Abstract

In this qualitative multiple case study, I explored the identities of students in a Lengua Inglesa major in a northern Mexican university. By applying a theoretical framework of imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Norton, 2000; Wenger, 1998), I examined the ways in which the identities of these students are negotiated as the students move within and across linguistic and cultural communities. I attempted to answer four main questions: What are the students’ imagined communities at the beginning of the program? What are the students' imagined communities towards the end of the program? What may be the impact on students' identity/imagined communities of receiving instruction in a foreign language while surrounded by their native language and culture?

The study took place at a Lengua Inglesa major that operates within the School of Humanities at a university located near the U.S.-Mexico border. Data collection took place from February through April 2006, and consisted in two rounds of semi-structured interviews with five first-year students, four fourth-year students, as well as four full-time professors and three sessional instructors. I used an open-ended interview guide to facilitate the interview process. Since all of the participants were fluent in both Spanish and English, as I was, they were given the choice of conducting the interview in either language. The interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically.

The findings of this study suggest that students imagine a Lengua Inglesa degree will provide them with linguistic resources and knowledge necessary to access a wide range of imagined communities both within and beyond national boundaries. This vision seems to be reinforced by the futures that the Lengua Inglesa professors envision for
Lengua Inglesa graduates, which includes the adoption of an identity as English-language-professionals. As part of this identity, Lengua Inglesa students are expected to develop professional skills and a strong work ethic that allows them gain access to a wide range of professional and academic imagined communities. This identity helps establish clear boundaries between Lengua Inglesa and surrounding learning communities that the Lengua Inglesa community perceives as having impoverished futures.
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<tr>
<td>ANUIES</td>
<td>Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Institutos de Educación Superior (National Association of Universities and Institutes of Higher Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPFCE</td>
<td>Comité Administrador del Programa Federal para Construcción de Escuelas (Administration Committees of the Federal Program for Building Schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENEVAL</td>
<td>Centro para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior (Centre for the Evaluation of Higher Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEULE</td>
<td>Foros de Especialistas Universitarios en Lenguas Extranjeras (Mexican Forum for University Specialists in Foreign Languages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOMES</td>
<td>Fondos para la Modernización de la Educación Superior (Funds for the Modernization of Higher Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERCOSUR</td>
<td>Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free-Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSU</td>
<td>Northern State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAM</td>
<td>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of Spanish Terms

In addition to Lengua Inglesa, there are some other Spanish terms that may appear in this study:

*Carrera:* This is the closest equivalent to “major” in the American and Canadian model of higher education. It indicates the approved sequence of courses in a particular field of study that a student must successfully complete to be granted a degree in that field of study. The term is often used interchangeably with *licenciatura*. In this study I will often speak of Lengua Inglesa majors with the added connotations of *carrera*.

*Licenciatura:* This term refers to an undergraduate degree typically obtained after four to six years of study. It also refers to the academic unit (department or major) that offers the courses needed to complete such a degree. Finally, it also refers to the degree itself, the “license” which grants graduates the right to carry out professional activities within their field of expertise. Lorey (1992) observes that the *licenciatura* is the rough equivalent of the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in North America, but more vocationally oriented.

*Universidad Autónoma:* “Autonomous Universities” are public institutions of higher education in Mexico. They are autonomous in the sense that they have the legal rights to elect their own administrative and academic staff, administrate their funds, design and implement curricula, and define any other aspect of institutional life free from the intervention of the State or any other external power (Brunner, 1989). Although these
institutions enjoy a certain degree of academic and administrative freedom, they receive funds from the federal government through various regulating agencies, like Funds for the Modernization of Higher Education (FOMES) and the Administrative Committee of the Federal Program for Building Schools (CAPFCE).

Diplomado: This is the language center at Northern State University (NSU). The center offers English and French courses. Many Lengua Inglesa graduates and current students hold part-time positions at the Diplomado as English instructors. The term diplomado is also used to refer to English courses in general at the end of which students receive a diploma with official validity. In this document I use the upper-case variant to refer to the language center at NSU.

Filosofía, Letras Españolas, Ciencias de la Información: These are the Philosophy, Spanish Literature, and Information Sciences programs offered at the School of Humanities. Information Sciences is a program akin to library sciences.
Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to express my deepest gratitude to the many people who made this thesis possible.

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To my mother with love
CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between language and identity is an intimate one. Indeed, it has been suggested that language is constitutive of and constituted by an individual’s identity (Belsey, 1980; Norton, 2000). In recent years, this relationship has been the subject of a considerable amount of research (e.g. Gee, 1990; Heller, 1987; McCarthey, 2002; Norton, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003) of which Norton (2000), McNamara (1997) and Hansen and Liu (1997) offer comprehensive reviews. Most of these studies have focused on higher education in contexts where English is learned as a second language. The relationship between language and identity in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language, on the other hand, has been often overlooked. This gap in the literature is troublesome at a time when universities around the world expect at least some degree of bilingualism in English and their first language from their students by the time they graduate—a trend promoted by larger political and economic forces.

The “disruptions of globalization” and the emergence of a competitive global economy that have forced major internal restructurings of higher education institutions (Mazawi, 2005; World Bank, 2000) make the relationship between language and identity even more critical in developing countries, where students are under great pressure to become fluent in a foreign language, usually English. Furthermore, with the advent of new educational technologies, as well as the creation of branch campuses and franchise universities, university programs in developing countries that operate entirely in English and follow a North American educational model are becoming more and more common. This situation poses important questions regarding the effects such programs may have.
on aspects such as students' learning experiences. Croxford (2001) highlights the tensions that the North American liberal arts education system may create in foreign students with respect to study skills and academic values. There is also evidence that students may develop learning problems in situations where English is not a native language but an institutionalized medium of instruction (So, 1987). Similarly, the situation poses questions regarding the effects of these programs on student identity.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study focuses on understanding changes in the identity of university students in a situation where the medium of instruction is not that of the community in which the students live. This qualitative case study considers the experience of students of Lengua Inglesa, the English major at Universidad Estatal del Norte¹ (Northern State University - NSU) in Mexico. I investigated how the identity of these students is affected by receiving full-time instruction in English while surrounded by their native Spanish-speaking community.

I apply a theoretical framework of imagined communities as proposed by Norton (2001, 2004), Wenger (1998), and Anderson (1991). Norton (2001) makes a connection between Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of situated learning and Wenger’s (1998) later work on the human ability to relate, through imagination, to groups of people “beyond our immediate social network” (Kanno, 2003, p. 287). Norton theorizes that an individual’s learning is affected not only by his or her current social interactions, but also by their future, imagined affiliations. An individual’s investment (Bourdieu, 1977; Norton Peirce, 1995) in a particular activity (e.g., classroom activities) will be influenced

¹ A pseudonym
by whether or not the individual perceives that the activity will facilitate access to a desired community.

Norton (2001) also indicates that an imagined community invites an imagined identity. I began the study with the assumption that the imagined communities of Lengua Inglesa students are affected as a direct result of participating in the Lengua Inglesa program. My study sought to investigate how the imagined communities and the identities of Lengua Inglesa students are negotiated as they move within and across linguistic and cultural communities. The study attempted to answer four main questions:

- What are the students’ imagined communities at the beginning of the program?
- What are the students’ imagined communities towards the end of the program?
- What are the futures that the faculty envision for students?
- What impact does receiving instruction in English while surrounded by their native Mexican Spanish-speaking community have on students’ identity?

I expected that the answers to these questions would lead to a discussion on the possible effects that the program may have on student identity, and the implications that this may have in terms of faculty expectations of prospective students and graduates.

