



## Return Migration as an Answer to Face the Need of English Teachers in Mexico: Challenges and Realities

Irasema Mora-Pablo, M. Martha Lengeling & Edgar Emmanuell García-Ponce

*University of Guanajuato, MEXICO*

*Division of Social Sciences and Humanities, Language Department*

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### *Abstract*

Migration has been part of the history of Mexico and the United States for many years. In this article, we aim to address the experiences of young return migrants who teach English as a foreign language in public schools in Mexico. They lived a number of years in the United States and recently returned to Mexico. We incorporate the voices of these participants into our own to give the reader a window into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Mexico. Through qualitative research and following a narrative approach, results show how these return migrants become English teachers, how they relate to the two educational systems, and how they see their future as professionals. Conclusion address that with each case there is complex story that leads to other possibilities and as such may be a wider issue of social transition through migration.

*Keywords:* English teaching, return migration, National English Program, education system.

### 1. Introduction

Migration has been part of the history of Mexico and the United States for many years. Families root themselves in the United States looking for the “American dream”, and other families go back and forth from one country to another for a number of reasons, creating bonds on both sides and developing transnational agency. Others come back to reside in Mexico. This is the case of the six stories we share, where university students, who are return migrants, discuss their connections with English and Spanish in the US and how they feel when settling down in Mexico. Most importantly, we present how these return migrants become English teachers, how they relate to the two educational systems, and how they see their future as professionals. In this article, we aim to address the experiences of young adults that teach English as a foreign language in public schools in Mexico. We incorporate the voices of these students into our own to give the reader a window into the EFL classroom in Mexico.

### 2. English teaching and learning in Mexico and the National English Program

English has gained importance in Mexico because it is considered as an international language with an active role that enables citizens to contribute to the academic world and the world of commerce (Ramírez Romero, Pamplón Irigoyen & Cota Grijalva, 2012). The everyday reality is that Mexico depends on investment from transnational companies that come to Mexico in search

of employees who can use English in the workplace. According to Heredia and Rubio (2015), these employees are classified as better prepared than those who do not speak another language.

The English proficiency of Mexican children and youth is generally low (Davies, 2009; Education First, 2014). One report ranked Mexico, among other Latin American countries, with the lowest English proficiency (Education First, 2014). In practice this is what we see in the classrooms where we are asked to observe English teachers. This is where our return migrant students have particular value in Mexican society. The schools and government institutions assume that by inserting return migrants in the classroom it will somehow magically improve the quality of language teaching rather than focusing on the curricular, material, and training deficiencies that we see continually in EFL classrooms. The result is a continued focus on redesigning and renaming the EFL program instead of addressing the underlying issues of hiring qualified teachers and making English a formal part of the curriculum.

In 2017, the Mexican Ministry of Education passed the PNIEB (National English Program) as part of a number of educational reforms to strengthen Mexican public education (SEP, 2011a). Until 2017, the PNIEB had the objective of developing students' "competencies related to the language and culture in order to successfully respond to the communication demands of the global world" (SEP, 2011b: 9). Throughout K-12 schooling, the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) held each state in Mexico accountable to help students acquire proficiency in English at an intermediate level (see SEP, 2011b). This was the first federal program designed to provide access to English learning for working-class Mexicans. Under President Peña Nieto's administration, the Secretary of Education reported that 1,000 English teachers were needed for the 2018-2019 term in order to start the implementation of the new program. Furthermore, as many as 180,000 teachers are needed over the next ten years. This looked good on paper but was never really put into practice.

However, PNIEB started losing importance when it was merged with other reforms and policies, like the *Nueva Estrategia Nacional*. PNIEB weakened due to teachers' lack of understanding of the program, inconsistencies between political discourse of the SEP and practice of the program that was never officially part of the school curricula, the persistence of traditional audiolingualism teaching practices, low socio-economic status of students, and large classes with 40 plus students (Davies, 2009; Roux Rodriguez, 2013; Sayer, 2012, 2015a, 2015b).

