my translation)

This detailed feedback is not incidental; it is part of a strategy implemented in order to mediate phonological awareness and linguistic output. According to Swain et al. (2015), this kind of detailed and responsive scaffolding provides new tools for the learner to manage and produce language, thus reshaping their internal mental activity over time.

It is evident that these teaching strategies go beyond the delivery of content. They represent intentional acts of mediation that facilitate learner autonomy, confidence, and comprehension. In contexts where resources are limited, the creativity of these teachers exemplifies how deeply mediation, context, and agency are present and inter-connected in the learning process.

5.3.1.3 Use of Peer Mediation

Another type of mediation identified by participants is the support that students provide to one another, particularly when one or more students possess a higher level of English proficiency. Teachers frequently acknowledge the role of returnee students – those who have lived or studied in the U.S. – as valuable linguistic and social mediators. These students often become informal assistants in class, helping their peers understand vocabulary, pronunciation, or tasks. This connects with the sociocultural theory's concept of learning as a socially situated process, in which knowledge is constructed through interaction and collaboration (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Swain et al., 2015). As one teacher shared:

> *"Este ciclo escolar a ese niño [retornado] lo he puesto a que... yo escribo [...] y él va leyéndoles y ya hace que repitan sus compañeros."* (Participant PC5)

> This school year I've asked that returnee boy to help... I write [...] and he reads it aloud to them, and then gets his classmates to repeat it. (my translation)

This dynamic is described by Lantolf and Thorne (2007), who refer as other-regulation – a stage where learners rely on more capable peers to support their progression within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The returnee student, in this case, assumes the role of a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), temporarily guiding others until they are able to perform the task more independently. Another teacher noted:

> *"Me apoyo mucho de ellos... 'mira, ve y ayúdame con él', 'ayúdale en vocabulario'."* (Participant PB4)
>
> I rely on them a lot... I say, 'go help him,' 'help him with the vocabulary.' (my translation)

This quote illustrates how peer mediation is intentionally fostered by teachers. Besides, it reflects a strategic use of classroom diversity to create collaborative learning environments, where knowledge is constructed in collaboration of its members. Moreover, in some cases, teachers themselves also benefited from these more capable students, thus demonstrating the collective nature of learning. For instance, one participant explained:

> *"Sí también me apoyaba de ella [niña retornada] para cuando yo tenía algunas dudas [...] muchas veces sí me corregía."* (Participant PC4)
>
> Yes, I also relied on her [a returnee girl] whenever I had questions [...] many times she corrected me. (my tranlsation)

This example highlights mediation as something that is not only unidirectional, but that is also reciprocal and effortless, since teachers also become learners within the classroom's social context. These moments of co-learning are related to what Li (2020) defines as situated agency, where both teachers and students actively negotiate knowledge within their shared environment.

Hence, through these interactions, peer mediation becomes more than a classroom strategy; it becomes a reflection of community-based learning and the redefinition of classroom roles. Thus, returnee students are not only seen as language models but also as bridges between global experiences and local needs – helping to build shared understanding in English learning.

5.3.1.4 Teacher as a Mediator

Teachers in telesecondary often see themselves not only as instructors but also as emotional and cognitive mediators. This aligns with the sociocultural theory view of the teacher as a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), who supports learning through both academic and affective means (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). For instance, one teacher noted:

> *"Trato de darles a ellos la confianza de que lo pueden hacer, de que vamos a iniciar desde algo muy básico."* (Participant PA4)
>
> I try to give them the confidence that they can do it, that we're going to start from something very basic. (my translation)

This extract highlights the teacher's role not just as an instructor but as an emotional mediator, building students' confidence and reducing anxiety by starting "from something very basic." This aligns with the sociocultural view of the teacher as a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) (Vygotsky, 1978), who supports both cognitive and affective aspects of learning. As Johnson and Golombek (2011) note, effective mediation includes creating a supportive environment where students feel capable of engaging with new content, which is an essential step when learners have limited prior exposure to English.

Another example is what another teacher shared:

> *"Mi papel es motivarlos, que vean que sí se puede."* (Participant PA4)
>
> My role is to motivate them, to help them see that they can do it. (my translation)

These quotes show how emotional support is part of classroom mediation. Teachers use presence, encouragement, and proximity to reduce anxiety and foster engagement, which is what Li (2020) calls *interactional resources*.

> *"Cuando estoy con ellos [...] como que sí se involucran y les agrada."* (Participant PC4)
>
> When I'm with them [...] they get more involved and enjoy it.
>
> *"Si ven que tú estás ahí con ellos y no solo enfrente, también se animan más, preguntan más."* (Participant PA1)
>
> If they see that you're there with them and not just standing at the front, they feel encouraged to ask more questions. (my translation)

These quotes highlight the emotional aspect of mediation, where teachers boost students' confidence and motivation. Phrases like "sí se puede" (they can do it) and "mi papel es motivarlos" (my role is to motivate them) show how they foster a supportive environment. As Li (2020) notes, interactional resources, such as presence and encouragement, help reduce anxiety and promote participation. When teachers stay close and involved, students feel more comfortable asking questions and engaging.

Teachers also build trust by acting as accessible guides:

> *"Yo hasta les digo que soy como un diccionario [...] pregúntenme todo lo que quieran."* (Participant PB8)
>
> I even tell them I'm like a dictionary [...] ask me anything you want. (my translation)
>
> *"Aunque yo no sepa todo, les ayudo a buscar o lo investigamos juntos."* (Participant PB1)
>
> Even if I don't know everything, I help them search or we look it up together. (my translation)

Other meaningful insights go along with the emotional part. Teachers demonstrate to guide students in the process not only in the delivery of content but also to build confidence in their students to motivate and encourage them to learn and use the target language. Besides, teachers let students know that they are also learning the language, that they are not experts and that they are always ready to help even though all those limitations.