Methods for Data Collection

The field research component of the study took place during the months of February and March 2006. I selected face-to-face interviewing as the main data collection approach for my study. This data collection approach allowed participants to share detailed historical and biographical information; this was essential since the study’s main focus was student identity and imagined communities. I applied purposeful sampling to
select the five first-year students, four fourth-year students, and seven professors who volunteered to participate in the study.

Using an open-ended interview guide (see Appendices), I carried out an initial round of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each participant. Since all of the participants were fluent in both Spanish and English, as I am, they were given the choice of conducting the interview in either language to ensure they felt comfortable during the interview. The questions in the protocol were presented in clusters of topics and were given to each participant at least 24 hours before the interview, so that he or she had an opportunity to ask questions about the protocol and the interview process. The questions for the student participants were clustered as follows: 1) educational and linguistic backgrounds; 2) participant’s expectations for the future and whether Lengua Inglesa will serve as a bridge to reaching those expectations; 3) participants’ processes of adaptation to the program; and 4) participants’ self-perception as members of the Lengua Inglesa program. An adapted version of this protocol was used to interview the faculty participants, focusing mainly on the role that the program is perceived and/or expected to play in students’ lives. These interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Once the interviews were organized and prepared for analysis, I carried out a systematic coding process to generate a detailed description of the setting and the participants in each group and to identify specific themes that emerged from the data. I then analyzed the data in light of the framework of identity, language and imagined communities as presented in the review of the literature. Next, I triangulated the findings with the institution’s own perception of the students’ identity. The latter was determined
from the semi-structured interviews with faculty-participants, which were analyzed following a process similar to that used in the interviews with student-participants. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed description of the study’s methodologies and methods applied in the data collection and analysis.

Significance of the Study

In recent decades, the increasing demand for English-Spanish bilingual professionals, as well as a generalized effort to internationalize the Mexican higher education system, has led to the proliferation of Lengua Inglesa majors in Mexican public universities. Yet with the exception of a landmark review carried out by the British Council,2 there have been few attempts to describe and analyze these programs. A handful of doctoral dissertations have appeared which deal with these programs to various degrees. For instance, Hassell (1995) investigated the implementation of a cooperative language learning approach in a Lengua Inglesa program. Similarly, Morin Lam (1998) explored a procedural model for teaching literature in a second language in a Lengua Inglesa classroom. Ryan (1994) explored the perceptions of culture and their relationship to the instructional behaviour of thirty teachers at the English department of a large Mexican university.3 Finally, Acosta (2003) conducted a survey of students’ attitudes towards English in a Lengua Inglesa program. Acosta’s study applies psychological theories of identity and language development in a survey of Lengua

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2 The British Council is the United Kingdom’s international organization for educational opportunities and cultural relations. The Council’s stated aim is to “build mutually beneficial relationships between people in the UK and other countries and to increase appreciation of the UK’s creative ideas and achievements” (http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-about-us.htm).

3 Although Ryan describes this department as a university language centre, the fact that this centre was linked to a Department of Applied Linguistics suggests that the setting for her study was in fact a Lengua Inglesa program also in charge of providing English instruction to all undergraduate students.
Inglesa students’ attitudes towards English. These studies approach the Lengua Inglesa environment as a convenient setting in which to find English learners/speakers. For the most part, they do not address the interaction between the institution and the students, nor do they pay particular attention to the peculiarity that English is the language of instruction in these programs.

The only sustained attempts at identifying their long-term impact on students are intra-institutional follow-up reports on alumni that focus on aspects like graduation and attrition rates among other quantitative data. However, it is not enough to talk about the physical presence of students in the classroom. Taking into account their vocal presence and their multiple identities as individuals (Hughes, 1998) is the initial step towards providing students with an appropriate learning environment (Liversidge, 2004). My intention in this study was to bring to the fore the unique perspective of Lengua Inglesa students and to gauge the impact that the major has on them in terms of their envisioned futures.

This study is also important in that the focus is on Mexican state university programs where English is the language of instruction. There is a significant gap in the literature on Mexican higher education regarding most of these elements. Thus, it is important that the study takes place in a state university in the north of Mexico, as the general trend in research is to focus on Mexico City or one of the other large urban centres like Guadalajara or Monterrey. There are significant differences between state universities and the large research universities in Mexico City and other metropolises, as in the quality of physical facilities and academic support. As Salvador (n. d.) has observed, this is mainly the result of the politicized system for economic redistribution.
whereby Mexico's strong central government collects taxes from all of the states in the country, then spends it preferentially in the more politically important institutions like UNAM. These differences may indicate that Mexican state universities deal with idiosyncratic issues that are not comparable to those of the centralized research institutions. Although in recent years some researchers have turned their attention to universities in other parts of the country, these institutions have been typically ignored. The present study is significant in that it will present the case of a B.A. program in a public state university.

Secondly, it is crucial to note that English is the language of instruction in these institutions. One of the most important aspects of the proposed study is that it will help narrow a major gap in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) literature in Mexico. As mentioned earlier, most of the research on language and identity has taken place in countries where English is learned as a second language. Even though there have been a number of studies focused on imagined communities, language and identity in countries where English is spoken as a foreign language, especially in Asia (e.g., Kanno, 2003; Norton & Kamal, 2003), there is a regrettable lack of information regarding the situation in Latin America. Furthermore, as Ricento and Hornberger (1996) and Brutt-Griffler (2002) observe, despite the traditional focus on institutional language planning, English has and continues to spread around the world via the work of local teachers. Lengua Inglesa programs train significant numbers of teachers, translators, and other bilingual professionals who may in turn pass on their attitudes towards English to a more general

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4 In fact, it is significant that the literature on universities beyond the Mexico City area often refers to these institutions as *provincial* universities. Even though "provincial" can denote a connection to a province or other territory governed as a unit of a country, the term also connotes a lack of sophistication and unwillingness to accept novel ways of thinking. In this study I will refer to these institutions as *state universities*, a term which describes institutions like NSU far more accurately.
The present study seeks to be a springboard in helping us to better understand Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexico and their influence on students. Likewise, I expect that this study may serve as a decision-making tool in the structural and curricular modifications currently taking place in Lengua Inglesa. A systematic, thorough appraisal of the students' expectations and imagined communities may help Lengua Inglesa faculty make decisions regarding student recruitment and curricular offerings.

Besides the more "academic" reasons for undertaking this project, I wanted to carry it out for deeply personal reasons. I bring along questions about my own hybrid identity, which I believe has been influenced by the Lengua Inglesa program: why do I find it easier to express myself in English than in Spanish? Where do I fit into the "native-speaker," "second-language speaker" and "foreign-language speaker" continuum, when my experience tells me that none of those categories is an exact description of my relationship to English? Why did my previous knowledge of English seem somehow out of context when I first moved to Canada, when it made perfect sense in both Mexico and the United States? Furthermore, why during my time as a graduate student in Canada have I felt that I am neither an outsider nor an insider, but something in between—something far more fluid and awkward at the same time? Why is this also the case when I am in Mexico? I did not expect to find conclusive answers to these and many other questions by carrying out this study. I did, however, hope that in the process I would discover whether other people with backgrounds like mine are asking similar questions and, more importantly, how they are making sense of them.
Organization of the Thesis