In sum, we have witnessed at close hand how SEP has implemented two English educational policies in order to respond to a globalized world, more specifically, to participate in international markets. Yet, these policies have faced challenges in practice because they have never gone beyond political discourse. These challenges highlight the need to improve the practice of English teaching.

### 2.1 Return migration to improve English teaching in Mexico

Improving English teaching and the preparation of English teachers require us to consider who we recruit to these programs. Even as we seek to supply thousands English teachers that are needed in Mexico over the next ten years, we need to recruit highly qualified applicants to English teaching programs. We have found that recruiting young adults with extensive experiences in the US is an area of opportunity. However, these American-Mexican students often return to Mexico with baggage from the US and how they were treated in the US. Over past several years, more Mexicans have left than migrated to the United States, even after living there most of their lives (Christiansen, Trejo Guzman & Mora-Pablo, 2017; Hamann, Zuñiga & Sánchez García, 2008; Mora-Pablo, Lengeling & Basurto Santos, 2015; Tacelosky, 2013). This includes voluntary returns, as well as deportations (Silver, 2018). Some return migrants remain in Mexico to work in transnational companies where English is mostly used (Anderson, 2015), while others enroll in higher education programs taught in English (Christiansen, Trejo Guzman & Mora-Pablo, 2017;

Rivas Rivas, 2013), though admission to these programs often presents social and administrative challenges for returnees because often they are not welcomed back into Mexico.

Return migrants usually speak English and Spanish, but they do not necessarily fit in either society. When they try to start an English teaching career in Mexico, this gives them an advantage over other potential English teachers because the school system feels their English can correct the missing pieces in the curriculum and it perpetuates the idea that speaking the language is enough to teach it. However, their return to Mexico is not easy. González-Barrera (2015) argues that a limited number of programs in Mexico provide returnees with opportunities to transition back into the country (e.g., to assist them with employment or education). As a result, the opportunity to become an English teacher, receive pay, and a small amount of acceptance with no training is a strong drawback for gaining initial acceptance in society

Regarding these concerns, several Mexican associations (e.g., Federal Executive Unions, the Ministry of Public Education and the Congress of the Union) and universities have formulated plans to (re-)integrate return migrants. For example, the *Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior* (ANUIES) launched a temporary program in 2017 called *Programa Universitario Emergente Nacional para la Terminación de Estudios Superiores* (PUENTES). This program has the aim of facilitating social, economic, cultural and educational integration of return migrants (ANUIES, 2017). PUENTES also seeks to support return migrants with enrollment, validation of legal documents, and career advisement so they can start or conclude their studies in a Mexican Higher Education Institution (ANUIES, 2017).

The University of Guanajuato has taken this call seriously and the results have been evident in several BA programs. The BA in ELT has admitted return migrants at increasing rates in the last five years. With native-like proficiency in English, return migrants are trained in this program to become English teachers, while being supported to integrate socially into the university. This is important because for these students it is the first time they are in a space in Mexican society where they are completely accepted and seen as valuable by us as teachers in the program.

### 3. Methodology

We relied on a qualitative paradigm, following a narrative approach. In order to collect the data, participants were asked first to write an autobiography and then they were interviewed individually. They signed a letter of informed consent and were told that their names would remain anonymous in order to keep their confidentiality. These were carried out in English or Spanish, depending on the participants' decisions. For the purposes of this article, we translated those extracts that were originally in Spanish. Data was analyzed following an on and on-going process and there were moments where we went back and forth between the autobiographies and the interview transcriptions. We relied on paradigmatic cognition, which entails "classifying a particular instance as belonging to a category or concept" (Polkinghorne, 1995: 9). We looked for similarities in the data and then grouped them in a same category.

The six participants (one male and five females) included in this article are all considered return migrants with transnational experiences, according to the definition of Petron (2009): those who maintained contact with both sides of the border and have established connections at different levels (i.e., family, education, identity). As they are now in Mexico, we refer to them as return migrants, in the US one would probably refer to these same people as heritage speakers. We chose six of them for the purposes of this publication to show representation of the issues they face when trying to become English teachers in Mexico. They do not belong to the same cohort, rather, they represent different cohorts at different times. The stories that we share are from six students that enrolled in our BA in ELT between 2013-2017. They were all

practicing teachers in private and public sectors. Table 1 provides a profile of the six return migrants.

