

Toward a critique of the English language teaching Practices and Policies in Mexico and Taiwan

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Abstract

The paper reviews the English language teaching practices and foreign language policies in Mexico and Taiwan. This paper also explores the most recent approaches to English language teaching in both contexts. The researchers present some evidence in order to build a critique toward how languages policies influence decisions about teaching methodologies but hardly ever they change teachers' underlying conceptualization about language teaching practices. Overall there are two factors resulted from the lack of English language competence: 1) low levels of school attainment, and 2) a high rate of foreign language unskilled workers. Consequently, to guarantee the mastery of EFL a more comprehensive pedagogical approach conducive to the development of effective pedagogies is needed in both contexts.

English Language Teaching Practices, Language Policies, Language Proficiency, School Attainment

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1. Introduction

The sudden increase of English, Mandarin and Spanish speakers is partly due to the massive influx of immigrants' mobility and the even more accelerated access to information through technology. As a result, new linguistic demands of interaction with people all over the world have emerged. The need to establish a rapid and effective way to communicate with people from different cultures, languages and nationalities globally is a decisive aspect in determining the use of English as a lingua franca among speakers of different languages. In this regard and, in order to prepare English language learners, language policies and teaching practices should be carefully revised and implemented (Garcia, 2012).

1.1 Importance of the Study

In 2015, Mexico was placed in the 40th position out of 70 countries according to the English First report (EF, 2015). Additionally, the *Sorry Report's* (2015) main findings concluded that overall the English teaching language in Mexico is neither adequate nor effective. In spite of this, the educational system continues to hand out diplomas each school year without assuring competitive and quality foreign language learning. Pedagogically speaking, in order to develop new EFL instructional practices in public schools in Mexico and Taiwan, a profound pedagogical and curriculum reform is required pertaining the content and orientation of the foreign language policies recently enacted.

Although some emerging insights have led to some fundamental changes in the way foreign languages are taught and learnt, yet the problem of academic language proficiency remains unattended and unsolved at all levels (Kibler et al., 2014).

After all the efforts at educational reforms and foreign language policies twists in Mexico and Taiwan in the last 10 years, particularly the rhetoric of quality education; academic success stand in opposition to the social inequality portrayed by the results.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The problem identified and observed in the Taiwanese and the Mexican educational contexts regarding the mastery of English as a foreign language (EFL, hereafter), is that the majority of learners cannot meet the linguistic demands of different content areas in a foreign language. In both cases, the prevailing emphasis of EFL practices is on grammar and vocabulary teaching and grammar testing.

Consequently, there has been an increase in the demand of quality foreign language education and effective English pedagogies that contribute to guarantee high rates school achievement and youth employment in better paying jobs. Today, competitiveness is one of the achieving goals that countries with developing economies such as Mexico and Taiwan, should fulfill; however, factors such as poverty, social inequality, differences due to gender and ethnicity, low levels of school attainment and lack of basic language skills in L1 (mother tongue) and L2 (second or foreign language) reduce the impact of the existing educational and linguistic policies.

Based on the OECD (2014) and UN report *Inequality Matters* (2013), wage gaps between skilled and unskilled workers have come down in many countries over the past decade. Accordingly, at the end 2012 economic hardship was widespread in Mexico affecting more than 120 million people, more than half of them lived in poverty.

The OECD (2014) data shows that Mexican workers labored 2, 237 hours on average during 2013, far ahead of the 1,789 hours worked by Americans. In contrast, those in Taiwan work an average of 2,144. 40 hours annually, that is 41.24 hours work weekly. The same year, the OECD average annual hour was 1,770 among member countries.

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education in its report, *The Condition of Education (2014)*, showed the percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty in 2012. Data indicated the following:

In 2012, among Hispanics the percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty ranged from 19 percent for South American children to 35 percent each for Mexican and Puerto Rican children and 38 percent for Dominican children. Among Asians, the percentage of children living in poverty ranged from 6 percent for Japanese children and 7 percent each for Filipino and Asian Indian children to 26 percent for other Asian children –including Taiwanese children. (p. 23)

Pertaining the youth unemployment rate in Taiwan as reported by the National Statistics Republic of China, it averaged 12. 91 percent from 2014 to 2015. On the contrary, the unemployment rate in Mexico averaged 5.0 according to the OECD (2014). Krashen (1999) argued that “economic success is much more dependent on school success” (p. 20). But in countries such as Mexico, education is not necessarily associated to economic success.