This introductory chapter outlines the main components of the study: purpose, research questions, significance, and definition of terms. Chapter Two is a review of the literature in which I first present evidence of the growth of Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexican public universities. I illustrate how this growth has been spurred by two intricately linked processes: globalization and the worldwide spread of English. I discuss the impact of globalization on Mexican public universities, focusing on the discourse of internationalization underlying some of the recent changes in the functions and values of Mexican universities. This discourse has in turn helped propel the growth of Lengua Inglesa programs in the country. A factor of equal importance in spurring the growth of these majors is the role of English in Mexico, a topic addressed in the following section. Here I present an overview of the global spread of English intended to contextualize the role of the language in Mexico, and its ultimate importance for the study of Lengua Inglesa programs. Some important themes emerge from these two sections: a close link between ideology and policy, the influence of transnational policies and ways of living, the asymmetrical power relations between countries and individuals, and the interplay of fear and desire as motivators for learning English. Finally, I present an overview of the literature on imagined communities, which constitutes the theoretical framework of my study. In Chapter Three I describe and justify the methodology applied in the study. I discuss the rationale for choosing to carry out a multiple case study through a series of semi-structured interviews as the main method for data collection. In addition to outlining the methodology for conducting and analyzing the interviews, this chapter discusses ethical and logistical considerations, expected challenges, and my role as researcher.
Chapter Four is a presentation of the data gathered during the research process; this section also includes a detailed description of the context in which the study took place. In Chapter Five I present the conclusions that I draw from the data in terms of the theoretical framework outlined in the review of the literature. Finally, in Chapter Six I make recommendations for the Lengua Inglesa program at NSU based on the findings of the study. This chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study suggest that students may imagine a Lengua Inglesa degree will provide them with the linguistic resources and flexible professional skills necessary to access a wide range of imagined professional communities both within and beyond national boundaries. Their decision to study in Lengua Inglesa is an investment in an education leading to an officially recognized university degree that at the same time allows them to develop a sophisticated knowledge of English. Together, these characteristics are envisioned as increasing the participants’ worth in national and transnational labour markets. This vision seems to be reinforced by the vision that the Lengua Inglesa professors have of the students’ futures. The faculty-participants take pride in the English language professional identity that the major offers to students. As part of this identity, Lengua Inglesa students are expected to develop professional skills and a strong work ethic that allows them gain access to a wide range of professional imagined communities. The professors also expect that, in addition to preparing students for successful careers, the major also may broaden the students’ horizons by helping them become critical and reflexive individuals. The data show that some of the student-participants have adopted several of the characteristics that define this identity. The
process seems to begin at the time of entering the major for most participants; additionally, it appears to have continued during the course of the studies of three of the fourth-year participants.

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that the participants must constantly negotiate belonging to at least two different linguistic communities: the English-speaking Lengua Inglesa community, and the surrounding Spanish-speaking community within the School of Humanities. The identities of the participants as members of two different imagined communities must be negotiated both within and outside the class context. Studying in Lengua Inglesa means entering "a different world" that operates according to a number of unspoken yet powerful sociolinguistic norms. These rules in part dictate how the participants negotiate their identity within the larger Spanish-speaking community. At the same time, they create identity markers that help establish boundaries between Lengua Inglesa students and two main groups: learners of English as a foreign language, and students from other majors within the School of Humanities. These boundaries appear to separate Lengua Inglesa students from those students whom the Lengua Inglesa community perceives as having impoverished futures.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the literature is divided into four main sections. In the first section, I describe the recent growth of Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexican public universities over the past two decades. Because the literature available on these programs is scarce, the next two sections are intended to provide a general picture of Lengua Inglesa majors in Mexico. To do so, I analyze the recent increase of Lengua Inglesa programs in terms of the social contexts within which Mexican universities currently operate. I focus on the influence of two powerful and intimately related phenomena: globalization and the spread of English. In the last section I link this discussion to the literature on imagined communities, language and identity, focusing on the work of Anderson (1991), Norton (2001), and Wenger (1998) to help me establish the theoretical framework for my study. Figure 1 is a literature map (Creswell, 2003) illustrating the main topics and the relationships among topics covered in this review.
Major themes included in the review of the literature

Related themes not included in the review of the literature
Lengua Inglesa Programs in Mexico

Lengua Inglesa majors are usually nine- or ten-semester programs aimed at preparing bilingual professionals who will work as teachers of English as a foreign language and/or translators. Although programs across the country may emphasize different areas of knowledge, they tend to be structurally similar and typically offer courses in history, literature, British and American culture, linguistics, phonetics, and language teaching methodology (Morris, 1999). Many Lengua Inglesa programs in the country also provide entry-level English courses for students, who are not expected to become proficient in the language until well into the third and fourth years of instruction.

Morris (1999) cites data from the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education in Mexico (ANUIES) to indicate that of 1996 there were fourteen state universities offering Lengua Inglesa majors. I have summarized these institutions in Table 1.

Table 1: Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexico in 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>1996 Student Numbers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP)</td>
<td>1143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes (UAAGS)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Campeche (UACAM)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Estatal del Norte (NSU)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Colima (UCOL)</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro (AUQ)</td>
<td>107</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa (UAS)</td>
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<td>Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO)</td>
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<td>Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco (UJAT)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
However, later data from ANUIES (2003) indicates that the number of Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexico had almost doubled by 2002, as illustrated in Table 2. Even though the names of the programs may vary according to their area of specialization, all of them fit the general description put forth by Morris (1999) and are therefore included in this overview. The approximate equivalents in English of these variants are B. A. in English (Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa); B. A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés, Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés, Licenciatura en Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa; Licenciatura en Docencia del Idioma Inglés); B. A. in Modern Languages (Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas); B. A. in Applied Linguistics (Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada); and B. A. in Translation (Licenciatura en Traducción) among other possible combinations. In this review I will consistently use the term “Lengua Inglesa” to refer to these programs in general, as I consider it to be the most encompassing of all of these terms and because it is the name of the specific program under consideration at NSU.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Name of Program</th>
<th>Number of Students in 2002</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza del Inglés</td>
<td>173</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Baja California</td>
<td>Lic. en Docencia del Idioma Inglés</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur</td>
<td>Lic. en Traducción</td>
<td>111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma del Carmen (Campeche)</td>
<td>Lic. en Lengua Inglesa</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad de Colima at Tecomán</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza de Lenguas</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas at Tuxtla Gutiérrez</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas at San Cristóbal de las Casas</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas at Tapachula</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México</td>
<td>Lic. en Lenguas y Literatura Moderna: Lengua Inglesa</td>
<td>271</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad de Guadalajara</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza del Idiomas</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad de Guanajuato</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza del Inglés</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad del Estado de Hidalgo</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México at Toluca</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México at Toluca</td>
<td>Lic. en Lengua Inglesa</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México at Acatlan</td>
<td>Lic. en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés</td>
<td>270</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León</td>
<td>Lic. en Lingüística Aplicada: Traducción</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
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<td>Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca</td>
<td>Lic. en Lenguas Extranjeras</td>
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<td>Universidad de Quintana Roo</td>
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<td>Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Veracruzana</td>
<td>Lic. en Lengua Inglesa</td>
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</table>
As Table 2 shows, Lengua Inglesa majors are rapidly becoming important components in the educational offerings of public state universities in Mexico. This is reflected not only in the creation of more programs, but in the number of students enrolled in them. In the case of Lengua Inglesa at NSU, there has been a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in the major over the last five years. In 2001, there were 102 students registered in the major; by 2004 this number had risen to 152, an 11.7% increase.

The information in Tables 1 and 2 challenges previous claims that by 1996 Mexican students were unlikely to receive a college education in English unless they attended college in an English-speaking country, or at the Universidad de las Americas (Hidalgo, Cifuentes, & Flores, 1996). As the data from the British Council (Morris, 1999) shows, by 1996 there were already fourteen public universities offering B. A. degrees in English. Of these, the Lengua Inglesa programs at the Universidad Veracruzana (1966), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (1975), Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro (1986), Universidad de Guadalajara (1987), Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco (1990), and Northern State University (1982) were founded on or before 1990. In at least the case of the Lengua Inglesa majors at Universidad de

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5 Universidad de las Americas is a private institution in Mexico City founded in 1940 which offers English as both the subject and the medium of instruction.
Guadalajara and NSU, English has been the principal language of teaching and learning from the inception of the programs.