Table 1. Participants' profile

<b>Name</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>Place of residence in the US</b>	<b>Reasons to emigrate to the US</b>	<b>Reasons to return to Mexico</b>	<b>Average schooling years in the US</b>	<b>Reasons to become an ELT</b>
<b>Yadira</b>	Guanajuato, Mexico	Illinois	Taken by family	Family reasons	5	Encouraged by a former teacher
<b>Gemma</b>	Nevada, US	Nevada		Family reasons	7	Encouraged by brother
<b>Angela</b>	Valle de Santiago, Mexico	California	Taken by family	Deportation	16	Encouraged by husband
<b>Laura</b>	Guanajuato, Mexico	California	Taken by family	Family reasons	7	Encouraged by a former teacher
<b>Oscar</b>	Dolores, Hidalgo, Mexico	Idaho	Taken by family	Wanted to join his family and help them with their business	16	Encouraged by friends
<b>Esther</b>	California, US	California		Parents divorced	7	Encouraged by friends

The return migrant teachers ages range between 20 to 35 years old. They now live in different parts of the State of Guanajuato and in the past, they lived in California, Idaho, Illinois, Nevada, and Texas. Oscar went to the United States as early as 11 months and Yadira at eleven years old. Yadira, Gemma, Laura and Esther received their education mainly in Mexico, while Angela and Oscar did not return to Mexico until they started their university studies. It should be mentioned that Yadira, Angela, Laura and Oscar were born in Mexico while Gemma and Esther in the United States. Their family instilled in them a strong sense of attachment to the Mexican culture and they identify strongly as Mexicans. For this reason, we have included them as return migrants. In their upbringing they were constantly in contact with Spanish and the Mexican culture.

We share how these participants started their connections with English and Spanish in the US, and then how they felt when settling down in Mexico. Then we narrate how these students became English teachers, how they relate to the Mexican and American educational systems, and how they see their future as professionals.

#### 4. Discussion of findings

##### 4.1 *"You are Mexican and as a Mexican you should speak Spanish"*

Esther was born in South Lake Tahoe, California. Her father had settled down in the US since 1976 as undocumented. Her mother was also Mexican and at home they only spoke in Spanish, as Esther recalls:

I am an only child. My parents only spoke Spanish, so I have to say that my first spoken language was Spanish. I attended Bijou elementary school at the age of five and I learned English.

She also mentions that she did not have to be enrolled in ESL classes, since she started learning English formally at school at an early age. In her narrative, Esther acknowledges that the “only Spanish at home” rule helped her with her Spanish:

While I was growing up, I remember that my parents were enemies when it came to speaking English at home. My father would get very disappointed if I would speak English at home and he would tell me “You are Mexican and as a Mexican you should speak Spanish”. So my brain was like a switch. When I entered my home, I would automatically speak Spanish. I have to mention that I am very grateful with my parents because if it was not for them, I probably would not speak Spanish at all.

When asked whether she felt either American or Mexican, she did not hesitate to state that she always felt Mexican, even when she was born in the US. She said that the fact of having both parents demanding to keep her heritage at home and the Spanish only rule, she always identified more with her Mexican side. In contrast, Yadira, who was born in Mexico, and at the age of 13 she moved to the US, finds it difficult to identify with one culture or another:

I have a conflict. At times I feel more attached to the American culture, but I also appreciate the Mexican one. And as I have lived some years here in Mexico again, I started to like it too.

She refers to English as the commodity that saved her life, since with this skill she was able to find a job as a teacher when returning to Mexico, and this is the reason why she considers English an important aspect of her life. However, she soon realized that speaking the language was not enough to become an English teacher and that she needed to study and have a certificate in order to validate her knowledge of the language.