5.3.1.5 Challenges and Limitations in Mediation

Despite their strong commitment to supporting students, teachers in telesecondaries face serious limitations that restrict their ability to fully implement mediation strategies. These include outdated or insufficient infrastructure, lack of access to digital tools, and their own gaps in English proficiency. These barriers make it difficult to maintain constant support within students' ZPD, especially when the conditions needed for effective mediation are absent. As one teacher expressed:

> *"Si quisiera trabajar una plataforma de inglés [...] la escuela tiene señal de wifi, pero no tiene una cobertura que llegue hasta mi salón."* (Participant PA3)
>
> If I wanted to work with an English platform [...] the school has Wi-Fi, but it doesn't reach my classroom. (my translation)

Other participants echoed similar concerns:

> *"Antes podía proyectar, pero ahora el proyector ya no sirve, y comprar el cable cuesta más de 500 pesos. Ahora solo uso una bocina para pronunciación."* (Participant PB1)
>
> I used to project, but now the projector doesn't work, and replacing the cable costs more than 500 pesos. Now I just use a speaker for pronunciation. (my translation)
>
> *"A veces no tenemos ni material, yo hago mis propias hojas o uso lo que tengo en casa."* (Participant PA4)
>
> Sometimes we don't even have materials, so I make my own worksheets or use what I have at home. (my translation)

These voices illustrate what Bautista (2022) and Ayala Sánchez (2018) describe as the invisible load placed on rural teachers, who must rely on improvisation and materials that they create or adapt due to limited institutional support. These conditions restrict instructional distribution and also impact students' engagement and motivation. Moreover, some teachers acknowledge their own limitations in English, which also affects the quality of mediation:

> *"Yo lo sé leer, sé pronunciarlo, porque me gusta y me baso mucho en la música [...] pero no sé cómo enseñarles."* (Participant PC2)
>
> I can read it, I know how to pronounce it because I like it and I use music [...] but I don't know how to teach it to them. (my translation)

This extract connects with what Cruz García and García Higuera (2023) argue regarding the need for pedagogical appropriation in technology use and language instruction. When there is a lack of training, even when there is the presence of tools, it does not guarantee effective use or meaningful mediation. SCT values the use of tools and interaction for learning. Authors like Martínez (1999) and Moll (1990) remind us that cultural and material conditions greatly influence the development of psychological [cultural, social and cognitive] processes. In telesecondaries, teachers' efforts are often constrained by external realities that make mediation a constant exercise of adaptation and creativity, rather than a fully planned and supported pedagogical strategy.

5.3.2 Students' View

Students' perceptions shed light into how mediation is experienced in English classes across telesecondaries. Data collected through the class observations reveal a recurring pattern: Spanish is often used as the main language of instruction, since during the class observations all

the teachers supported their lessons with the use of Spanish to explain English content. This practice reduces students' exposure to the target language; however, it is a strategy that teachers have implemented to teach students the target language. A student from *telesecundaria A* mentioned in a section of the questionnaire:

> *"Casi siempre nos explican en español, entonces no practicamos mucho el inglés."*
>
> They [teachers] almost always explain things in Spanish, so we don't practice English a lot. (my translation)

This perception is important from the lens of a sociocultural perspective. Although the use of Spanish can help students to understand faster in the moment, it also limits opportunities for students to engage with English as a symbolic mediational tool. In this regard, Lantolf and Thorne (2007), emphasize that tools like language are central to the development of thinking. Hence, if English is not consistently used, students miss chances to internalize its meaning and structure.

This situation also reflects what Despagne Broxner and Sánchez Martínez (2021) suggest about language ideologies in Mexican schools. They argue that English is sometimes seen as something distant or disconnected from students' lives, especially when the teaching practices is not something useful or relevant for them. Then, if English is mostly explained through Spanish and not used actively, students may not see themselves as real users of the language. Figures 3 and 4 below show students' perceptions of mediation in the classroom. It illustrates the frequency in which Spanish is used, how group work is implemented, and how much peer support is provided.

Figure 3

Students' Conceptions of the Use of English for their Future: Telesecondary A

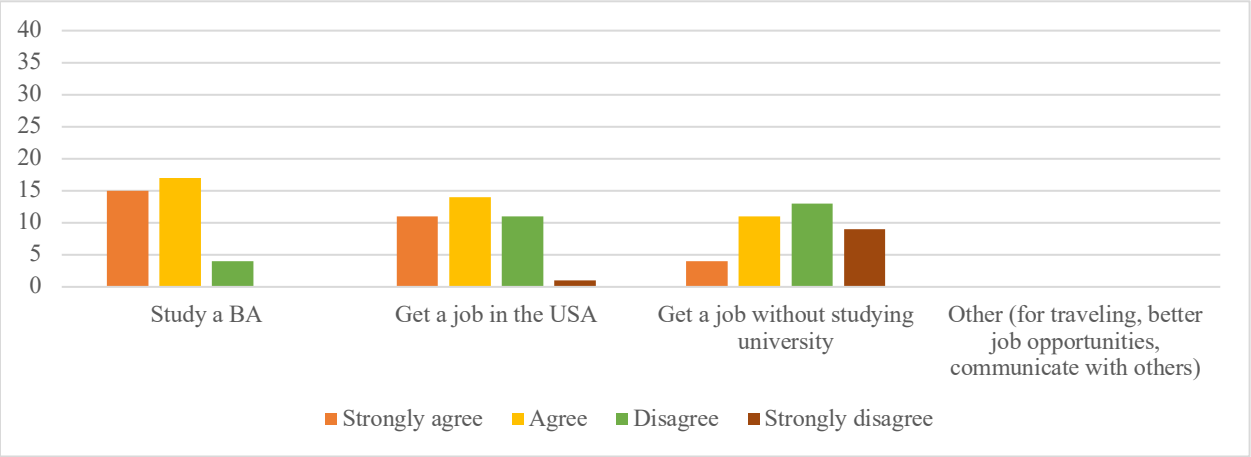
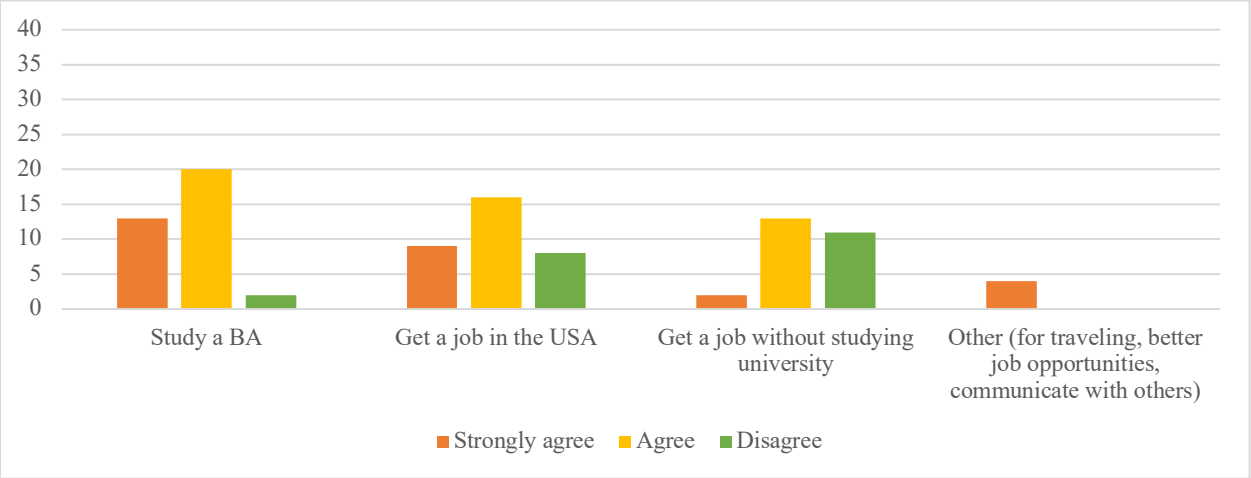