Globalization and Higher Education in Mexico

Over the last decade, many definitions of globalization have been suggested, each highlighting different aspects of what is loosely understood as a number of economic, cultural, social, and political trends—facilitated by technological advances—that are extending the boundaries of social systems around the world beyond the borders of nation states (Barrow, Didou & Mallea, 2004, p. 1). A comprehensive analysis of the multiple debates surrounding globalization and its implications is beyond the scope of this review. Nonetheless, the impact of globalization on Mexican public universities is of particular interest to our discussion of Lengua Inglesa majors in Mexico. In this section I briefly summarize the ways in which the political, economic and ideological shifts brought about by globalization have resulted in dramatic changes in terms of the core values, interests and structures of universities around the world. I then present this as the background to identify the main factors that have altered the functions and values of Mexican universities and propelled the growth of Lengua Inglesa programs in the country.

It may be argued that modern universities have always been international institutions that respond to new circumstances (Altbach, 1998). Similarly, it may be argued that world economies have always been international, and that globalization is in fact a centuries-old phenomenon (Diaz-Bonilla & Robinson, 2001; Robertson, 1997; Wallerstein, 1987). Yet the term “globalization” commonly refers to the “multiplication and intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural linkages among people, organizations, and countries at the world level” (Diaz-Bonilla & Robinson, 2001, p. 1).
Even though there is much contention regarding the specifics of what has changed and how it has changed (Fontana & Yanoma, 2001), globalization is generally seen as having increased the complexity of social, economic, and political interactions between nations and individuals.

At the same time, as neoliberalist trends gain strength around the globe, universities are being restructured according to market-driven objectives to make them more “client” or “customer” oriented (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). The notion of neoliberalism I employ here refers to the politico-economic ideology that gained strength in the 1970s and the 1980s during the administrations of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States (Cerny, 2004). This notion of neoliberalism views the market as the core institution of modern capitalist societies. It proposes that national and international policies should be subservient to the needs of the markets, and consequently emphasizes deregulation and reduction of the state. Competition—between nations, regions, firms, individuals—is the central value of neoliberalism, as it is supposed to “allocate all resources, whether physical, natural, human or financial with the greatest possible efficiency” (George, 1999, p. 2). At the domestic level, competition as the central value of neoliberalism implies that “the public sector must be brutally downsized because it does not and cannot obey the basic law of competing for profits or for market share” (idem, p. 3). At the international level, competition is promoted through three broad measures commonly associated with structural adjustment policies: free trade in goods and services, free circulation of capital, and freedom of investment across borders.
Closely linked to these precepts is the notion of the so-called "knowledge-based" society, which has increased the dependency of post-industrial societies on universities for training, research, and high-technology innovation (Altbach, 1998; Slaughter, 1998). Simultaneously, theories of human capital have stressed the need for a labour force with highly-developed skills. Workers and students alike are expected to develop the learning skills that will allow them to survive in a demanding and constantly changing labour market. In keeping with neoliberal ideals, the responsibility for success in the labour market—as in life itself—falls on the individual, with little consideration for existing social structures (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status) that may prevent individuals from accessing education and other essential resources (see Cruikshank, 2002; Fenwick, 2004).

As society grows more complex, so do universities. Greater complexity of higher education institutions does not only entail the "differences in scale and technology" that Cobban (1975) describes; it also implies adjustment of historic configurations of beliefs, interests, and structures (Clark, 1993). For instance, Readings (1996) contends that as the nation-state and the modern notion of culture lose their relevance in a transnational economy, the university's traditional role as a safeguard of national culture cannot endure. Such changes in the perceived role of universities have a powerful impact on institutional policies and structures. According to the World Bank (2000), the number of post-secondary students around the world doubled in size from 40 million in 1975 to more than 80 million in 1995. In response to the demands of ever-increasing masses of students, universities around the world have recently experienced unprecedented growth and diversification to meet the demands of specific groups (Altbach, 1998; Morrow & Torres, 2000; Slaughter, 1998).
In the case of developing countries, the “disruptions of globalization” and the emergence of a competitive global economy have also forced major internal restructurings of higher education systems (Mazawi, 2005; World Bank Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). In exchange for financial aid, international agencies like the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) encourage developing countries to implement educational reforms favouring less public investment in education, structural adjustment of schools and teachers, and the promotion of policies toward decentralization and privatization (Lopez, 1999). These measures have been rationalized as responses to the integration of countries into large politico-economic blocs like the European Union, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) in South America, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in North America.

There is a common misconception that NAFTA, unlike the Treaty of Maastricht in the European Union, has not considered education as one of its main concerns. Yet Chapter XII of NAFTA specifically addresses cross-border trade in services. This chapter stipulates that transnational providers of education services at all levels must be allowed to offer their services in Mexico (Barrow et al., 2004). Likewise, Article 1.201 specifies that professionals from one country are allowed to practice in another if they obtain appropriate licenses (Fantini, Arias-Galicia & Guay, 2001). Furthermore, NAFTA endorses the creation of private tri-national commissions to evaluate and license Mexican professionals and university programs (Aboites, 1997). After the signing of the treaty in 1993, these provisions urged a movement to increase student mobility, academic exchange, and professional certification across North America. Groups like the
Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) were created to develop policies and programs that would help achieve these aims.

The increased contact among the three trading partners, along with the recommendations of organizations like OECD, prompted an interest in comparing the Mexican higher education system with those of other countries to justify policies that emulate quality and funding levels abroad (Kent, 2002). Simultaneously, a new official discourse of "rationality," "quality assessment," and "excellence" emerged which has greatly influenced the restructuring of the traditional missions and values of universities in Mexico. Among the concrete outcomes of this discourse is the implementation of quality-assessment examinations of university programs across the disciplines; these examinations were for the most part designed "with a North American perspective and in consultation with similar associations north of the border" (Kent, 2002, p. 150). Other measures included the implementation of controversial programs to standardize the entrance examination to middle and higher education, as well as nation-wide programs to promote the high-level performance of university professors (Zorrilla, 1998). These measures, in keeping with the neoliberal ideals of competition and homogenization, cause students to compete against each other for entrance to universities, while professors compete among themselves for research funds and bonuses for productivity. Similarly, private and public schools increasingly compete amongst themselves for state funding,

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6 Mexico joined the OECD in 1994. In 1996, at the request of the Mexican government, the OECD conducted one of its first external assessments of national policy in the country; this review included an analysis of higher education in Mexico (Zorrilla, 1998).

7 On November 7, 2005, NSU signed an agreement with the Centro Nacional de Evaluación Superior (CENEVAL), the private organization responsible for designing and implementing these standardized entrance examinations (NSU, 2005)
just as the primary, secondary and post-secondary levels of education compete for priority in the public budget (Lopez, 1999).