Before 2014, evidence shows that Mexican English Language Learners (MELLs) as well as Taiwanese English Language Learners (TELLs) perform poorly academically speaking in a foreign language.

In other words, regardless the structural differences between the Mexican and Taiwanese curricula designs, English foreign language practices fail to prepare language learners adequately to join the vocational and a competitive skilled workforce, and meet the demands of worldwide competitive market as suggested by the OECD (2014) reports.

Accordingly, in 2015 a report ranked Taiwan in the 31st. position in English proficiency out of some 70 countries surveyed, falling behind among other Asian nations such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Japan (EF, 2015). Today, Taiwan is a country where despite all the schooling and after 40-plus years of making English a priority, close to 90% of the native population speaks only one language – after all that, the English-teaching experiment has failed.

Similarly, Mexico has been repeatedly ranked in the last positions concerning the English language proficiency. In 2012, the INEGI (National Institute of Geography and Statistics) census informed that out of the 4% of the total population that indicated being able to speak an international language, only 2%, i.e. 2 million of the total population, reported speaking English well. Besides these percentages, data remain scarce.

1.3 Research question

The problem of poor results in English Language teaching practices and policies in Mexico and Taiwan, prevents students to fully participate as globally and competent students, in today and tomorrow’s world demands for a democratic society framework. With this background, the study’s research question that emerges consists on analyzing: How have the educational and foreign language policies enacted in Mexico and Taiwan impacted the development of English as a Foreign Language?

1.4. Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

To approach the most recent English teaching practices and enacted policies in Mexico and Taiwan in order to evaluate their sociocultural and socioeconomic implications in the youth, mainly.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- To evaluate the contexts of English teaching practices and policies in Mexico and Taiwan in order to explain the low level of English language development.
- To build a critique toward the English language teaching practices and policies to describe and document the phenomenon observed of low academic achievement and low rate employment due to the lack of English language abilities.

2. Review of the Selected Literature

English language learning emerges as pivotal political and educational strategy for the development of national projects. Nonetheless, English as a foreign language provide a strong impetus for the implementation of educational reforms (Kibler et al., 2014).

Correspondingly, the underlying rationale for learning and using English as a foreign language in countries with a developing economy consists of providing speakers of the minority languages equal access to the resources of language learning, high quality education and literacy opportunities (Krashen, 1999). However, it has been observed that the more the governments emphasize on the cultural, educational, linguistic and societal outcomes of learning and speaking a foreign language, the poorer are the results.

The enactment of linguistic policies through educational policies will continue to elude school system until educators and policy makers seriously account for the problems of bilingualism and bilingual education (Shouhui & Baldauf, 2012).

Additionally, the discussion pertaining linguistic diversity and economy development is a wide-ranging topic, with long-term implications regarding language policy for indigenous and minority language communities worldwide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, 2014). In the same spirit, research shows a relationship between the use of a dominant of non-dominant language, and its impact on school attainment on the lives of those who live in developing or advanced economy countries (Barro & Lee, 2013).

Consequently, it is also implied that being fully literate in one or more languages – preferably a dominant language might increase the possibilities of securing better educational and job opportunities; develop attitudinal, cultural and linguistic awareness; and increase cognitive abilities, among others (Baker, 2011). In other words, contemporary economic seems to be largely dependent on school success (Tsai & Chiu, 1993; Krashen, 1999).

For instance, the significant relationship toward this English language hegemony, with academic and cultural purposes, shows a direct correlation between the levels of acceptance of the role of English as the main language medium with a strategic intent of ensuring economic survival. Additionally, the use of English as a foreign language is considered a priority for maximizing social mobility opportunities for those speakers of different languages other than English (Ali, et al., 2011; Shouhui & Baldauf, 2012).