Figure 4

Students' Conceptions of the Use of English for their Future: Telesecondary B



(own source)

Figures 3 and 4 above illustrate the collected data from the questionnaire administered to students in telesecondary schools A and C. They provide insights into the perceptions that students have towards the English language beyond the classroom and in their future. It is

evident that both telesecondaries share some commonalities. On the one hand, in both schools A and C, most of the students find English useful to study a bachelor's degree, while on the other hand, only a few students in both telesecondary schools disagree with that. Another surprising finding revealed that in both schools, over half of students said English is helpful for the future to get a job in the USA, to have a broaden perception of this last finding, it is worth mentioning that the communities around the three telesecondaries belong to a zone with high rates of migration. Therefore, most students have the aim to migrate and work in the USA.

These outcomes reflect that the English language is seen as a valuable resource from the students' perspective that will help them have better study or work opportunities in the future. If we go beyond numbers, these beliefs might mirror that students are exposed to social messages and expectations about the role of English in their lives. The internalization of these beliefs goes along with different types of mediation such as teacher discourse, community influence, and students' family discourse. As Vygotsky noted "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). From this regard, it can be said that students' beliefs about English for their future are evidence of internalized meanings that have been socially mediated in their social and learning environment. This supports Lantolf and Thorne's (2007) notion of symbolic and ideological mediation, where learning goes beyond content, making students aware about the purposes and opportunities that learning a second language can get them to their future. From this perspective, teachers mediate linguistic content but also the sociocultural importance of English, as described by (Swain et al., 2015).

Furthermore, students also reported other types of mediation that take place during the English instruction, one of them relates to group work. From the collected data in the student's questionnaire revealed that working in groups helped students to understand better, for instance, one student from telesecondary C explained:

> *"Cuando trabajamos en equipo, es más fácil entender porque alguien explica y entre todos lo hacemos."*
>
> When we work in teams, it's easier to understand because someone explains, and we all do it together. (my translation)

These moments of collaboration reflect what Martínez (1999) describes as shared meaning-making, where students interact with each other and use the available tools to build understanding. Even in settings where teacher mediation is limited, students can still support each other by explaining, asking questions, or working together, and by doing that, they are creating their own learning paths.

This also connects with Moll's (1990) idea that learning happens in connection with the students' social and cultural context. In rural telesecondaries, where resources are few and classes are often large, peer collaboration becomes an essential resource for learning. It is through teamwork that students construct their knowledge in collaboration and help one another stay engaged in the lesson.

In the end, even though many students reported that mediation through English was inconsistent or weak, the gathered data shows that meaningful learning still happens – especially when there is peer interaction. These social moments of support represent real opportunities for learning within the ZPD and remind us of that mediation in telesecondaries can take many forms, even when formal resources are limited.

5.4. Beliefs and Ideology: Agency

Beliefs and ideologies play a key role in shaping how teachers, students, and school directors understand and approach English teaching in telesecondaries. As sociocultural theory suggests, learning does not happen in isolation – it is influenced by the cultural and social context where it takes place (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). What people believe about English, its value, and how it should be taught or learned, affects the decisions that teachers make and the actions that they take.

Ideologies also reflect the broader experiences of each participant and their place in the school system. Sometimes, these beliefs help them take initiative and find creative ways to face challenges; however, other times, they can limit their possibilities. This section presents the perspectives of teachers, students, and directors, showing how their beliefs shape their sense of agency in the classroom and in the learning process.

5.4.1 Teachers' View

Many teachers in *telesecundaria* see themselves as agents of change, even though they often lack specialized training in English instruction. Their beliefs are shaped by both institutional pressures and their personal experiences with language learning and teaching. Teachers always evaluate what is realistically achievable within their own contexts. This agency reflects what Johnson and Golombek (2011) describe as a dynamic negotiation of professional identity, shaped through daily practices and sociocultural constraints.

