



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

**“A COMPARISON OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
PERCEPTIONS IN AN IMMERSION CONTEXT AS OPPOSED TO A
FOREIGN CONTEXT”**

A thesis submitted to the faculty of languages for the degree of

Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching

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Puebla, Puebla

May 19th, 2021

Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

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LICENCIADO EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLES

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Agradecimientos.

Le agradezco a Dios por haberme acompañado y guiado con amor a lo largo de mi carrera, por estar conmigo siempre durante mi formación y por todo lo recibido en este proceso de aprendizaje como estudiante y docente.

Le doy gracias a mis padres Marcos y Sofía por todo su apoyo a cada momento de mi etapa escolar, por su paciencia, por los valores y enseñanzas recibidas y por darme la oportunidad de tener una excelente educación en el transcurso de mi vida. Por ser un ejemplo de esfuerzo y responsabilidad y hacer mis sueños posibles.

A mi hermana Elisabet por cuidarme y ser una parte importante en mi vida y llenar mi vida de alegría y amor.

A todos mis profesores, por su dedicación y tiempo al compartir sus conocimientos, habilidades y amistad conmigo.

A mi profesora Leonor por su paciencia, dirección y apoyo en este camino como tesista y llegar a la conclusión del mismo.

A todos ustedes, mi mayor reconocimiento y gratitud.

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Chapter I. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This investigation seeks to highlight a central feature of the process of English learning, namely, the context where learning takes place. From my personal experience and that classmates and friends have shared with me about learning English language, some problems of understanding are present as well as different issues in speaking, writing, listening or reading skills in specific contexts. These issues led me to wonder if students that have learnt English in an immersed context, as immigrants that live in the USA, present similar issues or problems when acquiring the English language. And, if they share the same motivations that university students have.

The context where learning takes place seems to be determinant in the success of learning. Some university students present issues regarding their English proficiency and cannot speak in an efficient way but also those students who live in the U.S. A. Therefore, the question remains; is it better learning English as a foreign or as a second language? Generally, it is thought that students that have lived in the U.S.A. have better opportunities to find better jobs or better opportunities as well as acquiring the language in a better way since they are in constant interaction with native speakers and the environment. English language students in English immersion have ample access to English-speaking peers and opportunities for meaningful, contextualized interactions in English (Umansky & Reardon, 2014). This may mean that these students living in an immersed context should present a better proficiency in the language.

Learning a language involves a series of steps for every student, to progress in their learning process. The acquisition of a second language is not an exception, but indeed many internal and external factors are involved in such process. Second language acquisition defined by Li (2009) as the process in which a learner with the mastery of his mother language learns another language without its social environment. implies the settlement of new knowledge above one that is previously established and it is acquired consciously or subconsciously, while we are focusing on communication. This is also influenced by the method students are learning through, and the second language interactions they have with bases on the common social and mental strategies and processes that are used by the learner (Vettorel, 2015) showing that there are some other factors that have an influence on students' learning.

Among the many factors that can influence the learning process, the ones that can be found are: formal education, family background, length of time spent in the English-speaking country or the practice they have had in the second language context (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), 2008). Such factors are of great importance and are different for L2 classroom students and immigrant students and greatly determine the level that students will be reaching in a certain period of time. Immigrant students are likely to achieve a better level of proficiency since they are living in constant contact with English which helps them because they have immediate and more meaningful communication,

Savignon, (1997) expresses that there are benefits in the learning of students immersed in an English context when they interact with native speakers; however, their

performance in the language it is not so clear. Because of this it is important to evaluate the perceptions of both immigrant students that speak English and have lived in the U.S. A. and university students learning English in Mexico so that the level of language they possess can be identified and some light can be shed as to what differentiates them or makes them alike.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to explore two groups of English students' reasons and issues to learn English. The specific objective of this study is to compare and contrast both groups; Group A) Students from the Faculty of Languages of the BUAP who have only learned English at this university, and Group B) Immigrant students who lived in the USA and learned English in that country and who are now studying at this university.

1.3 Research questions

The data collected in this study aims to answer the following research questions about Group A and Group B described above:

- What reasons do both groups of participants express to learn English?
- What issues do both groups face when learning English language?
- How effective is immersion and classroom environment to develop students' performance according to participants?

1.4 Significance of the study

The findings obtained in this work, may be useful for the improvement of teaching practices depending on the context where teaching-learning takes place. This project analyzes the perceptions hold in acquiring a second language hand by hand of the context they are involved in, aiming to understand what differentiates both processes. In further research it may be helpful in the development of specific curriculum design according to students' needs and better ways to successfully help second language acquisition.

1.5 Methodology

The terms in which this study is developed consists of the investigation of the socio cultural and academic environment students from two types of contexts (immigrant students and L2 classroom students) have. This, in order to get information about the factors that help in learning a second language. The information was obtained using questionnaires and interviews. The results obtained were helpful in the moment of making comparisons with the information collected and provided answers to better understand the development of the second language learning process.

The use of these instruments in this research and the ways data were collected, followed an exploratory design. Qualitative data were gathered following a quantitative explanation of the relationship found in the data obtained in the research. The subjects of the research were two types of students: students that have lived in the U.S as immigrants when they were kids or teenagers and had to learn English language there, being Spanish their mother tongue, and

came back to Mexico studying now at the university. The second group was university students that have lived in Mexico acquiring English as a second language only in a classroom context without being abroad or living in an English-speaking country. The differences presented by all the subjects, involving different factors of influence while acquiring the language will bring richness in the understanding of the students' proficiency and let know about the kind of context that presents a more suitable environment for English learning.

Chapter II. Literature review

2.1 Chapter overview

In the present study I discuss the factors that influence English learning and proficiency. I specifically present previous studies about English Language Learning (ELL) and the contextual variations and their effects. This paper presents perceptions of students toward learning English in two different contexts. Thus, this chapter includes research and theories about the relationship between learning English and the contextual differences, besides discussing the impact of studying it as a second or as a foreign language. In the following sections I present a broader explanation on what literature states about this topic.

2.2 English Language Learning

Language is the heart of teaching and learning, while learning English, concepts and skills are learned and assessed, students shape a social identity and relationships that help them construct deeper and complex understanding of the language over time (Bloom, Carter , Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2004). When English language is learnt, several aspects are involved in this learning process as it was mentioned before; these aspects can be variable depending on the personal context every student is immersed in as well as the classroom context and interaction with their teachers. Therefore, during the English language learning process, inside the classroom teachers are often part, but not quite, of the first contact that students can have with the language; they have a remarkable role in their students. It can be said that the way in which teachers behave inside the classroom, prepare the content of their

lessons, assess their students and even the use and knowledge of English language that they have, determines their personal learning and shapes students' perception and interest about the language (DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker, & Rivera, 2014). Nevertheless, teachers are not the only ones involved in the matter of learning English language, students themselves are an important part for learning to happen.