*The Internationalization of Mexican Public Universities*

Another dimension of the discourses heralded by NAFTA urges Mexicans to see themselves "not only as national citizens but as citizens of the world, who must commerce in the global market of capital and commodities without trespassing the borders of national labor markets" (Barrera Herrera, 1993, p. 14). This facet of the discourse avers that the main purpose of universities is to become "internationally competitive" (Aboites, 2003) by operating according to international indicators and standards (see ANUIES, 2000). The reforms that came about under the banner of "internationalizing" higher education have appeared in various guises, as in cooperative agreements between institutions to carry out joint research projects, the implementation of distance delivery programs, the establishment of articulation programs to validate academic credits and degrees across borders, and the promotion student and faculty exchange programs (Marin, 1998). Additionally, Mexican public universities have attempted to "internationalize" their programs by introducing basic instrumental courses like computer skills and English. They have also created specialized courses and majors leading to careers viable in the global competitive reality such as international trade, foreign relations, tourism, computer sciences, and especially relevant to our discussion, English (Didou, 2000; Lopez, 1999).

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8 Garcia-Guadilla et al. (2002) and Marin (1998) offer detailed accounts of the forms in which this discourse translated into greater but profoundly asymmetrical interactions between universities in Mexico, Canada, and the United States.
Barrow et al. (2004, p. 141) observe that universities in Mexico “felt compelled to internationalise as soon as NAFTA was implemented even though there was no clear understanding of the desirable direction for the process, its benefits, risks and content.” Yet many of the plans to internationalize universities gradually lost momentum as there were no clear strategies to enforce them. Although between 1990 and 1997 the number of undergraduate programs that reported an international component increased from 23 to 152, the number of students in these programs made up a miniscule percentage of the total number of undergraduates in the public system: 12,000 students out of 1.08 million (1.1%) in 1990, and almost 36,000 students out of 1.3 million (2.7%) in 1997 (Didou, 2000).

In the end, Kent (2002) observes, “in terms of changes in the curriculum and teaching, internationalisation has made headway only at certain institutions—especially those situated on the U.S. border and the larger universities and research institutes—and in certain disciplines and departments” (p. 156). Nonetheless, it is evident that the efforts to internationalize Mexican public universities had a significant impact in boosting the development of Lengua Inglesa majors. Barrow et al. (2004) indicate that between 1994 and 1997 most of the undergraduate degrees awarded in programs with an international component were in international trade and customs (119 degrees) and international relations (46 degrees). The authors note that, at the same time, the number of language degrees for teaching purposes also increased to “at least 18 programs where undergraduates can pursue professional training in English, which is the language most demanded in Mexico at the current time” (p. 150-151).
This supports the information presented in the first section of this review of the literature, in which I describe the growth of Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexico. The comparison between Table 1 and Table 2 illustrates that the estimate of Barrow et al. regarding the number of Lengua Inglesa majors is rather conservative, as there are now in fact close to thirty such programs in the country. Furthermore, between 1996 and 2002 other Lengua Inglesa programs also experienced significant growth in student enrolment, most noticeably Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, and Universidad de Sonora. Even though the total student enrolment in Lengua Inglesa programs represents only about 0.57 percent of the total undergraduate enrolment in public universities (7,207 students out of 1,244,942 in 2002) (ANUIES, 2003), at the institutional level the increase in student numbers may be quite significant depending on the size of the university.

The interplay between ideology and policy becomes evident in the analysis of globalization and higher education. As we have seen, the functions and structures of universities around the world have been greatly altered by the neoliberal ideologies and by the national and international policies that have given them flesh and blood. In Mexico, the discourses of competitiveness and internationalization have driven universities to carry out sweeping reforms at the curricular and structural levels. Even though these reforms have been fragmented in scope and implementation (Didou, 2000), they have nonetheless played a key role on the growth of Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexico.

Barrow et al. (2004) raise the important issue that English is the language in most demand in Mexico. While this can be in part explained by the influence of NAFTA and
Mexico's proximity to the United States and Canada, the widespread use of English in a non-English speaking country is not a phenomenon exclusive to Mexico. The following section addresses this issue. I present an overview of the global spread of English that leads to a discussion on the role of the language in Mexico, and its ultimate importance for the study of Lengua Inglesa programs. Some themes emerge that overlap with the discussion of universities and globalization: the close interaction between ideology and policy, the influence of globalization and transnationalization, and the asymmetrical power relations between countries and individuals.

The Global Spread of English

"There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English," Crystal (1997, p. 139) categorically asserts. The general consensus among researchers of the global spread of English (e.g., Ferguson, 1982; Graddol, 1997; Machan & Scott, 1992) is that this is true. Nonetheless, we are also reminded that English is far from being the only or even the first language to be used for intercultural and/or international communication. Ferguson (1982, p. ix) provides a more nuanced assessment of the growth of English within a historical perspective:

...the spread of one language in relation to others is a phenomenon which presumably goes back as far in human history as the existence of a multiplicity of languages. Certainly it is documented as far back as written records go; e.g., in the second millennium B.C., Akkadian replaced Sumerian but the speech community retained the latter in certain learned uses. Also, it is a familiar phenomenon for one language to serve as a lingua franca or language of special functions (religious, commercial) over a large area of many languages: Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Arabic and French are examples at various periods and in different parts of the world. But there has never before been a single language which spread for such purposes over most of the world, as English has done in this century.
Indeed, it is expected that in the following decades those who speak English as an additional language will outnumber those for whom it is a first language (Graddol, 1997). If this holds true, then not only would speakers of English as an additional language become the key players in determining the future of English: the very distinction between 'second language' and 'foreign language' would become increasingly inadequate (Crystal, 1997). The spread of English is thus a unique and modern phenomenon in terms of scale, rate, and the degree to which it is used for international and intranational purposes (Fishman, 1982, p. 19). At the same time, it has been described as "an unprecedented form of linguistic and cultural colonization" (Kachru, 1982, p. 3) inextricably linked to the complex processes of globalization and transnationalization.

In the last few decades, various descriptions, analyses and theories of the spread of English have appeared. Some of these are triumphalist, "non-political" descriptions of English as an international language (Crystal, 1997; Hanson, 1997) which uncritically endorse the ideology of English as the language of science, technology and modernization. In this view, which has been called the "Diffusion of English Paradigm" (Tsuda, 1994), monolingualism and culture homogenization are presented as inevitable—even desirable—in a world where national barriers are becoming blurred by internationalization and transnationalization (Phillipson, 1999). In this section I describe two alternative interpretations of the spread of English: a Marxist view of the spread of English as linguistic imperialism, and a post-colonial perspective that underscores the agency of peoples and nations to "appropriate" English.

Although there are evident ideological differences between these perspectives, the two of them draw attention to the intricate ways in which the spread of English is linked
to complex phenomena of diasporas, globalization and transnationalization. In spite of these differences, I do not believe that these two views are as mutually exclusive as some researchers (e.g., Pennycook, 2003a, 2003b) suggest. Indeed, I find that if we think of them as absolutely incompatible, we risk overlooking key issues that would help us form a fuller understanding of the causes, characteristics and implications of the spread of English. These two views can help us understand the role of English in Latin America and, more specifically, the context in which Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexico operate. On the one hand, the association of English with linguistic imperialism stresses the fact that the spread of English is inextricable from social, political and economical issues outside the language itself. On the other hand, the post-colonial perspective brings to the fore the notion that people in post-colonial—and, we may add, EFL contexts in general—have the agency to critically assess how they can and want to engage with English (Canagarajah, 1999a).