Instructors often act as mediators by guiding and supporting students emotionally and socially. Their approach is closely aligned with the concept of the "more capable other" (Vygotsky, 1978), where teachers do more than only transmit knowledge; they actively build

learning opportunities that make students feel capable. For instance, one teacher described this effort by saying:

> *"Yo les digo que aunque no soy experta en inglés, estoy aquí para ayudarles a que no le tengan miedo."* (Participant PB6)
>
> I tell them that even though I'm not an English expert, I'm here to help them so they don't feel afraid. (my translation)

This quote shows how teachers see themselves as supporters, not just instructors. Even without being experts in English, they aim to reduce students' fear and build their confidence. This reflects Vygotsky's (1978) idea of the "more capable other" and supports Johnson and Golombek's (2011) view that teacher agency is shaped by personal experience and context. Emotional support becomes part of how learning happens.

Another emphasized the need to adapt instructional content to fit students' realities:

> *"A veces el libro pide mucho vocabulario que ellos [los estudiantes] no tienen, entonces adapto el tema para que sea más realista."* (Participant PA3)
>
> Sometimes the book asks for too much vocabulary that they [students] don't have, so I adapt the topic to make it more realistic. (my translation)

These voices reflect how teachers use their knowledge and experience to transform the curriculum into something more accessible and meaningful. According to Li (2020)**,** this is an expression of situated agency, which refers to the ability to act intentionally and strategically within one's working environment.

In this sense, teachers modify lesson content, and also, they create their own materials when there is a lack of resources or when they do not match the students' level. This practice of adapting and creating materials was highlighted by a teacher:

> *"A veces no tenemos ni material, yo hago mis propias hojas o uso lo que tengo en casa."* (Participant PA4)

> Sometimes we don't even have materials, so I make my own worksheets or use what I have at home. (my translation)

This type of improvisation is a result of the structural limitations and aligns with what Bautista (2022) and Ayala Sánchez (2018) describe as the invisible labor that rural teachers carry, in which improvisation and resilience become part of the daily practice. Some teachers even seek out their own ways to improve their English and teaching skills, showing initiative that goes beyond the institutional requirements, this can be seen with participant PC1:

> *"Yo me metí a un curso de inglés en línea, porque quiero entender mejor para enseñarles más."*
>
> I joined an online English course because I want to understand better so I can teach them more. (my translation)

This is related to what Cruz García and García Higuera (2023) state, as they claim that it is important that the pedagogical appropriation and the need for continuous teacher learning in contexts where formal support may be limited. In other words, teacher belief systems in telesecondaries are not fixed; they evolve in response to the challenges, the needs of their students, and their own growth as educators. Through adaptation, improvisation, and personal effort, these teachers construct their own paths to effective teaching, demonstrating professional agency in meaningful and context-sensitive ways.

5.4.2 Students' View

Students' beliefs about learning English are influenced by how they perceive their teachers' confidence, methods, and expectations. For instance, many students conceive English as something that is important, but they also think that it is hard to learn, often expressing that their learning is hindered by the inconsistent exposure to the language. According to Vygotsky's

theory, that type of belief is socially mediated. This means that these beliefs are constructed through interaction, discourse, and shared meanings in the classroom culture.

Students also internalize the idea that English belongs to those who "already know" – an ideology reinforced when translation is overused, or when instruction is limited to isolated vocabulary lists. This reflects what Li (2020) calls learner positioning: how students begin to see themselves (or not) as real language users, depending on how they are positioned by others in the learning environment.

However, when spaces for collaboration are created, especially through peer interaction, students begin to gain agency. These moments provide opportunities for the construction of meanings collaboratively, aligning with the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) where students are supported to achieve more with help to be able to do more things:

> "Sí me gustaría aprender, pero a veces siento que no puedo porque no entiendo nada." (Student from *telesecundaria* B)
>
> I would like to learn, but sometimes I feel like I can't because I don't understand anything. (my translation)

> "Cuando trabajamos en equipo, es más fácil entender porque alguien explica y entre todos lo hacemos." (Student from *telesecundaria* C)
>
> When we work in teams, it's easier to understand because someone explains, and we do it together. (my translation)

In this way, student agency is not static, since it is dependent of the types of interaction that take place. Thus, peer collaboration can serve as a crucial mediational tool in contexts where direct teacher mediation is limited.

5.4.3 Directors' View

School directors in telesecondaries face a complex role. They are expected to follow the national education policies, but at the same time, they also have to respond to the real needs of their schools and communities. This dual responsibility shapes how telesecondary principals view and manage the teaching of English. Most directors agree that English is important, however, they also point out that their priorities often lie elsewhere, like improving reading in Spanish, working further on Mathematics, increasing attendance, or managing school discipline. This is observed in the interviews conducted to the *telesecundaria* principals, in which directors expressed that English is not seen as a priority, even though it is part of the formal curriculum.

This approach reflects what Apple (2019) describes as *legitimation*, which means that principals do not reject a policy, but that they have to make decisions that seem reasonable and that match with their actual context. For example, one director explained:

> *"El inglés es importante, sí, pero hay prioridades más urgentes aquí: la disciplina, la lectura en español, la asistencia."* (Director from telesecundaria A)
>
> English is important, yes, but there are more urgent priorities here: discipline, reading in Spanish, attendance. (my translation)

This quote shows that even when English is recognized as valuable, it is not always treated as urgent. This might indicate that in many rural communities, there are deeper structural problems that need to be addressed first.

Another key issue is the lack of proper training and resources for teaching English. Some directors noted that the English textbooks provided by the SEP are too advanced for students'

actual levels, and teachers often do not have the knowledge to adapt them effectively. For example, one principal expressed:

> *"Nos encantaría impulsar más el inglés, pero sin capacitación o materiales, es complicado exigir algo que los maestros no han recibido."* (Director from telesecundaria C)
>
> We would love to promote English more, but without training or materials, it's hard to demand something that teachers haven't received. (my translation)

The director's comment highlights a practical limitation: the desire to promote English is present, but structural barriers like inadequate training and lack of materials make it difficult to act. This illustrates what Li (2020) refers to as *situated agency* – teachers and principals making strategic decisions based on the realities they face, rather than passively applying policy.