Regarding ELL, students try to apply their own procedures that can help them get involved with the language and facilitate the learning journey; on my personal experience of learning English I could mention that watching movies, memorization, and linking new words to the ones I previously learnt to find a better pronunciation are just a few of the techniques that I found especially helpful. These sort of 'self-techniques' helped on my personal English learning but I cannot assume that they are equally effective for all students. Taking as an example the word linking, Cohen (1990) states that it is concerning linking a word to another one just by their similar sounding or in a way trying to approach a native speaker pronunciation because it can actually interfere with the precise pronunciation and affect the learning, also students have their own perspectives and perceptions about English language learning and the best way to try to understand them is getting involved as much as possible in the different contexts that sculpture this English language learning. When discussing ELL experts in the field classify two basic contexts of LL; namely learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and Learning English as a Foreign language (EFL).

2.2.1 English as a Second Language

In order to understand students' background at the moment of their English language learning it is important to understand what English as a Second Language means according to experts. This topic refers to the learning of English language by speakers from other countries with different languages as their mother tongue, who live in an English-speaking country (Leung, Davison, & Mohan, 2001). For students that live in The U.S.A., considering that they have been there since a young age, education in English is more attainable, this process is called immersion approach. Learning English with technology or informal communication with native speakers facilitates the learning and progress. Espinosa & Massey, (1997) state that learning English arriving at a young age in the U.S. and length staying in the country raises English skills among Mexicans who return to Mexico after living in the U.S It is also an influence for them the education they have at home to improve their skills and acquire more vocabulary.

A study presented by Palermo, et al. (2014) expresses the influence that young immigrant students living in the U.S (preschoolers) can receive from home, school, teachers and English native speakers to learn in a better way the language. This study mentions that students who have a better performance in learning English language are the ones that have interactions in English also at home, because they can increase their vocabulary opposed to the ones that only receive English input from school, talking with their teachers or English peers who are native speakers. In the study it was explained also about the interactions that make greater contributions in the language to immigrant students and it was shown that

immigrant students receive major contributions if family members also get involved in the English learning process. Besides, English speaking peers also make greater contributions in reinforcing the vocabulary already acquired and for immigrant students it is easier to get involved with them and there is a better understanding that makes them feel more comfortable in that environment without being consciously afraid of making mistakes while performing English language. Students inside a family environment feel more comfortable, this happens mostly because there is no adult interaction that corrects or prevents them of committing mistakes while speaking. Children who interacted mostly with English-speaking peers throughout preschool were likely to demonstrate the greatest gains in their English oral proficiency.

The interaction immigrant students have with teachers helps them to enrich their learning because they interact with academic, formal expressions of the language as well as with informal language. Teachers play a significant role in the acquisition process because their questions and feedback guide students' responses (Cazden, 2001). Immigrant students present a more real-life language if English is reinforced at home even if their parents are not native English speakers or are acquiring English language as well. This shows that the context immigrant students are exposed to is full of richness because as they grow up the opportunities to be connected with English interactions does too. Thus, they are surrounded with input that enriches their English knowledge. Similarly, Solórzano & Oliveira, (2012) discuss other external factors that have an important role in Mexican immigrant students when learning English, such as; sociocultural and socioeconomic because the cultural

experience that Latino students can have affect their learning and development in English language as well as classroom experiences and the literacy levels. These factors shape the way immigrant English students will learn the language. Taking this into consideration, it is understood that ESL learners are intended to learn English at the same time they do with their daily curricula from school and this is only talking about a classroom environment. Outside the educational landscape, students encounter social and cultural English learning too. From high education learners to students that are barely starting their preschool education they are all learning from their surroundings in the country they are immersed in, Second language learning sometimes involves the acquisition of a second identity too (Valdes, 1986), meaning that additional to the language learning, which is a priority in order to stablish relationships with others inside and outside school, they also learn about daily life and culture of the English speaking country that is their home at the moment.

Even when it may seem that students are forced to learn the language because they are living in a natural English environment in which they need to communicate, some of these students are not being forced at all, since in their own family and native culture the second language is positively accepted to construct their personal and professional identity (Brown, 1980).

2.2.2 The context and cultural differences of other countries

The culture students are exposed to can be different depending on the country they are living in at the moment, as well as the family they are growing up with and the society they share with other individuals. Culture can be defined as putting together concepts of story, history, climate, identity, symbols, language, rules, feelings, shared values and charisma that are part of a particular country (Ledoux, 2005). Taking this into account it can be said that culture can shape individuals' perception of daily life and in this case of students' perception towards the language they speak and the ones they are yet to learn. Therefore, context and culture are key factors for students in their English language learning process, they are related concepts that influence their learning and motivation. The culture in which students are bound is not only about the language, it also involves ethnicity, race, social class and gender that can be part of the context as well (Nieto , 2001); these two aspects are fundamental in the educational achievement.

In this document there are two different cultural backgrounds students belong to; first referring to the Mexican culture, it can be said that most of Mexican parents believe that a better education could help their children in the future with better job opportunities and give them a financial security that they don't have at the moment and also that they will be best prepared for the future financial instability that the country could face (Saucedo, 2003). Added up to this, the importance for parents that their children learn another language besides their own has an additional probability for them to get a well-paid job; this idea is both shared by parents living in Mexico and the ones that decided to move their families to a new life in a

foreign context. Knowing this we can see how contexts influence students in their English learning. In the same way, students can face diversity in their personal context due to that it doesn't only implies culture but their personal experiences as human beings; for example, students that have been living their whole life in Mexico and have learnt English may show a context in which learning a different language wasn't crucial for their social inclusion but it was just because they wanted to learn it. It may be because it was either a part of their school curricula, or just because they had in mind the possibility to travel to another country where that language is spoken. As Valdes (1986) mentions, devotion to another language different than our own is a common characteristic among people who endeavor learning it, seeking for a connection with the language itself and the people who speak it.