In regards to higher education, in order to cultivate competitive human resources capable of world-class work, English language proficiency represents the most common path toward learning, teaching and research. Overall, those without the linguistic skills in a foreign or second language to participate socially and economically, generate higher costs for health, income support, child welfare and social security systems (Crawford & Krashen, 2007; Shouhui & Baldauf, 2012).

For instance, during the past two decades, language teaching has witnessed a remarkable change in attitude towards the teaching in EFL classrooms in Mexico and Taiwan, where English is not the official language, but it has made its way through the mass media, publications, technology and teaching. One assumption that guides this investigation is the dissemination of values and norms as a hegemonic strategy of a dominant culture. To penetrate and influence economic, cultural, scientific and political processes, the spread of the English language in developing economy countries has grown along with the economy capacity of a developed economy country such as the United States.

3. Method

This study was based on a documented and text review on the main language teaching practices and policies in Mexico and Taiwan. Although there is scarcity of reliable data concerning the English language teaching and learning in both countries, some data bases such as the OECD (2014) Education at a Glance Report, the EF English Proficiency Index (2013), and (2012), were also used as a referent in order to have an overview of the English language development in Mexico and Taiwan.

3.1 Research Design

A documentary investigation was firstly needed as an approach toward a critique of the current conditions of English language in Mexico and Taiwan. Therefore, a descriptive interpretation of the circumstances presented in both countries was required to observe the possible similarities and differences of the English language teaching practices and policies in both settings, as well as its implications.

3.2 Toward a Critique of the English Teaching Practices and Language Policies in Mexico and Taiwan the contexts

Linguistic settings

With the change of administration and politics in Mexico (lastly enacted in December, 2012), the potential exists for opening up a broad and controversial discussion regarding language policy in education, in particular for those linguistic communities in which significant numbers of children speak a different language other than Spanish. In 2010, the INEGI census documented that there were 89 live indigenous languages that survived into the 21st Century (INEGI, 2012). Despite the historical and social prejudice against indigenous language speakers, and the official disdain of language educators, indigenous languages have not completely disappeared in Mexico.

A starting point of the following discussion is the linguistic cost of enacting linguistic and educational policies such as English as foreign language in countries where there is a wide variety of indigenous languages, which remain unattended by the governments. The constant and continuous result so far has been the accelerated gradual loss of indigenous languages in both cases.

For instance, a similar situation occurs in Taiwan. Tsao Feng-Fu (1996) reported that: “many indigenous languages and cultures are quickly being diluted because of the fast expansion of the majority language in the country, or the so-called languages of wider communication (LWC) and English in particular” (p. 54).

In light of the rapid vanishing of indigenous languages and the pressure for the modernization orientation toward urban areas, the Taiwanese government urged the introduction of several linguistic policies and practices in the name of the national unity and development. This in turn helps to propagate majority languages such as: Mandarin, Taiwanese and English, for the purpose of achieving national integration while extinguishing the indigenous languages and cultures so as to enable its people to gain access to the world of technology and science, and thereby further develop its economy.

However, some questions remain little investigated: Why do the governments of under-developed economy countries focus on implementing and emphasizing on English as a foreign language when they do not attend the dramatic linguistic loss and vanishing of their own national languages?; and What are the socioeconomic and sociocultural effects of developing English as a foreign language in under-developed economy countries such as Mexico and Taiwan?

In order to approach these research questions, in the following paragraph a critique is developed based on some documentary review and databases accessed.

3.3 Speaking English as foreign language and employment rate in Mexico and Taiwan

The Mexican overview

According to the recommendations of OECD (2014), employment rates increase with education, on average across OECD countries; the employment rate of 25-64 years old without an upper secondary credential was 55%, and 83 % for those with Tertiary education. For instance, for adults with Tertiary education, the employment rate was about 90% in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland (OECD, 2014). However, in Mexico the idea of graduating from a public university does not guarantee higher earnings, better health, social mobility, or a longer life. Having a college education in Mexico is neither necessary nor sufficient condition for personal and professional success. In contrast Krashen (1999) and Crawford and Krashen (2007) consider that school success is correlated to better employment opportunities, health and social mobility.