Another director added:

> *"A veces usamos la clase de inglés para reforzar lectura en español. Si no leen bien en español, menos van a poder en inglés."* (Director from telesecundaria A)
>
> Sometimes we use English class time to strengthen Spanish reading. If they can't read well in Spanish, they won't manage in English either. (my translation)

Although this practice does not align with the official curriculum, the decision reflects an effort to address students' foundational literacy needs. This choice demonstrates the director's awareness of students' broader learning challenges and their attempt to respond with the resources available. In this sense, agency is exercised not by strict adherence to policy, but through context-based adaptation.

This extract illustrates how educational priorities are shaped by local realities. Some directors emphasized the economic and social barriers their communities face, such as limited

internet access and outdated or unavailable English textbooks. As Martínez (1999) and Moll (1990) argue, these material conditions significantly influence the implementation of language education in under-resourced settings. However, despite all these challenges, directors still see English as something useful. As one of them put it:

> *"La segunda [lengua] tendría que ser el inglés. Digo, 'tendría' porque es muy necesario, ya que estamos en una época muy globalizada, [...] tenemos muchos migrantes, llegan y ya se les olvidó el español."* (Director from telesecundaria A)
>
> The second [language] should be English. I say 'should' because it's very necessary. We live in a globalized era, and many of our students have migrated—some come back and have already forgotten Spanish. (my translation)

This extract shows a clear awareness of the role that English can play in students' futures, especially in communities where migration is very common to occur. However, the directors also recognize the gap that exists between what the policy expects and what they can realistically do. Their words reflect a kind of *constrained agency* since they try to do what they can, even when conditions are not ideal.

In the end, the directors' views remind us that educational change is not just about following rules. It also depends on the people who carry out the work, and on the realities that they face every day. Their voices show the complexity of implementing English education in rural communities across Mexico, and the importance and the weight it has to understanding school leadership as part of the larger picture of language teaching.

5.5 Technology and Infrastructure Conditions

Access to technology and infrastructure plays a vital role in how English is taught and learned in telesecondaries. In the context of rural education, these resources often determine the

type of modern strategies that teachers can apply and consequently at what point these resources can make students engage meaningfully with the language. This section explores how teachers, students, and school directors experience and navigate through technological and infrastructural limitations. Once again, the analysis is grounded in the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, particularly in the role of material tools as mediators of learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Swain et al., 2015).

5.5.1 Teachers' View

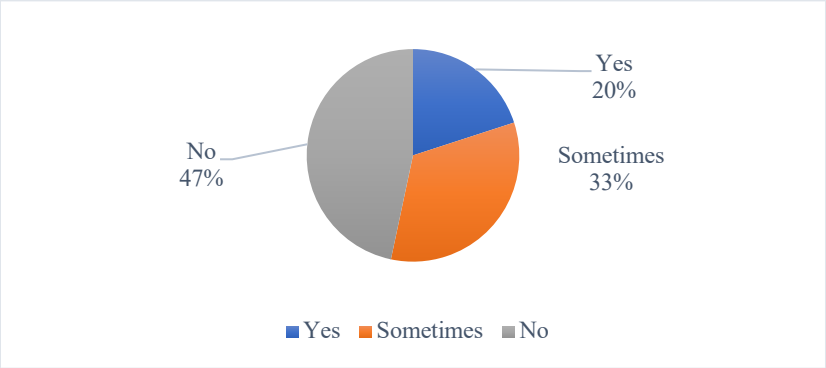
Most teachers agree that technology could improve their English lessons, especially in a context where textbooks often feel disconnected from students' realities. However, infrastructural limitations, especially unreliable internet connection, often act as an obstacle. These limitations restrict the use of authentic resources like videos, interactive platforms, or applications that could otherwise serve as valuable mediators of language learning. As one teacher explained:

> *"Hay veces que quiero usar una plataforma para practicar vocabulario, pero la señal [de internet] no llega al aula."* (Participant PB6).
>
> Sometimes I want to use a platform to practice vocabulary, but the [internet] signal does not reach the classroom. (my translation)

This is compatible with Swain et al. (2015), who understand the material tools as mediational means. Nonetheless, when these tools are unavailable or unstable, then mediation becomes difficult or inconsistent. To better understand the extent of this issue, teachers were asked about their access to reliable internet in the classroom. Their responses are reflected in

Figure 5

Teachers' Access to Reliable Internet Connection in the Classroom



As the chart shows, only a small portion of teachers reported consistent access to reliable internet connections. A third of the teachers reported only intermittent access, and almost half of the teachers stated that they did not have access to it. Hence, this lack of technological infrastructure not only limits the use of digital tools, but it also affects how English instruction is envisioned and delivered.

From the lens of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, this context seriously limits the teacher's ability to function as an effective mediator through semiotic and material tools. As Lantolf and Thorne (2007) argue, the quality of mediation depends on the tools that are available within the environment, therefore, when these are lacking, the teacher's role shifts from a facilitator of rich interactions to a gatekeeper managing shortage.

5.5.2 Students' View

Students also reported difficulties related to the limitation or even absence of technological resources. Some expressed a desire to use videos or access digital platforms during their English class, nonetheless such experiences remain infrequent. Other teachers pointed out that even when screens or computers were available, they were often not functional, or class time

was too limited to make meaningful use of them. These challenges highlight the infrastructural inequalities that shape how language learning unfolds in *telesecundaria* settings.

These testimonies reflect what Li (2020) argues about the motivational and linguistic benefits that integrating technology into language learning environments can have. According to sociocultural theory, tools – whether physical or symbolic – mediate learning processes (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Swain et al., 2015). However, when access is inconsistent or completely lacking, students are taught in more traditional formats of instruction, which might not always support their engagement or communicative development in the target language.

The limited access suggests that while some students may have the willingness to explore digital tools for learning, the infrastructure simply does not support it. This is pointed out by Swain et al. (2015), who state that it is not enough for the teachers' intention of using mediational tools, but access to context that enables their use is also required. In telesecondary contexts, where inequality and remoteness are prevalent, technology's potential remains largely intact.