Secondly, referring to the context faced by students living in the U.S.A. previous studies have shown that students that come from Spanish-speaking countries or families who don't have a very good environment inside the classroom, are not often allowed to speak in their native language at school, even if they are just talking with friends in the hallways teachers repeatedly ask them to only talk in English (Irizarry, 2011). Results of these behaviors for students has been a lack of linguistic and cultural identity without mentioning that since an early age it is difficult for them to get along with the Anglo educational system. Some students feel that there are no great opportunities for them at school, they feel excluded by their educators and often classmates. Nevertheless, these variations in culture should be enriching for teachers, looking toward a hand by hand work with students in the reach of English learning, being aware of the cultural influence on everyday life allowing students to

express their feeling in a cross-cultural situation (Valdes, 1986).

2.2.3 English as a Foreign Language

English as a foreign language can be defined as learning a no-native language in one's own culture without being in touch with the real environment that language belongs to (Valdes, 1986). This is the situation where students learning English in Mexico may be placed because students learn the language without any other input more than their classroom environment as it is presented. Borjian (2015) in his study about learning English in Mexico, talks about the way English is perceived in Mexico and the statements shown in the study are accurate. In Mexico, most of the times English has been limited only to middle and upper classes of the society. This means that only people who have more financial possibilities in going to private schools and taking classes with high proficient English teachers are likely to learn the language. Nevertheless, English language learning has increased its presence in Public schools' curricula in Mexico. Students in public schools start taking English as a mandatory subject in their elementary school years and during their secondary education they take the subject as well but the time is not enough and the topics taught to the students are simple and basic and they do not allow them to go further in the learning; indeed English at public schools is very limited.

English Instruction typically begins at the early stages of children's education in Mexico, but it focuses primarily on vocabulary and simple phrases (Borjian, 2008). It is also mentioned that contributions of Mexican English teachers to Mexican students are considered as minor and not completely helpful sometimes due to the lack of proficiency found in Mexican English teachers. This may be caused by several factors, included the way they acquired

English language as well and the education and English training they received at University (Borjian, 2015).

Putting aside the input students receive from teachers here in Mexico, it is also important to consider the motivation students have to learn English language, Borjian and Padilla (2010) mention that the reasons Mexican students share to learn English are complex and diverse being these the most common:

- Students pursue learning English because they are motivated intrinsically and have cultural connections with English-speaking people.
- Students note further that better job opportunities are linked to knowing English and that pressures Mexicans to learn the language.
- Parent's encouragement that motivates students' further education in the language.

Similarly, as well as it occurs with immigrant students there are a series of factors that influence more Mexican students learning English, such as; sociocultural, socioeconomic and cultural differences that exist in the setting they are immersed in.

EFL learners position implies few opportunities to practice the target language far from the native environment even though when classroom environment in most cases aims to be faithful to the real context with the aid of realia, it cannot be enough for most students to acquire deep linguistic structures, vocabulary and native like pronunciation for the ones who look for this characteristic while speaking. On the other hand, Pratt 2002, affirms that

engaging thoughtfully and intelligently to the foreignness of a language can help achieve a remarkable difference and a more proficient learning. This can be translated as if EFL students take possession of all the materials and tools that exist in the classroom to get closer the most to the native culture and context, they will present a better English learning, besides students must aim to get in contact with entirely different things from what they already know. Students should be looking forward to learning and discovering new knowledge besides the one of their own country, culture and language. This may offer them better opportunities and also take advantage of the structure of their first language using it in the study of the second language (Scott , 1965).

2.2.3.1 Classroom interaction and ELL

Generally speaking, no matter in which country students are learning English classroom interaction is part of a great influence, academically and personally for their learning process. Inside the classroom there are different kinds of situations that can lead the classroom environment to be a safe place for learning or a place that can lead students to feel intimidated and discriminated in their attempts to learn the language.

It is not unknown that teacher influence inside the classroom can lead to a successful learning, it has been mentioned in previous studies. Bouchaib et al (2018) in their research about High School Students' attributions of success in English Language Learning citing Thang (2011), mention that teachers' influence is the most ratified attribute for students to get a good grade. Similarly, to this, Yan and Li (2008) state that language environment provided by teachers has a great influence on students' language achievement.

Teacher influence in the classroom not only refers to the way in which they can teach the language but educators can also change the quality of classroom talks, then education quality can be changed (Mercer, 2012). Studies also point out to the attitude of English teachers inside the classroom while teaching. Therefore, students experience grows in a positive or negative way inside the classroom while at the same time they are being shaped by educators. Students indirectly shape their own type and quality of learning. As it was mentioned before about teachers' influence and the way they talk and present their classes in the classroom, it can be said that they lead students to get involved with the new knowledge they are encounter by providing cumulative, continuing contextual frame in their classes (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). This leads students to get participative, trying to articulate guess responses, elaborate thinking, and deeper reasoning (Boyd, 2015) thanks to a trustful and confident classroom atmosphere.

2.2.4 The impact of culture in Language learning

Culture has a deep influence and impact on language learners, it is important for students to be aware of the cultural beings they are in order to appreciate in a better way other cultures and languages. Valdes (1986) states about language learners that they must be firstly be aware of themselves as cultural beings knowing who they are in their own culture. This creates stability in their cultural identity and leads them to enjoy other countries as well besides their own. Language learners that have already recognized themselves as a complete and purely result of their own culture are the best prepared to face a new one and are more likely to notice peoples' behaviour, traditions, costumes, etc. and accept them without any

criticism or being judgmental but as a positive condition to learn.

This could be the case of foreign language learners who, being all the time in their learning of their own country, are able to grow up in their own culture without variations neither prohibitions nor discrimination for showing proudly the culture where they belong to. Consequently, the opportunity of being abroad and learning about the culture of the language they are learning can be felt as a great motivation and increasement of their vocabulary and skills, out of class learning that may show positively language gains (Lai , Zhu , & Gong , 2015). However, culture can influence positively or negatively those students living in a country that's not their own. For them it is often taken as a different, unknown and understandable environment that surrounds them. For example, inside the school students are forced to get along with the new culture in a rough way because in most schools there are policies imposed by education that do not allow speaking another language that is not English, (specially talking about Spanish). This can be seen as a good way to make students learn the language and facilitate skills like speaking, reading or listening but for students it is mostly seen as a discrimination of their culture (Irizarry, 2011).

On the other hand, it can be said that what students should do is accomplish a knowledge of the culture they are now immersed in to understand different behaviours, but that doesn't force them to become part of that same culture (Valdes, 1986).