#### 4.2 *Becoming an English teacher and finding out about the BA in ELT*

Gemma was born in Reno, Nevada. When she was two years old, her parents decided to move back to Mexico. But when she was seven years old, the family came back to the US and she stayed there until she was 14 years old. When returning to Mexico and trying to decide what to do with her life, she discovered that the University of Guanajuato offered a BA in ELT. Gemma examines how she started in our program.

I found out that the *Universidad de Guanajuato* had the *Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés* [BA in ELT], so I came with two of my classmates. They came to check for the area of law, and I came here but I think the time to get registered and everything were very close, and I knew for a fact that in my school that they were not going to have the paperwork. So I decided to take a year off so I didn't directly come here. And then I started working in PNIEB and there's where I met Andres.

Gemma did not enter immediately into the program but decided to teach at the public school level, encouraged by friends who saw her ability with the language. Notice that here her only qualification was that she spoke English. There she met a friend who was instrumental in guiding her through the university registration process for.

Andres helped me to do the registration work and how to fix everything, and he came with me to the school to turn in the paperwork and do the exam. I actually got in...and at that time I had left for the United States, and my plans were to stay there and work. Actually, I was working in a casino, and I noticed that my English was kind a rough around the edges, because I wouldn't speak it at home. For everything I was speaking Spanish... I asked my mom “Should I stay here or should I go?”... My family then told me “No, you should come back, and do school”, and for that reason I came back, and started here in the BA.

Similar to Gemma, Yadira mentions how someone encouraged her to become an English teacher merely because she was able to speak the language. Her English teacher in Mexico

realized that she had a different level of English than the other students in her class. Because of this, her teacher offered her opportunities to participate in class with different tasks.

Well, he was my English teacher and at the beginning of the year we took an exam, so he noticed those who spoke English already more than others. The ones who got a better grade, he called us in. Later he asked us where we had learned our English. Then he gave us exercises and more work, like essays, more linked with our level. And later he started to ask us for help, to help other classmates who had problems with the language and those that liked the language.

It is often the case for EFL teachers to find return migrant students in a beginning class. Teachers sometimes tell the student that he or she does not need to attend the class because of the student's English proficiency, or teachers often make the students take the class as a regular student, with no changes to the class content. Either way the students are classified as different and separated from the general student population.

#### 4.3 *Emotions of institutional struggles and finding a place in the BA*

Angela moved with her family to the US when she was four years old and she lived there until she was 21 years old. She did not choose to return to Mexico, but she faced deportation due to a traffic offense. She left her life in the US and had to start from zero when returning to Mexico. She did not know what to do with her life, but her husband encouraged her to become an English teacher. She provides us with more specifics of her challenges of entering into the BA:

To enter the BA was very random, because my husband's always been very supportive and he always told me: "You need to start too, and what are we going to do?" And it was very hard to validate all of my *constancias* [papers], and my high school diploma, because my name is very long. So in my high school diploma, they didn't write my name correctly, and when I wanted to validate it here, it was like impossible. So I had to take high school again, plus Spanish was very hard and it was a while since I've been in school.

Again, we see how friends or family members influenced the participants' decision making to become English teachers. When returning, she encountered problems with her papers, as she had left everything in the US:

... Just this year PUENTES was passed...It's one that, when Donald Trump became president, they made this rule, that for people coming back from the States, that if you didn't have your papers in order it didn't matter; you could enter the university. Then I was like: "Oh, my gosh, this is my time". And I applied, and I was the first one to apply.

After a number of hardships, she decided she had to get an education. She received support from the PUENTES program. She realized that it was her status as a migrant that gave the chance to study. The PUENTES program opened the doors for her and she took advantage of this situation to consider what she wanted to do in her life: teach English.

Once she entered into the BA, Angela reflects on her emotions concerning this process:

I think the BA program is great... I mean I think the fact that everything is in English makes me feel at home... I feel like I'm at home here because everyone speaks English and I flourish here. Like all the things that I know I can pass on to my classmates and they see it as like "We are glad Angela is here" because they say that "the fact that you speak with us and participate and we all get along. You create this environment and you make us appreciate what we are going through.