5.5.3 Directors' View

School directors in telesecondaries provided a straight look into the infrastructural realities they face. They are aware of the educational benefits that technology could offer; however, they emphasized that material conditions often determine how far those benefits could be realistically reached. Many acknowledged that some digital tools, like televisions, projectors, or laptops, had been provided through government programs or donations, their maintenance and keeping them updated and in optimal conditions, remain significant challenges. For example, one director explained:

> *"Nos encantaría impulsar más el inglés, pero sin capacitación o materiales, es complicado exigir algo que los maestros no han recibido."* (Director from *telesecundaria* C).
>
> We would love to promote English more, but without training or materials, it is complicated to demand something that teachers have not received. (my translation)

This statement highlights a common dilemma: even when some infrastructure is available, its pedagogical value is diminished if it is not complemented by training or a sustainable plan to implement the available resources. Directors often find themselves mediating between institutional expectations and the actual limitations. Telesecondary principals also show agency when they have to support the inclusion of technology, or when they are forced to make difficult decisions about how to prioritize limited equipment among subjects and classrooms. For instance, a director stated the following:

> *"Tenemos computadoras, pero son pocas, y no siempre funcionan. Hay que decidir en qué clase se van a usar o si se les da prioridad a los maestros que ya saben usarlas."* (Director from *telesecundaria* A).
>
> We have computers, but there are few, and they do not always work. It must be decided in which class they are going to be used or if teachers who know how to use them are prioritized. (my translation)

This decision-making process is central for Cruz García and García Higuera (2023), who describe that the impact of ICT in education depends on its availability and also on how it is integrated into teaching-learning practices, in the case of rural telesecondaries, integration is not automatic, then it requires contextual negotiation, planning, and compromise since these roles are often assumed by directors without having sufficient institutional support.

From a sociocultural perspective, the material conditions described by the directors can be interpreted as mediational environments (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007), where tools and resources can enhance or force the possibilities for learning. Additionally, the opportunity to use

technology as a semiotic artifact, can be possible when there is access to reliable infrastructure conditions; otherwise, when its accessibility is inconsistent, the opportunity to use technology is reduced significantly. Swain et al. (2015) underline that tools only become mediational when they are used meaningfully and regularly within a given activity or context. In *telesecundaria* schools, where directors must often rely on donations, external programs, or even improvisation, these conditions are hard to maintain.

Nevertheless, some directors demonstrate a proactive attitude, showing agency in seeking alternative ways to support digital learning, reallocating occasional funds or seeking the collaboration of their community. Their efforts align with Li's (2020) notion of situated agency, in which educational actors respond creatively and meaningfully within their own institutional and cultural contexts. However, these might be isolated efforts, since they are not part of a larger systemic support, which reinforces the structural inequities that these communities face. Furthermore, despite the limitations that each of the telesecondaries face in terms of technological infrastructure, it is worth mentioning that school principals along with the members of their community, make it possible to create external conditions to motivate the students and teachers. For example, all the schools have green areas with fruit trees and gardens with flowers and plants, hence, by having these areas, school principals are creating a sense of belonging among the members of their community, since they need to work collaboratively to maintain those spaces clean.

As a final remark, directors are not just administrative figures; they act as key mediators in deciding how and when technology is used in English classes. The infrastructural limitations they face are not only technical but also reflect deeper structural issues, such as persistent lack of

investment in rural education, limited access to professional development for teachers, and top-down policies that often fail to consider the realities of these communities.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This final chapter brings together the key insights and implications of this study on English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural telesecondary schools in Mexico. The research aimed to analyze how teachers navigate ELT without having specialized training in many cases, and how their decisions and practices are shaped by the sociocultural realities of their context. The conclusions presented here respond to the research questions, reflect on the opportunities and limitations of the study, and offer suggestions for future research. The chapter ends with both general and personal reflections on the research process and its outcomes.

Four research questions guided this study:

1. How do sociocultural factors influence telesecondary teachers' experiences and practices in navigating challenges in foreign language teaching in rural contexts?

2. How do telesecondary teachers cope with teaching English in rural areas without specialized training?

3. What local or institutional resources do telesecondary teachers implement to teach English in rural contexts?

4. How do telesecondary teachers scaffold their teaching to support both their own and their students' learning?

The next section summarizes each, providing a synthesis of the key findings:

One of the most important findings of this study is that teachers do not simply follow instructions, on the contrary, they take an active role in shaping how English is taught in their classrooms. In the absence of specialized ELT training and with limited institutional support,

teachers demonstrate to have a strong sense of professional agency, thus, rather than seeing themselves restricted by their conditions, they make thoughtful pedagogical decisions that respond to the needs of their students and their school environments. They also adjust materials, simplify language, design collaborative tasks, and find ways to make English more accessible and relevant to meet their context realities.

A clear example of this agency is the way teachers adapt to the limited resources available to them. Some adapt the textbook's content to suit their students' level, while other teachers transform pre-recorder material into interactive tasks that involve vocabulary, flashcards, or games. These practices show how mediation – understood as the process of making learning possible through tools, language, and interaction – is at the heart of their work. As it is stated by Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs in social settings through the use of cultural tools, and those tools gain value when they are adapted through human activity. The teachers in this study engage in linguistic, instructional, and technological mediation, even when technical conditions are poor or inconsistent. This adaptive practices reflect Lantolf and Thorne's (2007) view that mediation is central for development and that the effectiveness of any tool depends on how it is used in context. Swain et al. (2015) also argue that successful mediation depends on knowing how to use the resources that are available to support learning.

Another important finding in this study is that teachers are not only mediators for their students; but they are also active learners. Some teachers reported taking private English classes on weekends, watching videos in English, or asking for help from colleagues who have more experience. These efforts reflect a form of self-scaffolding in teachers, where they seek out new knowledge and resources to improve their teaching. This aligns with Johnson's (2009) perspective that teacher agency not only responds to challenges, but it also pursues growth

within those constraints, and that their actions are not isolated, since they are social, collaborative, and influenced by their context.