2.3 Social and cultural issues and ELL

English language speakers are exposed to culture and the society where they are living and both of them, culture and society influence their learning and proficiency in the language. English students come from different cultural backgrounds in comparison to the majority that represent students in U.S. schools. Regrettably, these differences are often seen as the reason for the academic issues ELLs present in their learning. Sometimes the term “cultural difference” is associated to a “cultural deficit” for some educators in the U.S. (TESOL, 2008) This means that because students are not originally from the United States culture that’s the main reason why they struggle in learning the English language. For this reason, students are placed according to the culture where they are can be depending on their personal experiences. When individuals who have been nurtured by one culture are suddenly located in another one different than their own feelings of anger, frustration, fright, repulsion and confusion can be experienced. Additionally, to this dramatically change of culture, the study of another language is faced too and it can cause a blocking in the language learning, turning out as linguistics issues and even loss. Valdes, (1886) has exposed also the argument that no one can feel or think deeply in an artificial language referring to students finding themselves in a culture that is not the one where they are born and grew up surrounded by an “artificial” culture and society where they don’t feel freely to express themselves.

Students in the U.S. are often tried to be adjusted to a culture implying that they should abandon their culture of origin and embrace totally the values and customs of the host society (Bochner, 1982). Contrary to this is the situation of foreign language learners of

English who have the same culture and society of their mother tongue and no other pressures, besides the academic to acquire the language.

2.3.1 Interculturality

The concept of Interculturality can be translated as “in between cultures” but it is not only about a simple contact among different cultures but a healthy exchange implying equality terms and can be understood as a permanent process of relationship, communication and learning between people, groups, knowledge, values and traditions; all of these aiming to generate and build mutual respect among cultures (Walsh, 2005). Knowing this we can infer that interculturality is about a mutual growth and sharing between individuals of different cultures, without looking for the idea of a dominant culture to assure an atmosphere of respect and support in daily life coexistence. Nevertheless, during human history there has been a superficial appreciation of cultural diversity until the present days. Some considerable aspects that have led to this superficiality are: the restrictions to diversity, false freedom given to new citizens, disenchantment, ethical disorientation and vulnerability of personal beliefs (Estrada, 1997). Considering all aspects that are associated to all the situations lived by immigrant people it may be said that there is a fear of the lack of encounter in between cultures, because generally in a person daily life one culture imposes itself to the other.

The concept of interculturality had been wrong adopted because in most cases intercultural interactions are often instable, leading to a discomfort and finally fail to the word original principle (Dervin, 2016). Interculturality purpose is not the imposition, it is about learning from one culture to another, one society to another and one person from

another. All that a person should be able to offer to another one is to enrich while sharing their differences, specifically talking about culture. In other words, interculturality may be the ideal situation when learning ESL.

2.3.2 Identity and society

Society comes hand by hand from culture; inside society it can be found a set of rules, meanings, beliefs and values determined by culture and that influence and are influenced by interactions among individuals (Espurz, 2001). We might say that society is a vital factor for students to learn another language. A society in which education in general is seen as an opportunity for growth and diversity as beings and professional development impulse the learning. On the other hand, a society where education it is not considered as a tool that will help people for the daily life cannot be seen as good influence for students to learn. The society in which students belong also determines the personal identity they have.

The sense of identity involves several factors such as race, ethnicity and gender but what identity implies the most is a notion of difference among individuals (Clarke, 2008). Individuals have their own identity unique from others, this identity is shaped by the society and the context and culture they are living in. Students have their own identity that has been nurtured by the culture that surrounds them and which certainly influences students learning, especially in the process of language learning Kral (2012). Learning and acquiring various literacy skills implies a change in the identity and representation of self being. This statement leads us to the fact that while learning, students adopt a different identity besides their own in order to learn from another culture. This is necessary to learn the language effectively as

much as possible, and identity in a way is being molded by students according to their needs while learning a new language. Identity is a flexible term for students learning new languages due to the amount of new concepts yet to learn for them. In the case of this study, identity is a concept we found relevant to explain how both groups of participants differ when learning a second language.

2.3.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality it is a term that was introduced in the late 1980s that focuses on the context of antidiscrimination and social movements. It aims to understand why differences (race, gender, class, sexuality, age, disability and religion) that exists among individuals are important to determine inclusion and exclusion on diverse human groups. The concept has been deployed in several disciplines such as history, sociology, literature, philosophy, anthropology as well as in various studies like ethics, legal and feminist studies (Crenshaw, 2013). In education, intersectionality may be perceived when trying to understand why students suffer when interacting with their peers and sometimes also with educators. Discrimination does not only involve ignoring the contributions of students that are ethnically and racially different inside the classroom but also includes being unaware of the cultural needs, styles and differences of culturally diverse students (Diller & Moule, 2005). As teachers adapt their teaching to the different learners of their own country, they should be able to adapt to students that come from different cultural backgrounds in order to make them feel included.

Intersectionality involves broader aspects than just talking about race and gender and that is why students' perceptions and experiences may vary from one to another. In my personal experience, inside the classroom this may be noticed when EFL students who have a bigger amount of vocabulary or present a good pronunciation and fluency in the target language are well accepted and praised by their peers and teachers. However, due to the different classroom contexts that as a student I could experience, I could also say that these same kinds of students that seemed to have a better understanding of English sometimes were segregated by a few teachers. This, in order to pay attention to the ones that needed more help in learning the language. In this sense, without involving gender, race or sexuality it was just about language proficiency inside the classroom.

In the case of students in an ESL classroom, intersectionality plays a paramount role. This due to racial, age and gender issues that most students in a SLA have to undergo. Intersectionality is a concept that lead us to recognize the fact that certain groups sharing things in common can make people feel vulnerable in various forms. Even when, as individuals, we are part of many different groups at the same time; we are able to shape specifically good or bad experiences according to the diversity of the groups we belong to (Gillborn, 2015). The term intersectionality has been included in this part because some related issues were salient in the findings.

2.4 Socio-political and financial reasons to learn English

There are some other factors that may encourage students to learn the English language. Most of them may be immerse in the socio-political and financial one. These

factors influence students learning and perceptions, even when they seem to be external to them, they strongly interfere with their learning processes. Firstly, the sociopolitical context involves society and political forces in a certain country and the impact that they have on student learning (May, 1999). We may say the first world countries and third world countries are a clear example of it. Students are surrounded by this sociopolitical context without even knowing and it may vary depending on the country where they are living in. Different governments around the world have diverse policies about education, some may impulse and approve second language learning more than others.