The Spread of English as Linguistic Imperialism

Informed by Marxist perspectives, scholars like Dissanayake (1997), Phillipson (1992), Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Tollefson (1991) have emphasized the complex ties between the spread of English to globalization and transnationalization. Some of these scholars interpret English as an instrument of linguistic imperialism leading to the homogenisation of world culture and to the demise of local and minority languages (Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Tsuda, 1994). They remind us that “the majority of the population in post-colonial states are governed in a language they do not understand, and live in abject conditions” (Phillipson, 1999, p. 268). They consider that much of the discussion of English as an international language, including the concern for
developing a theory to explain the spread of English, has served as a “smoke screen” that obscures the underlying political, cultural, and ethical questions surrounding this phenomenon. In his earlier work, Pennycook (1994) criticizes works on the spread of English that present it as a natural, neutral and beneficial phenomenon, arguing that in reality it is inextricably linked to a myriad of local and global complexities, including the unequal distribution of wealth, power, culture and knowledge. According to Pennycook, the discourse of English as an international language “has shifted in accordance with other global changes... [i]t has moved from a rhetoric of colonial expansion, through a rhetoric of development aid to a rhetoric of the international free market. English and English teaching in these terms have been considered intrinsically good for the world, a key aspect of global development, and a commodity freely traded on world markets” (Pennycook, 1994, p. 6). To view the spread of English as a natural and neutral phenomenon, Pennycook concludes, “is to ignore the history of that spread and to turn one’s back on larger global forces and the goals and interests of institutions and governments that have promoted it” (idem, p. 23).

In many parts of the world—including Mexico—English is typically associated with power, elitism, technological progress, and modernity. As in many developing countries, English is recognized as the basic tool for “catching up” with the industrialized world, even in the face of national policies that claim to assert multilingual and multiethnic identities (Petzold, 1994). In light of such powerful motivations, it is unsurprising that many governments around the globe are concerned with increasing their citizens’ knowledge of English. Worldwide, English is becoming subject to much more functional regulation by local political authorities than any other language in history. This
is “an unusual situation insofar as the spread of English is concerned,” and represents a powerful force in the international sociolinguistic balance of power (Fishman, 1982, p. 19). For instance, there is evidence that in much of Latin America English learning and teaching are currently subject to system-wide regulation. A growing number of countries, including Argentina (Eayrs, 1999), Brazil (Walker, 1999), Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua (Gregson, 1999a), Colombia (De Castro & Garcia, 1999) and Mexico (Morris 1999), face sweeping educational reforms designed to make English mandatory at the primary and secondary levels. Likewise, many public universities in countries like Venezuela (Gregson, 1999c) and Mexico (Morris, 1999) are now implementing English as a compulsory subject for all students. Yet other countries like Brazil (Walker, 1999) have made English a component in public university entrance exams. This is interesting in light of the discussion on the impact of globalization on higher education in Mexico and Latin America presented earlier in this review, in which I described how universities are changing in the face of external pressures to become more internationally competitive.

The view of the spread of English as linguistic imperialism can help us re-examine the reforms towards the increased institutionalization of English in Latin America. This perspective reveals that the regulation of English in Latin America is by no means a neutral phenomenon, nor one without problematic repercussions. The reforms mentioned above, for instance, have often resulted in policies that make teachers directly responsible for increasing the quality of English instruction. Some governments are implementing re-training programs for existing English teachers who lack a university

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9 The only exception seems to be Uruguay, where Suarez (1999) observes that English teaching training programs are not regulated by the government.
degree in English or other kinds of formal training in language teaching; this is the case in Bolivia (Vilar, 1999), Nicaragua (Gregson, 1999a), El Salvador (Gregson, 1999a), Costa Rica (Eastment, 1999), Ecuador (Barry & Barry, 1999), Panama (Gregson, 1999b), and Argentina (Eayrs, 1999). Other governments, however, have taken more extreme measures. In Peru, the government has dismissed a number of non-university degree English teachers from state schools because their experience has no official validity in the national education system. To avoid losing their jobs, many in-service teachers “are joining professional training courses at universities but many find the five year length hard to sustain” (Ferreyros, 1999, p. 27). Likewise, the spread of English in Mexico also has a dark side. Morris (1999, p. 60) notes that “fear of being unable to attain sustainable employment without the attribute of speaking English to some level has led some Mexicans into classrooms, and is leading many more to do so.”

Under this lens, it is necessary to consider the extent to which these reforms are related to the demands of organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to implement educational reforms favouring the structural adjustment of schools and teachers, and the promotion of policies toward decentralization and privatization (Lopez, 1999). It is also worth considering whether the desire of Latin American governments to become “players” in the global economy motivates them to acquiesce to these demands, even at the expense of workers and the less-protected sectors of the population. The reforms towards the regulation of English in Latin America could thus be interpreted as symptomatic of a post-imperialist ideology enacted by international economic bodies and national governments.
In a similar fashion, it has been suggested that the spread of English in Mexico reflects a U.S. post-imperialist ideology that has strengthened thanks to NAFTA (Hidalgo et al., 1996). Indeed, it is largely due to this agreement that the regulation of English has taken a distinct flavour in North America. Even though the interlocking matters of culture, language and migration were excluded from NAFTA, as they were seen as “politically divisive and lying outside the legitimate sphere of a free-trade pact” (Morris, 2003, p. 145), the economic measures established in the agreement have a profound impact on all of these issues.\(^\text{10}\) This is evident in that, regardless of the economic incentives to maintain membership in NAFTA, the three member countries have expressed concern that the rising “interdependence” among them may “loosen control of the nation-state over national culture, language, and flows of people across borders” (idem, p. 144).

The linguistic situation in the bloc is particularly complex even though NAFTA includes only three countries, two of which have large English-speaking populations. Each member country must deal with idiosyncratic challenges, such as the federal and provincial language policies in Canada, the historical decentralization of language policies in the United States, and the protection of indigenous languages in Mexico, to name a few. NAFTA has added to the often pre-existing concerns of each member country regarding linguistic and cultural flows. In the case of the United States, for example, there is apprehension regarding the socioeconomic, cultural and educational implications of the large-scale migration of Spanish-speaking individuals into the United States.

\(^{10}\) In fact, matters such as job security, labour rights, national fiscal and monetary policies, and even certain common commercial policies were considered extraneous to the narrowly defined trade and investment purposes of NAFTA (Morris, 2003).
country. The signing of the treaty increased concerns that the migratory flow of Mexicans into the United States would deprive “Americans of jobs while also creating and sustaining large Spanish-speaking enclaves, which unlike previous waves of immigrants have remained largely resistant to assimilation with US culture” (idem, p. 144). Sollors (1998, p. 2) indicates that, ironically, the “English only” movement in the United States “gained wider currency at the same time that NAFTA would make the intensified teaching and learning of at least Spanish and French more desirable.”

Similarly, the asymmetry of power among the three countries is a concern for Canada and Mexico. Many Canadians and Mexicans are concerned that the free-market forces will intensify the spread of American culture in their own countries (Labrie, 1995). In the case of Mexico, this is evident in that many young Mexicans give preference to U.S. “standard” English over other varieties of English (Marin, 1998) including Canadian English. This phenomenon is related not only to the rising trade relations with the United States and the strong presence of U.S. cultural industries brought about by NAFTA, but also to the historical bilateral ties between Mexico and the United States and the presence of a long and important shared border (Morris, 2003). In a sociohistorical account of the role of English in Mexico from the mid-1940s to the early 1990s, Hidalgo, Cifuentes and Flores (1996) illustrate how the dominant influence of the United States has been a defining factor in the spread of English in Mexico. According to the authors, it was in the nineteenth century that English first acquired an aura of prestige and modernity among the educated Mexican elites. This tendency would intensify during the interwar period thanks to the elitist support of private education and the consumption of English language media and publications. Hidalgo et al. pinpoint World War II as the time in which
English began to permeate virtually all aspects of Mexican life, due to Mexico’s increased and asymmetrical economic dependency on the United States.