Angela brought up an array of strong emotions, such as empathy, gratefulness, rapport, security, among others, when describing her career entry. She was also aware of the pros

and cons of studying and working at the same time. It is evident that she understands the juggling of these two activities will pay off in the long run of her professional development. However, what we think is at the forefront is that the fact that the program is in English made her feel at home and accepted. This is a reoccurring theme in return migrant students in our program. The BA is the place where they are accepted in society here in Mexico.

Gemma voices her emotions regarding how she feels about becoming a BA student:

It brings joy to my life at certain moment and I found that I was actually very indecisive about the degree program that I had chosen. At the beginning I was like "Am I really made out for this?" Throughout the semesters, and with my classmates, this is something that I see myself doing and I belong to it... I wanna do by the time I am 30, and I like studying, finding the joy in it. At first I was very skeptical, cause I don't know if it was actually made for me.

Although she questioned if she could become a teacher, Gemma recognized that she is now a member of a BA and also the EFL profession. We need to highlight that she had doubts about wanting and being able to do this. This we think goes back to the stereotype in Mexico that all you need is to speak English to be an English teacher. Over time this membership of the BA group provides her with security as to how she identifies herself in the present and future.

#### *4.4 Comparing educational systems*

Having been educated in both countries, participants were able to see the differences of both educational systems. They have experienced the differences first as students in the US and later as students and teachers in Mexico. Laura, for example, moved to the US when she was three years old. Her mother was already living there and asked for her children to be brought by any means to the US. Laura started her education there and when comparing both educational systems, she clearly makes a distinction between the involvement that parents showed in their children's education in both countries:

In the States, the parents would get together, and see how their kids were advancing and improving, and here it's like each time you have a grade to give to them, the parent would be like: Ok, you sign and that's it. They wouldn't discuss more.

Laura's experience in how she has perceived the Mexican system is not positive. She compares what her mother had to do for her and how she sees that parents in Mexico are not as involved in their children's education:

... Every day my mom had to sign my homework, so that my teacher could go through it and that I had actually done it and it would also let you see that the parents were involved in the education. And here, they don't really, I mean, from what I see they just send them to school and the teacher has to give you everything, like the values and at the same time teach your subjects and [I think] it's like: no, you can't do that.

Laura has navigated two educational systems, but her transition into the Mexican educational system as an English teacher is discouraging and disempowering, provoking a conflict in the way she perceives what education should be and the realities of dealing with parents who do not take responsibility for their children's education. Similarly, Angela even describes the educational systems as completely opposite, emphasizing that in Mexico, teachers do not pay close attention to the students' individual needs:

Well, in the States it was very structured, and I think here the school system is very different because when I see my daughter and how I teach as well, we don't focus enough on the individualities that each learner may have, I think. It's like also very rigid. I think that a lot of teachers are unmotivated because of external factors, because maybe they're not getting paid on time or maybe they have too many students or the parents don't support enough.

Even when she mentions similar factors that Laura brought up to the discussion, Angela goes further and implies that teachers can be demotivated due to their working conditions, which are different from those working conditions of the teachers in the United States.

However, Angela also mentioned how she has seen that the values attached to the “privilege” of going to school are not appreciated in Mexico, and how in her case, her mother made her realize what she had and she valued it:

But as the generations go by, I think values have been damaged. They don't care if they don't do homework anymore. When I was in school I was like “Oh my God! If I don't turn it in, something's gonna happen. My grades are gonna go down”. When I was in high school, I ditched classes like twice and it was the first time my mom whipped my butt because she said: It's an honor to go to school, and if you don't wanna go to school, you're gonna go walking. And they made me appreciate it.

Comparing both educational systems can be influenced by their experience as students, but, as we can see in these excerpts, participants now evaluate those systems considering their own vivid experiences as teachers. They compare academic aspects of both systems. The participants' recollections are often portrayed as nostalgic and yearning for the old, and sometimes, it seems that their descriptions portray one system as “better than the other”.

Nevertheless, considering their current position as English teachers in public and private schools, these participants have developed a sense of duty and they try to help their own students when they find out that they have a return migrant in their own classes, as it will be further explained.