In the case of Mexico, about fifteen years ago the ministry of education created a program for students to learn the English language called PNIEB (National English Program in Basic Education), which included study plans for the three different levels of basic education in Mexico. This program included several purposes:

- To collect information about didactics in the subject as well as the organization and expansion of this program among students.
- Sensitize students in relationship with English language.
- Involve students in social practices of the language in order to develop specific competencies (National English Program in basic education. English as a second language, 2011).

As it can be seen, government through this program aims to increase among Mexican students an interest and involvement for English language seeking students to develop their skills and practice the language.

Now, referring to the financial reasons that may lead students to learn English language it may be due to their personal perceptions towards the language and also the family they are raised with. Some parents may have not enough funds designed to support the learning of a second language compared to others who can cause disinterest in students due to the few interactions with the language. Students may discover that sometimes the mother tongue is not enough to cope with different matters such as financial, social, intellectual, politics and religious that surrounds them. And if another language is not learnt it may cause them feel excluded from the different contexts where they interact (Valdés, 1990).

2.4.1 Previous studies on ELL

English language learning has been described as a process of acquisition of English language skills and knowledge (Cheung & Slavin, 2012). This process involves students who are learning English as their second language. In the case specifically of Mexican students who it may also vary depend on parent education and language proficiency in previous years in the English language. According to previous studies, researchers have examined different results involving English language learning among Mexican students or students who have Spanish as their first language. For example, students living in the U.S are in need for learning the language in order to be able to communicate with others and be participants of their new society and to avoid being excluded. Inside the school ELL in the U.S are more likely to experience first special EL classes for a short time, and later on they are included in the regular school program designed for native or fluent English speakers (Jiménez, 2001). Teachers generally have a limited awareness of the support that ELL need while learning

English, they may have assumptions that students are not able to read text books, comprehend lectures, participate in group projects, or complete class assignments until they are fully proficient in English (Valdés, 2004). This kind of support-exclusion has remarkable impact on students' perception towards English learning.

Previous studies regarding ELL outside English speaking countries have found out that teachers are an important piece for students learning. Teachers are the ones in charge to encourage students to engage with the language. Due to the fact that the different contexts in which students have to learn are varied, teachers must look for students to have interest and motivation in the language they are learning. They must also have to find face to face through the materials used in class to develop oral and written academic language as well as encourage peers interaction (Rubinstein-Avila, 2006). Mexican students learning English in Mexico may have similar classes and assignments compared to the ones learning inside English speaking countries. Most activities for ELL can be found inside the classroom but are mostly centered in verbs study, grammatical rules, vocabulary acquisition and little translations (Martínez, 2012). All of them aiming to practice the target language but may be not be enough for students who have few hours per week learning. And, there are not many other opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Understanding what has been mentioned by other researchers it can be found that English language learning varies from one student to another depending on the conditions of their learning, this includes the country where they live, family economy, classroom environment and also personal motivation, these factors join students in their English

learning process and shapes their perceptions towards the language.

Chapter III. Methodology

In this chapter I describe the methodology used in this investigation. I provide details about the method, context, participants, instruments and data collection procedures. I specifically describe the form data were analyzed and interpreted.

3.1 Approach

The approach used in this research was Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an approach that studies texts/talk and language in use, discourse and communication (Tashakkori & Cresswell W., 2007). This study followed a mixed method paradigm, which is defined as a study in which a researcher collects and analyses data, integrates de findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative information in a single study (Tashakkori & Cresswell W., 2007). As it is shown this approach sums up different points of view involving social and behavioural studies as well as sciences providing the research with distinct strengths and deeper insights (Cresswell W, 1999), with the objective to provide robust interpretations of the data.

The data in this investigation is interpreted both qualitatively and quantitatively. Statistical numbers are presented in graphs and tables in terms of percentages. On the other hand, a critical discourse analysis is explored qualitatively examining and interpreting participants' actual discourse.

3.2 Context

This investigation aims to explore Second Language Acquisition (SLA) from two different perspectives; as a foreign language (at a public university), and in an immersion condition (with immigrant students). Therefore, this investigation takes into account three different contexts. These contexts are the following:

Faculty of languages of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. This Faculty is an educational institution located in Puebla City. This institution is dedicated to prepare future English and French teachers. This research is focuses on students from the English teaching major. The faculty holds a significant amount of students who come from rural and suburban communities. This fact implies that some of these students may have similarities with the group of students that emigrated to the USA and participate in the study.

Returned immigrant students. University students that lived in the USA and came back to study in Mexico, all of them belonging to different careers and to the same University (BUAP) except for one student that belongs to a different University (UPAEP). But all have in common that they are all University students. They study architecture, computer sciences and English teaching. These university students used to live in different parts of the USA for several years.

3.3 Participants

There are eight participants in this investigation. There are two types of university students, all the students belong to different universities and majors in Puebla city: students

that lived in the USA and came back to study to Mexico and students that have lived all their lives in Mexico and that have studied English without living or travelling abroad. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy; they are shown as follows:

Students that lived in the USA						
Name	Age	University	Major	Age they went living to USA	Time living in the USA	Age they came back to Mexico
Carlos	23	BUAP	Architecture	6 years	6-7 years	12-13 years
Pablo	20	BUAP	Computer sciences	Born there	7 years	7 years
Juan	23	BUAP	English teaching	12 years	5 years	17 years
Saúl	24	BUAP	English teaching	7 years	5 years	12 years

Table 1. Students that lived in the USA

Students learning English in Mexico					
Name	Age	University	Major	Age they started learning English	Time studying English
Abril	21	BUAP	English teaching	8 years	13 years
Zayra	23	UPAEP	Pedagogy	6 years	17 years
Andrea	20	BUAP	Graphic design	3 years	16 years
Jessica	24	BUAP	English teaching	11 years	13 years

Table 2. Students learning English in Mexico

3.4 Instruments

There were two instruments used to collect the data in this research: a questionnaire and an interview. Both of these instruments helped collecting enough information and evidence about students processes and perceptions when ESL.

The questionnaire used in this research consists of 4 questions, 2 of them being multiple choice and 2 open-ended questions. These questions were enough to gather the information needed due to the broad explanations and answers given by the participants. Questions included issues of perceptions toward what it was like for participants' learning ESL. This instrument may be seen in the Appendix.

The interview consists in 10 questions for students who had lived in the USA and 8 questions for students who had learnt English only in Mexico. A sample of these questions may be seen in the Appendix.

3.5 Data collection procedures

The data in this research was collected in different scenarios. The six questionnaires were administered in English and sent online to all the participants; all the participants had to return the questionnaires answered by email. The questionnaires used in this research were sent online on May 28th, 2018 to 9 participants, 2 of them returned the answered questionnaire the next day, 2 of them five days later and 2 of them sent 10 days later. 3 questionnaires were nor sent back.