Accordingly, in the latest OECD (2014) report, in Mexico the number of young people between 15 and 19 years old who prosper without Tertiary education is higher compared to those who have B.A. degrees or higher, and struggle in low-paying jobs. Additionally, the OECD in its report *Education at a Glance (2014)* indicated that students in Mexico tend to exit education at an early age.

As mentioned earlier, school attainment also plays a key role when addressing issues such as inequality, unemployment rate and poverty.

Some of the recommendations by International Organizations such as OECD, the UN and UNESCO emphasize on developing effective school practices, for instance, more collaborative and culturally responsive and diverse classrooms, class size reduction, longer school days and years, a long-term effective mentoring system, and situated and contextualized pedagogies, among others (Freire & Shor, 2014).

The results reveal that the Mexican youth are at high risk of disengagement from both education and the market. Even if the proportion of 15–29 year-olds who were not enrolled decreased by 1% compared with 2011, nearly 65% of 15-29 year-olds in Mexico were not involved in education in 2012 (22% of the same age group were neither employed nor in education or training compared to 2011 with a 23%). Despite the efforts to maintain a public policy where each student should have the opportunity to attend school with diverse peers, segregation, high dropout rates and high rates of unemployment still prevail among youth in this country (52% of 25-34 year olds adults are below upper secondary, 23% upper secondary or post-secondary non tertiary education, and just 25% with a Tertiary education).

In this view, in the Mexican case, youth increasingly continue to be segregated on the basis of race, ethnicity, and income. Derived from this data, we identified that the challenge to get a job for this portion of the population increases when there is a lack of linguistic skills in a foreign language such as English. The scarcity of job opportunities is associated to the failure of using a foreign language outside school. Consequently, Mexican youth that is segregated from school falls behind dramatically each year with low linguistic abilities in both languages (Spanish and English as a foreign languages) or even more when there is the case of having a mother tongue different from Spanish.

The Taiwanese overview

In contrast, the level of educational attainment in Taiwan has steadily increased in the last ten years according to the information provided by the Ministry of Education of Republic of China in 2014. However, despite the trends toward a reduction in variables such as school attrition and attainment, inequalities in educational opportunities also remain. The most significant challenges for educational opportunities have been those associated with ethnic and social origin (Taiwanese and Mainlanders, mainly). In the last century, race and ethnicity have played critical roles in social inequality and integration in Taiwan (Tsai & Chiu, 1993).

Over the past five decades, the increasingly need of the lower levels of the educational system (primary and secondary both public and private) has generated a demand for advanced education that has exceeded the growth of higher education facilities all over the country. This shows that due to structural and institutional constraints two-thirds of today's high school graduated want to pursue educational or vocational alternatives (Tsai & Chiu, 1993). Indeed, the Taiwanese educational system is widely known for its remarkable competitiveness.

Consequently, examination performance is the typical criterion for deciding which students preferred schools. In other words, Taiwan implements educational system based on merit for student recruitment; however, the methods for the selection and placement based in student's merit does not necessarily represent an indicator of equality in educational opportunities. The educational attainment process in Taiwan is currently conceptualized as follows:

- Completed elementary school (six years of schooling)

- Completed junior high school (nine years of schooling)
- Completed senior high school (twelve years of schooling)
- Some post-high school education (at least thirteen years of schooling)

It must be noted that the increase observed in the reduction of the illiterate Taiwanese population from 2003 to 2013, could be associated with the intensified globalization influences and the advent of technology. Additionally, from 2013 to present date, the increasing emphasis on the use of technology has created an increasing need for spreading dominant languages such as Mandarin and English nationwide.

For instance, the average of school attainment increased in all levels but clearly the most prominent change is in higher education. However, the demand for higher education has become saturated and has forced students to look for college opportunities abroad in the last decade. Overall, in Taiwan, the experience of language and education are closely tied to variables such as people's ethnicity, economic and political status. Despite this proposition, research evidence has also included father's educational attainment and occupation status, farm origin, and mother's educational attainment associated to the level of school attainment and educational transitions (Tsai & Hei-Yuan, 1993; Ting, 2011).