#### 4.5 *Helping other returnees*

As English teachers, participants find similarities between their own life experiences and their students'. Oscar is another participant who was taken by his family to the US at the age of eleven months old and spent almost 21 year living in the US, with constant vacation trips to Mexico. He has studied his BA and is currently finishing his MA at the University of Guanajuato and he has taught English for six years. He has researched the topic of return migration in public schools. He wants to help those return migrants to become visible in the educational system. About this, he states the following:

I think that's something really important that I need to consider as a contribution to working together with the parents of students and the administrators, because I mean through my research I found that these students were still invisible with the administrator. So what does that tell us? It tells us that nothing is being done for the specific linguistic needs of the students in this context. So perhaps it's something I could work on.

As a result of the participants' academic trajectory, they have witnessed how teachers sometimes disregard the return migrants in their classes or they do not consider the value they could bring to the classroom. Instead of using this knowledge to their advantage, teachers tend to avoid it and with this they create a difficult environment for the return migrant who is adapting to a new educational system. In other cases, teachers gave all the responsibility to the return migrant to take over the class, as Gemma recalls:

My teacher in high school [in Mexico] made me suffered. She felt offended every time I read something because my classmates said that I spoke better than the teacher. I mean... I didn't say it, they did, but they took it personal. And she asked me to leave her class, she told me she would give me a 10 as a final grade, but she did not want me in her class.



For Gemma this was discouraging as she did not understand why the teacher was doing this. What we can see here is how this teacher in particular portrays a common scenario of English teachers in Mexico with low proficiency of the language they teach and they feel threatened by a return migrant with native-like proficiency.

Gemma's story resonates with Laura's. In this sense, Laura has a precise point of view of what she would not do to her students:

I wouldn't treat them [my students] as I was treated. For instance, I wouldn't make them do the class, and I would send them a message that I could identify them are returnees, or they are native speakers. I would set them aside: if you feel like something to say, or if you can participate more, and help me out, feel free, go ahead.

From Oscar and Laura's excerpts, we see two ways return migrants navigate becoming English teachers. Having experienced teachers on both sides of the border, their perceptions of teachers reflect both positive and negative views. Now that they are English teachers themselves, they rely on these past experiences to make their own decisions about how to support return migrants in their classrooms. They demonstrate a personal commitment to meet their language and educational needs.

#### *4.6 Looking into the future*

When analyzing their own teaching experience, Laura acknowledged the advantages of being a "native speaker", but she also recognized that in order to be a teacher, she needed something else:

Being a returnee or a native does not assure the fact that you are gonna be a teacher. I personally have experienced that fact that I have a hard time explaining grammar points. I actually have to sit down, analyzing and trying to figure them out, and then I can teach to my students. Being a native speaker or a returnee, all you have really is being the model of the language, but further than that, it does not assure that you're gonna be a good teacher. It doesn't mean that with the knowledge you have, you're gonna be able to express it, or share it with your students.

Currently, the Mexican government has implemented a new plan where return migrants have the possibility to become English teachers in one year, after taking a course on classroom techniques and classroom management. Even though this invests more time than the previous DACA six-week course, the plan takes for granted that they have the language skills and a short course will suffice their limitations as potential English teachers. We can see how Laura is keenly aware that teaching English is more than speaking it. Oscar refers to the Mexican government initiative in the following manner:

I think [forcing returnees to be English teachers] is bad idea. One because for us in our profession it's a step back in what we've been working towards to achieve which is the professionalization of the area and for it to be more academic. And also this is a bad thing for these people who are returning because they aren't being given other alternatives. It's like: "Okay so you know another language, just teach. That's all you can do here in Mexico. You can't do anything else".