There were four interviews administered. Data collected through the interviews also was presented in different situations. The first interview was administered on a Sunday midday; the participant was relaxed and inside a cafeteria. The participant of the second interview was in her house at the moment of the interview, it also was on a Sunday afternoon. The third and fourth interview were applied during a Monday being both students in the university.

The other 4 participants were not interviewed due to their limitations in time and personal activities that could not facilitate the application of this second option to gather the information. Another couple of students who did not participated in the questionnaires were interviewed in order to collect more information. The instrument that was used to record these interviews was a mobile phone, later on, the interviews were transcribed and explored in order to analyze participants' answers about their perceptions and experiences aiming that their responses as well as the questionnaires answer the research questions presented in this study.

Chapter IV. Findings

In this chapter I present the findings and results of the data gathered for this study. I first present some general findings and then answer in deep the research question posted in chapter one of this investigation.

4.1 General findings

Findings obtained from the interview were administered to two of the participants, one University student who has learned English as a foreign language only in Mexico, and one University student who lived and learned English in the USA as immigrant. Information of participants' responses is presented in tables and categorized in order to have a better understanding and interpretation. These categorizations emerged from the answers and have been classified under four categories: reasons, experiences, advantages and disadvantages. Starting with the interviews that were applied to students from both contexts the following results were obtained:

Students from the two different contexts show similarities and differences about their perceptions when learning English, starting with the reasons they had to start learning the language, both of them give a different opinion, however, it can be seen that both of them in a way weren't so aware of starting learning English language. They just started to learn it due to what their own needs were depending on the context they were located at the moment.

Reasons why they learnt English	
Immigrant students	Mexican students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I had to learn it in school to continue with my studies because I was living in the USA” • “I was excited with the idea of going to a different school” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I started to learn it, I had no idea what English was so I just learn it and that was it.” • “Because I took private classes and then I had to keep learning at college”

Table 3. Reasons to learn English

In their experiences learning English they present marked differences, showing that learning English in the USA was good when family also helped in language learning and having a Spanish speaking teacher to help them, as they mentioned that the presence of another Spanish speaker in the classroom made them feel that learning the language was easier. On the other hand, students learning in Mexico showed good grades as a motivation to learn because it made them feel they were having the performance expected while learning the language or just simply that they were doing a good work. Generally, both type of students presented as negative the experience the fact of being teased or bullied by teachers and classmates when they struggled with pronunciation.

Positive experiences	
Immigrant student	Mexican student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “One of my aunts tried to help me.” • “I had one teacher who spoke Spanish, so it was easier.” • “When teachers used to praise all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I got one of the highest scores • “I was so happy I could understand so well and that I got a good grade.” • “I could say that I can express better

the things, I did good at class	<p>sometimes than in Spanish.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I wanted to learn as much as I could” <p>When I could finally get to communicate with native speakers effectively.</p>
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Table 4. Students’ positive experiences

Negative experiences	
Immigrant student	Mexican student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...but I remember he used to... like ignore me when I spoke in Spanish.” • “I said wrong a word, I remember everybody started to laugh and I felt so bad.” • “I remember maybe going through a bit of bullying with my pronunciation.” • “It was a little difficult for me.” • “When people used to tell me to really talk in English or said they did not understand me even though I had a good development in the language already” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I mispronounced a word...” • “My classmates laughed at me even the teacher laughed” • “The word that I said sounded as a bad word.” • “I had to learn like about structures and more vocabulary is where I had more problems.” • “When people used to laugh about my pronunciation or words I used to say wrong”

Table 5. Students’ negative experiences

As may be seen, both students struggle with similar issues in regards to pronunciation and motivation. When their discourse is explored in terms of expressing the advantages and disadvantages they perceive when learning English, their answers are below.

Students' advantages and disadvantages when learning English, the way they did:

Advantages	
Immigrant student	Mexican student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s faster to learn for someone who lives in a place where they just speak that language.” • “There was a point where I actually learned more English than Spanish.” • “Everywhere you look you got the opportunity to practice the language and get involved” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You can hear a lot of things all the time.” • “I consider that I have a good level” • “You need to talk in English all the time and practice it”

Table 6. Students' advantages when learning English

Disadvantages	
Immigrant student	Mexican student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I arrived home and I would get confused and maybe mix a word or two.” • “I asked my family how to say one or two words in Spanish” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In vocabulary more specific, I don’t know so much.”

Table 7. Students' disadvantages when learning English

The advantages of learning English for the student who lived in the USA were presented as a way of learning fast and acquiring a good variety of vocabulary. Meanwhile, the disadvantages that this scenario presented was a lack of vocabulary in Spanish besides being confused with some meanings of words and needing help to talk in Spanish. The advantages that studying English in Mexico presents, according to this participant is that students can always listen to different things in the language to practice and this leads to consider that they have good level. As a disadvantage, this participant mentions the lack of vocabulary in English language.

The previous information provides a general understanding of the findings in this study. Now I proceed to answer the research questions posed in Chapter I.

4.2 Answer to the first research question

The first research question in this study was how returned immigrants and English students who have lived in Mexico perceive learning English. Generally speaking, students in both of these different contexts expressed that it was due to academic reasons that they had to learn English. Mexican students pointed out learning English because the subject was included in their school curriculum, meanwhile immigrant students showed learning the language because their whole education depended on that language because of the English immersed context of the country.

In order to answer this question, I present these excerpts.

Abril: *“I went to English courses when I was 8 years old”*

Andrea: *“I learned English through classes since I was a child”*

Zayra: *“because it was a subject in school since kindergarten”*

Jessica: *“I took private classes and then at college”*

Saúl: *“I had to learn it because I was going to a new school”*

Carlos: *“I had to learn it in school to continue with my studies because I was living in the USA”*

Pablo: *“because I lived in the USA and I had English as regular class”*

Juan: *“Because I was studying in the United States and also later in the university in Mexico”*