The Spread of English, Class, and Geographical Location in Mexico

As we have seen, the view of English as linguistic imperialism emphasizes that the global spread of English is closely related to the inequitable distribution of wealth, power, culture and knowledge (Pennycook, 1994, 2003). Thus Hidalgo et al. (1996) make a valid and important point by stressing that the privileged classes have played a major role in promoting the spread of English in Mexico. It is still true that the formal study of English is still largely the privilege of the upper classes (Acosta, 2003). Who gets to learn English and under what circumstances are important questions when examining the role of English in Mexico, as is the matter of who is to be the main beneficiary of the increased institutionalization of English.

Nonetheless, the role of English in less formal contexts and within different socioeconomic groups should not be overlooked. For instance, immigration and transnational family networks can present opportunities for the informal acquisition of English. Moreno de Alba (1981) pointedly calls into question the idea that the main source of English borrowings in Spanish is the commercial and tourist exchange between Mexicans and English-speaking foreigners. He sees the flux of legal and illegal Mexican migrant workers that concentrate in the bordering zones as a significant source of English borrowings in the north of Mexico. Migrant workers, he observes, face sociolinguistic situations that are very different from those created by tourist and commercial exchanges; nonetheless, their stay in the United States is usually long enough for them to assimilate certain English words into their Spanish, which they then bring back with them to their
Mexican communities. Hidalgo et al. (1996) mention related aspects only in passing, since the primary focus of their analysis is the role of English in what they call “the Mexico City model” of English. The authors readily acknowledge that the interaction and perceptions of English may vary considerably, particularly in the north and the south regions of the country. Other researchers (Morris, 1999; Hidalgo, 1986) support this notion.

A Post-Colonial Perspective on the Spread of English: the Flux of Agency and Desire

In the previous discussion, I have presented the regulation of English as an extended example of how the view of English as linguistic imperialism can illustrate different yet inextricably related aspects of the spread of English in Latin America. Several scholars have in turn argued for a different understanding of the spread of English than that proposed by the neo-imperialist perspective. These scholars have pointed out that Western academics who support the neo-imperialist perspective “have been paralyzed by dichotomizing perspectives that frame debates about English—arguing for and against English; for and against the vernacular” (Norton and Kamal, 2003, p. 310). This paradigm, informed by work on post-colonial and critical linguistics, places great emphasis on resisting linguistic imperialism through language policy, alternative language teaching and learning paradigms (Canagarajah, 1999a; Dendrinos, 1992) and ecological language paradigms (Mühlhäusler, 1996, 2003).

Pennycook (2003a, p. 516) recognizes the importance of work of scholars like Phillipson (1992) in bringing to the fore “the problematic institutional domination of English and its many side effects.” However, Pennycook points out that the view of the spread of English as linguistic imperialism fails to consider the agency of those
individuals who use English, and the reasons for which they use it. Discussions of globalization and the spread of English, he stresses, must be examined "both critically—in terms of new forms of power, control and destruction—and in its complexity—in terms of new forms of resistance, change, appropriation and identity." The spread of English in a globalized context should not be reduced to arguments of nation-states and imperialism, but rather interpreted "in terms of translocalizations and transcultural flows" (Pennycook, 2003, p. 524). Such an enterprise necessitates the application of theoretical and methodological tools from post-colonial studies.

In an earlier work, Pennycook (1998) calls attention to the absence of colonial and post-colonial approaches to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). This absence, he writes, is all the more troublesome given that "language policy and language education were (are) crucial sites of colonial encounter and of the production of colonial discourse. As a result they both helped to produce colonialism more generally and also have had lasting effects into the present" (p. 69). Pennycook suggests that, in order to counter these colonial discourses, English language practitioners must go beyond examining the "structural power" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 72) of English and pay attention to the realm of popular culture. Discourses of colonialism, he writes, "are far more prevalent (or at least more obvious) in various forms of popular culture—popular books on language, magazines, newspapers, and so on--than in more academic contexts." Therefore, while it is important to consider the influence of discourses of linguistics and applied linguistics in the making of English teachers, it is crucial not to overlook the fact that those involved in language education "are also inevitably surrounded by popular culture, by the everyday images of English. It may be that these are far more influential in the
formulation of policies, curricula, practices, research agendas, and so on” (Pennycook, 1998, p. 130)

In light of this, Pennycook (2003b) proposes a focus on the “worldliness” of the spread of English—that is, to consider the ways in which individuals take up English, how they use it, and why they use it. Pennycook offers the term “worldliness” as a translation for Mignolo’s (2000) concept of mundialización, which Mignolo describes as the “local histories in which global histories are enacted or where they have to be adapted, adopted, transformed and rearticulated” (p. 278). In this sense, the worldliness of English is a site where individuals resist, change, adopt and reformulate the ways in which they engage with English.

Like Pennycook, Canagarajah (1999b) stresses that the view of the spread of English as linguistic imperialism “fails to understand that there is a relative autonomy for institutions, communities, and subjects to work out alternate meanings, statuses, and uses for the discourses intended to dominate them” (p. 208). This is a key notion for those involved in the ELT profession, he writes, because it means that the language classroom doesn’t have to be at the mercy of power dictated unilaterally from above—by the larger social institutions. It has the relative autonomy not only to renegotiate these sources of power, but also to develop alternative discourses and power equations within its own walls. We have to consider power as not necessarily exercised top to bottom; institutions like the school may serve to reconstitute power relations bottom up. At the micro-social level of the classroom, then, teachers and students enjoy some agency to question, negotiate, and resist power (p. 211)

Canagarajah (1999a) emphasizes the notion of “resisting” the global spread of English. By “resistance” Canagarajah does not imply that individuals in post-colonial contexts should reject English, but rather that they “reconstitute it in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms” (p. 2). This entails a negotiation of the role of English in
people’s lives as well as active opposition to political structures with the ultimate aim of reconstructing the community’s languages, cultures and identities to their own advantage. Central to his argument is the reconstruction of “local knowledge” (Canagarajah, 2002).

Canagarajah defines local knowledge as a process through which individuals negotiate dominant discourses and engage “in an ongoing construction of relevant knowledge in the context of our history and social practice. What is important is the angle from which we conduct this practice—that is, from the locality that shapes our social and intellectual practice” (idem, p. 251, original emphasis). Locality is here understood in all relevant senses: geographical, social, geopolitical. Engaging with local knowledge thus requires both “deconstructing dominant or established knowledge to understand its local shaping,” and reconstructing it for local needs and interests. At the same time, it requires that individuals and communities reconstruct local knowledge in light of contemporary needs; that is, that they try to respond to emerging social and geopolitical questions parting from their own historical and social experience.

Like Pennycook and Canagarajah, Brutt-Griffler (2002) believes that the view of English as an instrument of linguistic imperialism in its most extreme forms places imperialism as the central agent in shaping world history. This view, she asserts, fails to recognize the agency of other peoples in the world in the development of World Englishes, as it assumes that “if English spread, it was because Westerners (the British in the first place) spread it. If non-Westerners played a role, they did so as the pawns of Western policy” (p. 64, original emphasis). Brutt-Griffler presents empirical evidence that the spread of English in Asia and Africa was far from being an exclusively unidirectional, top-down process. After Hornberger (1997), Brutt-Griffler (2002)
emphasizes that individuals “are not the passive recipients of language policy that they are often made to be,” and should therefore “not be conceived as victims on whom language policy-making authorities codify prefabricated plans.” Rather, individuals and their communities are “are active shapers of the language policy environment who at the least codetermine the context and at the most seize the initiative from the institutional planners, thereby forcing the latter into a reactive mode” (p. 63).