In Mexico the stereotype is quite strong that the return migrant is only capable of teaching English. This has played into a labeling where the bilingual immigrant is seen as someone inferior as he or she has no ability to study or become something else in a professional sense. Boxed into this situation, they have made the most of the process to integrate themselves into the community. However, for these students, they have chosen to follow this path and they now embrace their profession and want to become better at it, as Angela points out:

Well, I want to finish my BA, but I want to go into the Masters and then I would love to become a teacher trainer like to go and give courses because I think that I have a lot of things to offer. My goal is to become a teacher trainer. (Angela)

Angela seems to have plans for her future as professional. Others have thought about studying an MA, and taking advantage of what the Mexican government offers, such as scholarships to study a graduate degree, as in Gemma's case:

I'm thinking about doing the Masters, and I'm still trying to decide on the one specifically here in Applied Linguistics, or one in the States. And I have been talking to my tutor about that, and he is guiding me to stay for the one here, and telling me like "Oh if you get it, you could get the scholarship. They'll pay you to come to the school". So, he is like giving me all these pointers so that I'll stay for this one. So, I'm still deciding, and he is making a very convincing point. So, I'll start right after I finish the BA, just get in to the MA, right after back. (Gemma)

In the case of Oscar, he is in his last semester of the MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching with us and he is considering pursuing PhD studies, as he does not want to stop at this level:

... One thing that I've kept in mind is to not stop working because the moment I stop working, I feel bad. If I take a day off, because I said I could have done this yesterday not now doing it today. Es como "*No dejes para mañana lo que puedes hacer hoy*" something like that. And so, I think that's something that I've worked on and I've done, all I need to do is keep working keep working. (Oscar)

Oscar is probably one of those cases in which his personal experience has influenced his current professional life. He is interested in the topic and his goal is to keep working on the topic to be able to help others in the same situation.

## 5. Conclusions

In this article, we examined the professional lives of six return migrants who decided to enroll in the BA in ELT offered at the University of Guanajuato and become formal English teachers in Mexico. As mentioned before, it is often the case for English teachers to begin teaching without formal training and this is the principal issue that affects their initial development as professionals. As such this article has also focused on gaining a better understanding of the challenges this situation causes for them, while studying this BA program and teaching EFL in public schools in Mexico at the same time.

These return migrants have plans to integrate themselves within the profession and it is clear that their main objective is to contribute to society and help other returnees, such as themselves. Overall, the voices of these six show how complex the social reinsertion of return migrants can be and how they continuously face struggles to find academic and job opportunities due to, sometimes, ineffective educational programs. We think this shows a natural process of how they become attached to the profession through formal preparation as an EFL teacher. This leads us to believe that educational deficiencies in the Mexican educational system help to maintain this phenomenon rather than addressing it.

The above undoubtedly calls for closer attention and more research which focuses its attention on revealing the transitions return migrants suffer from the educational systems in the United States and Mexico. Also, more effective educational programs which aim at making their lives more about inclusion rather than exclusion in the education systems and labor markets they work in. This inclusion refers to their being recruited and prepared for the profession which will hopefully eliminate their stigmatized labeling. In short, we think that the focus is about finding a way to value what these return migrants have and to make them a stronger part of society avoiding created stigmatization based on language.

This valuable understanding sheds light on the intricacies of lived experiences and the resources they bring as language teachers and learners, transitioning through the stereotypes placed on them by the educational system. Recruiting and preparing returnees to become EFL teachers is of importance to help meet the needs of the different levels of education: federal, state, local and university. We recommend that these returnees incorporate themselves with mono-national Mexican peers within educational programs that prepare teachers in order that all learn from each other and are aware of how each are of value by their integration within the EFL profession. For policy makers, it is of concern to not overlook who these individuals are. They are labeled as being deficient in Spanish or in English, making their educational insertion in Mexico problematic. Policy makers – at federal, state and local levels - must provide the means to include this type of students and be sensitive to who they are within an educational context rather than viewing them as a resource to cover up a national English language teaching deficit.

Finally opening a dialogue of these issues will help to make sense of these experiences and in turn this will be of value for all involved. To conclude, these implications and recommendations are also of interest for other countries that may have similar contexts. What we have learned above all else in this experiencing of working with return migrant students is that there is no-one-size fits all answer. With each new student, there is complex story that leads to other possibilities and as such may be a wider issue of a never-ending story of social transition through migration.

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