Another noteworthy finding is the role of returnee students – those who have lived or studied in the United States. These students act as informal language models that help their classmates understand instructions or vocabulary during class. Their presence contributes to having a more dynamic and collaborative learning environment, where mediation goes beyond the teacher. As van Compernolle (2014) argues, learners can also become mediators when they share their knowledge and experiences with others. In this case, returnee students help to bridge the gap between the global and the local, since they reinforce the idea that language learning extends beyond the classroom and by this, making their peers to be aware that language can be applied in real-world contexts and relationships.

Finally, the study reveals a broader tension between the national educational policies and the daily realities of rural telesecondaries. The curriculum and pre-recorded lessons have the aim to deliver standardized content across the country, but in practice, teachers must constantly adapt this content to make it meaningful and teachable in their local settings. This reflects the gap between policy and practice, where teachers are expected to meet the national goals without the necessary tools or support (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). However, rather than abandoning the curriculum, teachers negotiate with it, by translating, simplifying, and modifying it in ways that work for their students. This is not a sign of resistance, but of creative and situated mediation, rooted in a deep understanding of their context.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

Among the limitations, it is worth mentioning that this research focused on three telesecondaries in rural Southern Puebla, which limits the generalization of the findings. Additionally, the number of students and school directors who participated in this study was constrained by time and logistical factors, since it was only possible to administer the student's questionnaire and make the interviews to principals in two of the three telesecondaries. Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data from teachers and students, which might reflect their perception more than what actually occurs in daily practice. However, triangulation with observations, interviews, and questionnaires helped validate key insights. Finally, the study did not include follow-up sessions or the implementation of classroom interventions, which could have provided deeper insight into the long-term impact of the mediation strategies that were observed.

6.3 Directions for Further Research

Future research could expand to include telesecondaries from other municipalities of the state of Puebla or even across Mexico to identify commonalities and differences in teaching strategies and limitations. Longitudinal studies would also help to track how sociocultural factors and mediation practices evolve over time, especially as teachers gain experience or receive further training in ELT. Another interesting direction could involve exploring the role of returnee students more deeply, particularly as peer mediators and how they shape identity in rural English classrooms. Finally, further research can examine how the existing English curriculum can be adapted and supported with more effective resources in order to have ELT programs that are aligned with the local needs.

6.4 Personal Final Reflection

Personally, this study has shown me the resilience, creativity, sense of agency, and humanity of teachers who work in educational contexts that are often ignored. As a Mexican educator, I recognize how easy it is for rural schools to be left behind in the national policies; however, these teachers do not wait for the perfect conditions, since they create learning environments using the resources they have and, more importantly, through their dedication, identity, and personal commitment to their students.

At a broader level, the findings indicate that teaching and learning are deeply interpersonal and that English instruction in rural telesecondaries is not simply about grammar rules or vocabulary lists. It extends beyond that, since all the people that are part of a community – students, teachers and school principals – make sense of a language that often feels distant, and together they build meaning through everyday interaction, adaptation, and hope.

Therefore, if educational policy truly seeks equity, policymakers must listen to the voices of rural teachers and support them with materials, recognition, training, and flexibility to teach in ways that that respond to their unique contexts.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview for teachers

Formato previo a la entrevista

INFORMACIÓN DEMOGRÁFICA DE LOS PROFESORES DE LA TELESECUNDARIA "NOMBRE DE LA TELESECUDARIA"

Agradeceré mucho me proporcione la siguiente información:

1. Edad: _____
2. Antigüedad en esta Telesecundaria: _____
3. Género: ☐ Masculino ☐ Femenino
4. Formación Académica (seleccionar todas las que apliquen):
   - ☐ Licenciatura Normalista (especificar especialidad): _____
   - ☐ Licenciatura Universitaria (especificar licenciatura): _____
   - ☐ Maestría (especificar): _____
   - ☐ Doctorado (especificar): _____
   - ☐ Otros cursos o diplomados (especificar) _____
5. Años trabajando en el sistema de Telesecundarias: _____
6. Años impartiendo la materia de inglés en Telesecundaria: _____
7. Grado que imparte actualmente: ☐ 1º. ☐ 2º. ☐ 3º.

Estimado profesor, el objetivo de esta entrevista es recabar información sobre su experiencia profesional impartiendo la materia de inglés en Telesecondaries rurales. La entrevista no tiene ningún propósito evaluativo y garantizamos que la información proporcionada será confidencial y utilizada únicamente con fines de investigación. Su identidad no será revelada pues su utilizarán pseudónimos.

Experiencia

1. ¿Ha tenido alguna capacitación para impartir la materia de inglés? ¿Fue por iniciativa propia? ¿Fue en línea o presencial? ¿Cómo fue su experiencia?
2. Para impartir sus clases de la materia de inglés ¿Qué recursos físicos y/o tecnológicos utiliza?

3. ¿Sus clases se inglés se asan en el Programa Nacional de Inglés (PRONI) en este contexto? ¿Por qué?
4. Cuando tiene duda sobre algún tema que va a impartir, ¿resuelve sus dudas con la ayuda de algún colega o busca usted mismo/a la información? ¿Cómo le ayuda el hacer esto para poder impartir el tema?
5. ¿Cómo es la actitud que tienen los alumnos cuando toman clases de inglés?
6. ¿Los papás se muestran interesados en que sus hijos aprendan inglés? ¿De qué manera se involucran los papás en la materia de inglés?
7. ¿Alguna vez ha tenido estudiantes de retorno? ¿Cómo fue su experiencia?
8. ¿Cómo describe su papel como profesor de inglés en telesecondaries?
9. ¿Qué considera que hace falta para mejorar los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés en el contexto de Telesecundaria?