As mentioned, advances in science and technology are now exerting worldwide an enormous impact on people's lives, schooling, employment and international relations. These global processes have led to rapid progress toward social mobility and people's dispersion globally (Perley, 2011). At the same time, there has been a movement toward the construction of multiple networks driven by the emergence of learning and using English as the international lingua franca (Shouhui & Baldauf, 2012).

3.4 English foreign language policies

Mexico

In Mexico, in 1992 the Department of Public Education (SEP) planned to start English language teaching at the elementary school level through some pilot programs in some states such as: Coahuila, Morelos, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Later, in 2006, the Federal government prompted the *Enciclomedia* proposing to introduce an English module at the 6th grade. Three years later, in 2009, it was marked by the creation and piloting of the National English Program in Basic Education (PNIEB) but it was not until 2011 that PNIEB (English Nation-wide Program for Basic Education) became compulsory through the Agreement 592.

This language policy for EFL described the block of 10 years of English schooling, from preschool to 9th grade -including 700 additional hours of compulsory English study in basic education. By the year 2013, the PNIEB lost momentum as a national program and was implemented under the Program for Strengthening the Quality of Basic Education through teachers' evaluation compulsory decision.

Although it is certainly a step toward the achievement of the objective, at present English language teaching in Mexico focuses mainly on grammar and vocabulary teaching practices. Presently, there is scarcity of well-prepared English language teachers as indicated in the Sorry Report published in February 2015. Even when the cadre of language teachers has significantly grown and included better trained personnel. The objective of achieving proficiency across nationwide is highly unlikely when factors such as inequality, discrimination, violence and poverty are unequivocally more prevalent coast-to-coast.

Under these circumstances, English continues to be widely stressed in the curricula through all the schools levels, but the public education system shows very poor results. Consequently, by the time Mexican students from public schools reach college level, they have spent on average six years of exposure to the study of the English language.

As mentioned earlier, a recent study published in 2015 revealed that in Mexico English has been taught “little, poorly and late” (Sorry, 2015). In the absence of reliable information from the Department of Public Education, the participant researchers designed and administered in 11 states the English Language Use and Comprehension Exam for Lower Secondary School Graduates (EUCIS), an instrument to assess and measure the English level among young people upon completing their basic education. Some of the most noteworthy results are the following:

1. Fifty-three percent of the sample that received a grade higher than 9 in English during lower secondary school, demonstrated a complete lack of knowledge of the English language on the EUCIS (A0 level according to the European Common Framework description).
2. In the last 5 years, Mexico has spent more than 2.25 billion USD on English in Basic Education, including teachers’ salaries but the results are disappointing when it comes to consider the highly inequitable distribution of English teachers. In 2015, the Mexican Educational System was divided by the pros and cons views of society regarding the professional evaluation of teachers nationwide. According to census results, there are 50, 274 English teachers in public basic educational system.
- 3.

For instance, one of every 2 is working in lower secondary schools, 1 out of 4 are in *Telesecundarias* (distance education), and one out of 20 is a preschool English teacher. In contrast, the number of English teachers working in indigenous primary communities is just 1 out of 100. Considering these estimates, reaching all children and youth in Mexico is unlikely to happen.

3. Overall, no one did well in the study. On the contrary, the results emphasized that the low-income students had the poorest results; they had the lowest probability of learning English. (Sorry Report, 2015)

Undoubtedly, the strengthening of English foreign language policies that have been implemented in the past three years in Mexico support these negative outcomes. For instance, entire national education policies appear and disappear in Mexico before they are fully analyzed and evaluated in order to provide meaningful insights while developing both education and language policies.

Taiwan

In 2001, the Taiwanese government mandated that English be taught as a foreign language (EFL) in all public elementary schools students ten years old and above. At that time, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan emphasized the need of applying the *fun* English program. The goals of curriculum design were to enhance students’ essential communication skills and to introduce students to the new culture (Ting, 2011). In addition, to diminish the backward effect, the government in Taiwan forbade students, less than twelve years of age, to take the GEPT (General English Proficiency Test) in 2005. This became a controversial issue because it was observed that public examinations like the GEPT influenced classroom curricula in that the educational system was oftentimes driven by public examinations.