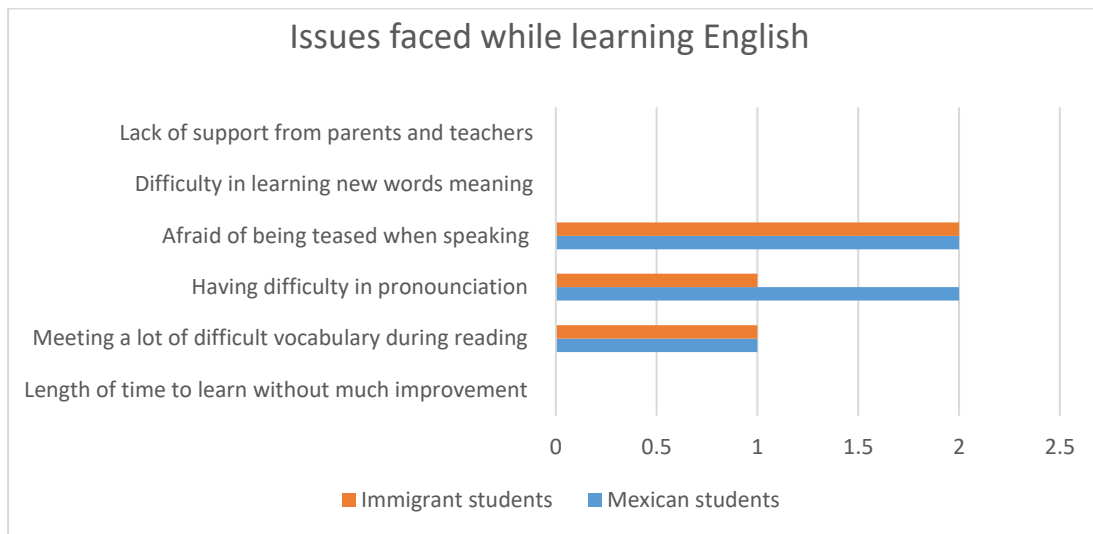
As we can notice in participants' responses, without taking into account the different contexts they come from, they most show as the main reason of learning English the fact that it was because of their education at school. Most of them since their elementary education. There is a little variation in students that came back from the USA expressing a little bit more of obligation to learn English due to the immersed context they were living in.

4.3 Answer to the second research question

The second research question in this study aims to answer if immersed context students and L2 students face the same issues when learning English language. In order to answer this question some answers from the questionnaire administered are presented to illustrate participants' answers.

Again, the different types of students share similarities in having the same issues when learning English language. The most significant is the fact of having errors or mistakes when speaking in English, students in both contexts felt afraid to not have the right pronunciation and suffer of teasing. Another issued presented by the students was the fact of facing difficult vocabulary words which they struggled with to understand their meaning affecting their

comprehension of the language. This can be seen in the following graph:



Graph 1. Frequent issues when learning English

For students that have learnt English in the USA the biggest issue was marked as being teased when speaking, showing that although they were in constant contact with the language and pronunciation, they were afraid of committing mistakes while speaking. Another issue they mention is encountering difficult vocabulary that they could not understand at all in reading material.

On the other hand, Mexican students presented as the marked issue the fact of having difficulty in their pronunciation. This may lead to interpret that this happens because they are not in constant contact with English. They feel more afraid when speaking and practicing the language and, as well as immigrant students expressed as a problem, the facts of being teased when speaking and struggling with difficult words while reading. Both types of students coincided in not having issues when learning new words. Any of the mentions not being

supported in their learning process nor the time it took them to learn English as an issue.

4.4 Answer to the third research question

The third research question in this study was aimed to answer if classroom environment context is more effective to develop students' performance than immersed context learning. In order to answer this question some answers from the questionnaire administered are presented to illustrate participants' answers.

All participants' answers have been classified as advantages or disadvantages. This categorization has allowed to evidence and interpret the information in a clearer manner.

Mexican students		
Name	Advantages	Disadvantages
Abril	<p>"Nowadays I don't have too many grammar mistakes"</p> <p>"I wasn't learning alone"</p> <p>"I had the opportunity to interact with my peers"</p>	<p>"The teaching methods my instructors used were not the best"</p> <p>"They did not teach more than the topics included in the book"</p>
Andrea	<p>"I got used to listen to the language"</p> <p>"I wasn't afraid when English became a subject in my school"</p>	<p>"I don't associate correctly the word with the meaning or context"</p> <p>"Don't research more to know words meaning"</p> <p>"Don't learn grammar at the same time, so you don't learn the grammar correctly"</p>
Zayra	<p>"Get the chance to know good teacher"</p> <p>"You get companionship with your classmates"</p>	<p>"You get to stay at the level the school says you should be"</p> <p>"You can't skip levels or repeat according to your own needs"</p>

Jessica	“I could finally get to communicate with native speakers effectively”	“When facing new words and I try to guess the meaning because I don’t know it.”
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Table 8. Comparisons Mexican Students

Immigrant students		
Name	Advantages	Disadvantages
Carlos	“You learn faster the language as well as the accent” “there’s and immense submersion with the English language”	“the difficulty I had to face when learning, due to all the context” “not knowing how to buy things, how to communicate properly, or even how to get back home from school”
Pablo	“I learnt from native speakers so I have a better pronunciation”	“I used to make a lot of mistakes in the time forms”
Juan	“You were forced to learn English in order to communicate and understand the surroundings”	“You get frustrated for not understanding something that you don’t enjoy”
Saúl	“You need to talk in English and practice it because you are involved in it”	“They did not understand me even when I had a good development in the language already”

Table 9. Comparisons Immigrant Students

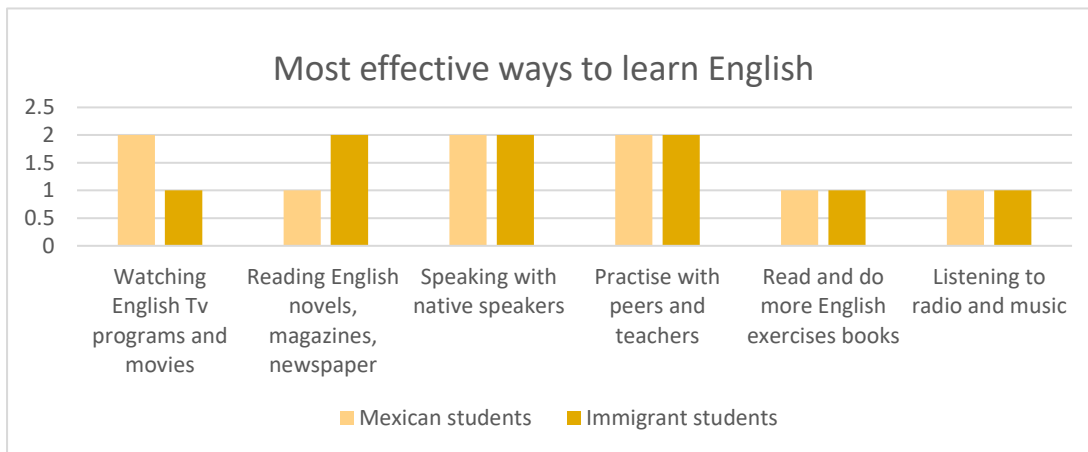
The previous tables show the personal opinions in what students considered was an advantage or disadvantage when they learnt English language the way they did. Participants’ answers are variable according to their own experiences. Generally, what Mexican students show is more oriented to their academic experience and immigrant students’ responses are more focused on social contextualized aspects that shaped their learning.