Si tiene alguna duda o pregunta acerca de la información que proporcionó en esta entrevista, por favor contacte a mayanit.sanchezgarfias@viep.com.mx

Adapted from Bonilla and Cruz-Arcila (2014)

https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/40423/47728

Appendix B

Class observations format

Class observation		
The teacher:	***Yes***	***No***
1. Shows knowledge about the topic, structure, etc.		
2. Explains clearly the topic, structure, etc. to the students		
3. Uses the book during the lesson		
4. Uses digital resources		
5. Uses conventional material		
6. Relates the topics to the students' context		
7. Promotes pair or group work during the activities		
8. Uses Spanish and English		
9. Corrects students' mistakes		
10. Interacts with students		
11. Uses motivational words/phrases with students		
The students:	***Yes***	***No***
1. Interact between them during the activity		
2. Ask their classmates when they need help		

3. Ask their teacher when they need help		
4. Show interest during the class		
5. Participate in class		
6. Show understanding of the activity in question		

CLASSROOM LAYOUT AND CONDITIONS

Equipment and furniture

Desk:____ Students' desk:____ Board:____ Television:____ Projector:____

Internet connection:____ Computer:____ Other:_____

Resources and materials

Posters in English:_____ English – Spanish Dictionaries:_____ Books in English:_____

Flash cards:_____ Other: _____

Ventilation and others

_____

Appendix C

Semi-structured interview for school principals

1. ¿Con qué espacios cuenta la Telesecundaria (biblioteca, cafetería, etc.)?

2. ¿Con qué amenidades cuenta cada salón (computadora, proyector, etc.)?

3. ¿Cómo percibe el contexto social y económico del contexto de la telesecundaria?

4. ¿Cómo considera la participación de los padres de familia en relación con los proyectos del centro educativo?

5. ¿Qué porcentaje de los alumnos inscritos terminan sus estudios de nivel secundaria? ¿A qué cree que se deba?

6. ¿Qué porcentaje estudian una carrera universitaria?

7. ¿Qué relevancia tiene la materia de inglés en este contexto?

Appendix D

Questionnaire for students

Ayúdanos respondiendo el presente cuestionario relacionado con tu aprendizaje y perspectiva sobre el idioma inglés. Su finalidad es conocer tu experiencia como estudiante, así como tu opinión sobre el idioma. Recuerda que no es un examen, por lo tanto, tus respuestas no serán consideradas como "correctas" o "incorrectas". La información que proporciones ayudará a la profesora Mayanit Sánchez Garfias en su tesis del programa de maestría de la Facultad de lenguas BUAP.

Instrucciones: Contesta las siguientes preguntas, marca con una "x" tus respuestas.

I. Contexto

Edad: _____

Género: ☐ *Masculino* ☐ *Femenino*

1. ¿Tuviste clases de inglés en la primaria? ☐ *Sí* ☐ *No*

2. ¿Con quién vives?

- ☐ *Con mis mamá y papá*
- ☐ *En casa de mis tíos(as)*
- ☐ *En casa de mis hermanos*
- ☐ *Solo con mamá o con papá*
- ☐ *Con mis abuelos*
- ☐ *Otro:* _____

3. ¿Qué harás terminando tus estudios de secundaria?

- ☐ *Estudiar el bachillerato o preparatoria*
- ☐ *Estudiar una carrera técnica (estilismo, mecánica, repostería, etc.)*
- ☐ *Trabajar*
- ☐ *Irme a Estados Unidos a trabajar*
- ☐ *Otro:* _____

II. Aprendizaje del inglés

4. ¿Te gusta el idioma inglés? ☐ *Sí* ☐ *No*

5. ¿Te gustan tus clases de inglés? ☐ *Sí* ☐ *No*

6. Pienso que aprender inglés es: ☐ *Fácil* ☐ *Ni fácil ni difícil* ☐ *Difícil* ☐ *Muy difícil*

7. ¿Cuántos días a la semana tienes clase de inglés?

- ☐ *No tengo clases de inglés*
- ☐ *1 vez a la semana*
- ☐ *2 o más veces a la semana*
- ☐ *Casi no tengo clases de inglés*

8. En cada enunciado (1-8) marca con una "x" la casilla que mejor represente tu experiencia. Puedes marcar más de un enunciado.

En las clases de inglés mi profesor/profesora utiliza….	**Siempre**	**Casi siempre**	**Algunas veces**	**Nunca**
1. ***El libro de inglés***				
2. ***Periódicos o revistas***				
3. ***Cuentos o poemas***				
4. ***Videos***				
5. ***Películas o series***				
6. ***Programas de radio o podcasts***				
7. ***Canciones***				
8. ***Juegos digitales***				
9. ***Aplicaciones móviles***				
10. ***Juegos de mesa***				
11. ***Hojas de ejercicio o copias***				
Otros, especifica:				

9. ¿Cómo trabajas en tus clases de inglés? (puedes seleccionar más de una respuesta).

- ☐ *Individualmente*
- ☐ *En parejas*
- ☐ *En equipo*
- ☐ *Como clase, en conjunto (cuando el profesor nos pregunta y nosotros respondemos)*
- ☐ *Otra(s), especifica:* _____

10. ¿Le preguntas a tu profesor(a) cuando no entiendes un tema de inglés que estudias en clase? ☐ *Sí* ☐ *No*

Si respondiste "Sí" a la pregunta anterior, *¿Qué hace tu profesor(a) cuando le preguntas?*

☐ *Me vuelve a explicar* ☐ *No me explica*

11. ¿Cuánto tiempo dedicas para hacer tus tareas de inglés?

- ☐ *Menos de 30 minutos*
- ☐ *30 minutos – 1 hora*
- ☐ *Más de 1 hora*
- ☐ *No me gusta hacer tareas de inglés*

III. Uso del inglés

12. ¿Crees que aprender inglés te ayudará a tener un mejor futuro? ☐*Sí* ☐*No*

13. Lee los siguientes enunciados y marca con una "x" la casilla que represente tu opinión.

Usaré el inglés para…	**Muy de acuerdo**	**De acuerdo**	**En desacuerdo**	**Muy en desacuerdo**
Estudiar una carrera universitaria				
Conseguir trabajo en Estados Unidos				
Conseguir un trabajo sin estudiar la universidad				
Otro(s), especifica:				

¡Gracias por tu ayuda!