Consequently, a new test teaching-orientation was the type of dominant pedagogy for English as a foreign language nationwide. Seven years later, in July of 2012, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan implemented regulations for carrying out preschool and care services *BANNING ALL-DAY* English and bilingual education programs for preschool children. Also, language education should begin with what the child is most familiar before teaching them something that is less familiar. That is, more emphasis should be placed on learning the national language, Mandarin.

In August 2013 the Taiwanese Executive Yuan approved an amendment to the Supplementary Education Act introducing stricter regulations for teaching language to children under the age of six in cram schools. According to the proposed amendment, courses offered by cram schools to children younger than six should be restricted to teaching body movements and the development of artistic talents (Ministry of Education of Republic of China, 2014). These schools would also be required to obtain approval from their local governments' education authorities before they can start classes. Cram schools that offer classes on foreign languages or other courses found in violation of the article would be fined up to NT\$500,000 and may be repeatedly fined until the problem was addressed.

In addition, according to the Minister of Education, in September 2013 the revised education curriculum for the 12-year compulsory national education program would include Taiwanese (also known as *Hoklo*), Hakka and Aboriginal languages. Students in junior-high school would have at least one class on weekly basis learning a native language, which will be implemented by making the optional courses compulsory.

In Taiwan, a widespread trend that prevails among middle-class parents is to prepare their children in order to be admitted into the prestigious colleges. These parents send their young children to the cram schools that teach syntax after school and weekends. The short length of language courses, the time consuming process, and the unwillingness of the teachers to teach communicative skills, many of whom were products of the English grammar and vocabulary-driven methodology, not only do not ameliorate but also worsen the situation (Yang, 1992; Huang, 2003). As part of a foreign language-teaching policy, the government has demonstrated its determination to promote everyone's English language proficiency by modifying educational policies. Some strategies such as adopting instructional international certification system for language learners and teachers have been implemented in order to acquire international credentials.

Nevertheless, English teaching in Taiwan has been charged of being test-oriented because learners are unable to cope with real language use in communication contexts. Accordingly, students achieve high scores in reading and listening in the classroom while performing poorly in writing, speaking in real communicative situations. Even the English majors do not always perform adequately in tests such as TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language).

It has been argued that the fault lies in that English in Taiwan is taught as a separate curriculum subject, not as a language for communication (Wang, 2002; Huang, 2003). Additionally, the third version of the Education First English Proficiency Index Report (2015) indicated that compared to other nations, Taiwan registered a low positive tendency (+2.02) toward increasing the English language teaching from 2013 to 2015, as shown in Table 2 below:

Country	Tendency
Turkey	+11.86
Kazakstan	+11.73
Hungary	+9.61
Indonesia	+8.66
Vietnam	+7.95
Poland	+7.63
India	+7.03
Russia	+5.29
Thailand	+5.03
United Arab Emirates	+4.84
Spain	+4.50
Colombia	+4.30
Austria	+4.08
Slovakia	+3.94
Portugal	+3.90
Chile	+3.57
Malaysia	+3.45
China	+3.15
Switzerland	+2.99
Egypt	+2.97
Brazil	+2.80
Sweden	+2.43
Ecuador	+2.36
Libya	+2.12
Taiwan	+2.02
Venezuela	+201

Table 2 Index of English Language Proficiency with a Positive Tendency

Source: Information adapted and taken from Education First English Proficiency Index Report (2015)

The EF English Proficiency Report has been widely criticized by some scholars such as Krashen (2013) who considers the English Proficiency Index as an unreliable instrument to assess and measure of a country's English competence. Krashen (2013) argues that half of the participants are enrolled in private English-language schools, and the majority are beginners or intermediate students so the test excludes those with an advanced level of English; whereas the other half of the test takers are volunteers who have easy access to computer and Internet. However, due to the scarcity of reliable data pertaining English foreign language attainment, the EF English Proficiency Report continues to be utilized to approach the situation of the English language use.

What seems to be noteworthy is that in Taiwan, since various governmental departments and prestigious universities require the GEPT (General English Proficiency Test) credential from applicants, English pedagogy has faced recently a dramatic change in this country due to in part to the impact of this four-skill proficiency test.