Taking into account this information it can be seen that in some way students learning in a classroom environment reflect being comfortable the way they learnt. Although immigrant students express mostly advantages of learning English in an immerse context

(pronunciation, learning faster), they also express a kind of an obligation to learn the language and issues of frustration.

4.5 Other findings

There were other findings in the data which may be relevant to point out. First, the following graph shows students perceptions on what the most effective ways to learn English language is according to their personal experience.



Graph 2. Most effective ways to learn English

The results obtained show that for Mexican students it's important to watch movies or programs in order to learn and get involved in the context but for immigrant students that are already involved in the context is not so common to choose this option as a way to learn.

The second option shows a different perspective that can be interpreted as the follows; for Mexican students' activities to learn that involve reading material are not so common due

to that they prefer to develop more their speaking and listening skills. On the other hand, for immigrant students, surrounded by all the language, they are likely to prefer this kind of activities to practice their grammar and vocabulary. The other options present a similar preference by both kind of students considering these factors important for learning English.

Chapter V Conclusions

In this chapter I discuss the implications of findings in this investigation. I also discuss the limitations of the study and directions for further research.

5.1 Implications

This study was aimed to explore the process of learning English from two different perspectives; seen as University students who have lived in the USA and seen by students who have learned English only in Mexican classrooms. This investigation demonstrated that no matter where they are learning the language, they all face difficulties through this process. In this study I have attempted to provide an illustration of the comparison of their personal experiences and perceptions.

The investigation was also aimed to raise awareness for English language teachers interested in knowing the influence they can have in the process of students' learning. As may be seen, through the students' opinions and experiences we may get a better idea of the issues and influence context and interactions have in the English learning process. In a way, this may also help teachers to notice personal areas of improvement in their lesson planning

and interaction with students.

This work suggests a comparison in the similarities and differences that students share while learning English language no matter the different contexts they are immersed in. What I could notice during this work was the importance of the external factors that influence students' motivation and performance in their learning as well as how students can be affected by the bad experiences and decrease their learning process and motivation to learn the language.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that there are many factors that can influence students' learning while learning English language, these factors can be compared according to the different experiences that students can present during their learning process. The results obtained based on the diverse experiences depict a richness in how a language can be learnt being immersed in totally distinct contexts.

5.2 limitations

Although this research has reached its aims by answering the research questions, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, because of the size of the population used in this study; even when the number of respondents that were invited to participate was considerable, most of them showed a lack of interest in the research and also some personally explained a lack of time to share their experiences and the ones who accepted were only six.

However, these participants were willing to share their personal experiences and this helped interpret and evidence the data collection process. The population of this research,

however, might not represent the majority of students' perceptions in these different contexts. Therefore, in order to have wider and deeper results, a bigger number of participants should have been invited.

Second the amount of time that students took to answer the questionnaires that were sent online may have been more significant. Some of the participants took a lot of time answering it even when there were few questions in it and others did not even answer this instrument.

Finally, another limitation was the lack of time presented by the participants that were so immersed in their academic and personal activities. This issue did not allow me to administer more interviews, which could have been more evident of the results. Nevertheless I decided to continue working even with these limitations because I realized that the opinions and experiences that the participants shared were significant to answer the research questions presented even when their responses were a few sample of the ones that could have been obtained.

5.3 Directions for further research

The directions that I consider important to follow for someone who is interested in this research are:

Following or doing a similar one taking into account the availability of time from the participants. Consider that the participants that are going to be chosen for the research will be able to participate and answer the questionnaires in a more equivalent amount of time and it

would also be important to take into account a larger number of participants in general so the data gathered can show more variations and be interpreted noticing more opinions from participants experiences.

Other suggestions that I would like to express for further research would be taking into account teachers and parents' opinions and perceptions towards students' experiences or limitations while learning English language. Teachers can express what they considered as an obstacle or facilitation for students at the moment of learning as well as parents can give their opinions about how it was for students growing up immersed in their local culture while learning the language.

Finally, I would recommend to include more questions in the instruments to know in a deeper way what students' personal opinions are about topics that can affect language learning such as culture, discrimination, financial issues, etc.

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Appendix

Instrument 1: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to collect data about English speakers' perceptions toward their learning processes.

Directions: Please, read carefully all the statements and answer the items according to your personal experience.

Age:

Gender:

Work:

1. How did you learn English?

 2. What of the following are the most effective ways to learn English? (you can choose more than one)
 1. Watching English TV program and movies
 2. Reading English novels, magazines, newspaper, etc.
 3. Speaking with native speakers
 4. Practise with peers and teachers
 5. Read and do more English exercises from books
 6. Listening to the radio o music

 3. What kind of issues have you faced while learning English?
 1. Length of time to learn without much improvement
 2. Meeting a lot of difficult vocabulary during reading
 3. Having difficulty in pronunciation
 4. Afraid of being teased when speaking
 5. Difficulty in learning new words meaning
 6. Lack of support from parents or teachers

 4. What may be the advantages and disadvantages of learning English the way you did?
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Instrument 2: Interview

Immigrants.

1. At what age did you go to live to the USA?
2. How long were you living in the USA?
3. Where did you live?
4. Did you like the idea of learning English before you started learning it?
5. Do you like English now?
6. Do you consider that you have a good English level or a good performance in skills such as writing, listening, speaking or reading?
7. What is the nicest experience you can remember about learning English?
8. What is the worst one?
9. Do you consider that you faced any problems or had issues while learning the language?
10. Do you consider that learning English in the USA was an advantage for you above people learning English in Mexico?

Mexican students

1. At what age did you start learning English?
2. Did you like the idea of learning English before you started learning it?
3. Do you like English now?
4. Do you consider that you have a good English level or a good performance in skills such as writing, listening, speaking or reading?
5. What is the nicest experience you can remember about learning English?
6. What is the worst one?
7. Do you consider that you faced any problems or had issues while learning the language?
8. Do you consider that learning English in the USA could have given you any advantage than just learning English in Mexico?