4. Results

Because of both countries' national development plans, since 2000 compulsory instruction was expanded from elementary school to College. In Taiwan, English was given a *quasi-official status*; however, special emphasis was given to the use and widespread of Mandarin. In addition, universities and the Ministry of Education even considered the idea of using demonstrated English proficiency as a requirement for university graduation.

Currently, recent curriculum changes, mayor language standardized test in Mexico and Taiwan increasingly reflect the reality of these educational and linguistic worldwide demands. This, in fact, represents a major threat to develop English language proficiency. In this view, a more adequate English language teaching focus should be promoted to minimize the intrusiveness and backlash effect of those language-standardized tests.

For instance, authentic and performance assessments, along with a situated learning environment in both settings, could provide a better insight into what English language learners' understand and can do in English. After all, standardized testing are not natural pedagogical devices; on the contrary, they are the result of political forces and decisions that can be questioned, challenged and reversed (Kohn, 2000, 2015).

In this view, teachers are viewed as expandable test-prep technicians, and that global economic competitiveness eclipses what students really need linguistically speaking.

5. Conclusions

In the last five years, the standard testing based English foreign language teaching policies have determined the type of practices in both countries. Consequently, a common problem observed is that the type of language evaluated by standardized tests hardly resembles most problems that educators and learners face in either academic or real world (Kohn, 2015). Historically, official exams and particular certification entities such as those offered by Cambridge, Trinity College and TOEFL, among other international agencies, are used to select and place students and employees on the basis of computer-based or written tests about English language use.

However, it was widely understood that good results on these tests does not mean the same as a strong ability to communicate in English effectively and academically, more so, they hardly provide and insight into the academic abilities and linguistic competences of the speakers. Another factual point is that there is scarcity of data concerning reliable sources that provide an insight into the real conditions of English as a foreign language in the countries addressed in this paper.

From this perspective, apart from the databases provided by some local, national and worldwide agencies, data remains scarce concerning the status of foreign language development in countries where *monolingualism* is the norm not the exception. Accordingly, a suitable change towards an effective language methodology for both contexts could be based and designed according to the following modifications and adaptations:

1. Reorienting the foreign language teaching programs to more effective language teaching practices such as the two-way/dual or mainstream bilingual language programs whose aim in language outcome is toward developing bilingualism and *biliteracy*.
2. Reinforcing and guaranteeing the language proficiency of the speakers in their L1 in order to promote effective foreign language policies and practices.
3. Reducing the level of illiteracy in L1 and L2 in both countries will positively influence the level of proficiency in learning foreign languages.
4. Reducing the emphasis on standardized testing, as the only vehicle towards language certification, will impact undoubtedly the current grammar foreign language teaching-orientation that prevails in most Mexican and Taiwanese schools.
5. Enriching foreign language policies will diminish those who are educationally, economically and political disempowered. This then would prevent social inequality and injustice that exists for many minority and vulnerable social groups.
6. Establishing academic and conversational standards based on the main social practices that surround the speakers' reality could help to preserve and maintain their mother tongue and at the same that could enhance the learning of foreign languages.
7. Developing content curriculum gradually in foreign language as a medium of instruction across the different educational levels.
8. Stressing the development of literacy skills in both first language and foreign languages.
9. Promoting a culture of tolerance among speakers of different linguistic communities.

10. Developing social awareness and fluent bilingualism in order to prevent youth to fail in what seems to be an endless unemployment track.
11. Supporting a late-exit curricular enrichment model that continues L1 (native language) instruction after students are proficient in English or any other foreign language type of instruction.
12. Ongoing preparation of professionals whose expertise is reaching foreign and second languages.

Scholars and language researchers claim that the destiny of foreign languages in these linguistic contexts will highly depend on the willingness of dominant groups and powers to tackle their responsibility for a more intelligent educational and cultural responsive teaching as well as a sensible language planning to ensure equal educational opportunities and access to a better life for all. In countries such as Mexico and Taiwan, bilingualism along with multicultural and intercultural teaching represents a long way towards providing language learners with a truly Global Perspective –ensuring mutual survival and a better world in this century.

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