Brutt-Griffler’s (2002) argument that language policymaking is a two-sided process that results from the interplay of the “conflicting historical wills” of institutional planners and speech communities helps us frame the tensions between fear and desire that seem to underlie the spread of English in the Mexican context. From our previous discussion of the spread and institutionalization of English in Mexico, we can identify three co-existing agents—the state, educational institutions, and the individual—that seem to influence not only the development of language policy, but also the “cultural construction” (Hannerz, 1996) of individuals and communities.

First, from the point of view of the spread of English as linguistic imperialism, the increased institutionalization of English in Mexico and other Latin American countries could be interpreted as a desire to reach for British/American or European culture. Yet for Brutt-Griffler (2002) this position overlooks what she considers a more essential and powerful element: the desire of these nations to link to the world at large, to be players in the global economy, to be political entities with a say in international affairs. This desire may be in turn translated into policies perceived to lead towards the goal of acquiring a certain international status. As the increased institutionalization of English in Mexico suggests, these policies may take the form of educational language planning. Universities,
along with other educational institutions, are often the mediators between the individual (and his or her indigenous speech communities) and the state. Hannerz (1996) writes that, through educational institutions "the state engages in the cultural construction of citizens, inculcating loyalty to that conception of the nation to which it publicly adheres, as well as an almost universally replicated set of skills, including literacy and numeracy" (p. 71) and, we may add, language education. Even though there may be no solid evidence of a correlation between the adoption of English by developing countries and greater economic well-being (May, 2001), bilingual education may still be perceived as promoting the fiscal goals of a nation.

Thirdly, Hannerz (1996) adds that "nobody, anywhere, is completely shaped as a cultural being within the formal educational apparatus. Rather, people are formed continuously through their experiences in all kinds of contexts" (p. 72). As potential members of any number of communities of practice, individuals may orient themselves to varying sets of social and communicative rules as part of a wilful strategy of communication. In order to make sense of this phenomenon, "one must recognize that each member of a community has a repertoire of social identities and that each identity in a given context is associated with a number of appropriate verbal and nonverbal forms of expression" (Saville-Troike, 1996, p. 357). An example from a very different context, cited in Brutt-Griffler (2002), further illustrates this point. In this excerpt, Bisong (1995, p. 125) challenges the notion that English represents a threat to indigenous languages in Nigeria:

There is no way three or four hours of exposure to English in a formal school situation could possibly compete with, let alone threaten to supplant, the non-stop process of acquiring competence in the mother tongue.... The parent sends the child to the English-medium school precisely because she wants her child to grow
up multilingual. She is also not unmindful of the advantages that might accrue from the acquisition of competence in English. Why settle for monolingualism in a society that is constantly in a state of flux, when you can be multilingual and more at ease with a richer linguistic repertoire and expanding consciousness? To interpret such actions as emanating from people who are the victims of Centre linguistic imperialism is to bend sociolinguistic evidence to suit a preconceived thesis.

In Bisong’s example, the hypothetical parent desires for her child to have access to a better future and an “expanding consciousness.” She imagines that learning English and becoming multilingual will help pave the way for the future she envisions for her child. This example foreshadows the theories of imagined communities, identity and language learning which I discuss in the following section.

Identity, Imagined Communities, and Language Learning

Theories of imagined communities and identity focus on the human ability to relate, through imagination, to groups of people “beyond our immediate social networks” (Kanno, 2003, p. 287). Imagination is here understood not as fantasy or withdrawal from reality, but as “the creative process of producing new ‘images’ and of generating new relations through time and space that become constitutive of the self” (Wenger, 1998, p. 177). In this sense, imagination plays “both an educational and an identitary function,” in that “imagination is a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice and a way in which individuals locate themselves and others in the world” (Pavlenko 2003, p. 253).

In this section I present an overview of the current literature on identity, imagined communities, and language. This first part is organized around Anderson’s (1991) work on imagined communities and its influence in our understanding of nationality,
transnationalization and globalization. The second part is an overview of research that applies the notion of imagined communities to explore the relationship between language and identity, and the impact of this relationship on language learning. Central to this discussion is the work of Norton (2001), who first brought the concept of imagined communities to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

*Imagined Communities: Anderson (1991)*

In 1991, Anderson interpreted the concept of “nation” as an imagined political community. According to Anderson, individuals who belong to even the smallest nation may “never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 5). These communities of the mind—which may encompass from a few individuals to billions of human beings—have finite yet elastic boundaries beyond which other nations exist. Anderson links the emergence of national imagined communities to the rise of secular, capitalist society and the advances in the technology of printing that had taken place by the sixteenth century. Together these factors made possible “a new age of ‘print-capitalism’ and thus of shared national identity among citizens” (Walter, 2003, p. 42). The increased literacy rates in national print languages fostered the appearance of ‘languages-of-power’ that influenced the construction of a common imagined nation with defined limits and claims to membership.

Anderson’s work has been greatly influential in debates on education, identity, and globalization. For instance, Appadurai (1996, 2001a, 2001b), has suggested that the revolution of print capitalism was but a “modest precursor” for the world we live in now in terms of the role imagination plays in social life. In our “post-electronic” society,
imagination is greatly mediated by mass communication technology and mass migration and diasporic movements. This has turned imagination into a social practice that enables the construction of complex transnational imaginary landscapes through which local subjectivities can be produced and cultivated (Appadurai, 2001a, 2001b). On the one hand, the rapid development of communication and transportation technologies has significantly altered the scope of imaginable communities. The images, ideas, and opportunities created and dispersed by the mass media have the power to produce collective imaginary experiences ("brotherhoods") that stretch beyond the borders of the nation-state. On the other hand, migration facilitates the creation of transnational ties, as more and more people are able to imagine "the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 6). At the same time, the media has a profound influence on immigrant flows, as "those who wish to leave, those who have already left, those who wish to go back, and those who choose to stay," often formulate their plans based on the realities available to them through radio, television, the written press, or other media (Appadurai, 2001a, p. 22). Furthermore, transnational migrant communities are "surrounded and infiltrated by secondary as well as tertiary relationships" (Hannerz, 1996, p. 101), as "deterritorialization creates new markets for film companies, impresarios, and travel agencies, which thrive on the need or the relocated population for contact with its homeland" (Appadurai, 1991, p. 193).

Other scholars (e.g., Block & Cameron, 2002; Burbules & Torres, 2000) have also built on Anderson’s work to illustrate some of the effects of globalization on national and individual identities. For instance, Block and Cameron (2002) suggest that the global "patterns of movement across national borders that produce increasingly diverse
populations within them” may put into question Anderson’s representation of national imagined communities. These authors add that in countries like England, “the continuing and relatively intense interaction between diasporic communities and ancestral communities elsewhere in the world—made easier by the communication technologies that accompany globalization—makes possible plural or hybrid identities, challenging the assumption that people must identify with a single imagined community” (p. 7).

The very concept of national political accountability has been redefined beyond the nation state by transnational centres of power like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Rasool, 1999). These arguments suggest that “the imagined community conceptualized by Anderson (1991) is made more complex by patterns of migration, changing demographics, and communication technologies” (Norton & Kamal, 2003, p. 313). They also speak to Almgren’s (2000) observation that it is possible to conceive of communities that are independent of territorial contexts.

Kubota (2002), Harris, Leung and Rampton (2002) and Heller (2002) argue that “globalization reframes our conception of ‘the nation’ and the role of language in defining it” (Norton & Kamal, 2003, p. 313). In this vein, Hannerz (1996, p. 21) makes the point that for quite some time, language has probably dominated our thinking about cultural boundaries, since it has coincided with notions of nation, and the active involvement in other symbolic modes—music, gesture, and others, and their combinations—has tended to be mainly confined to local, face-to-face settings. Now that media technology is increasingly able to deal with other symbolic modes, however, we may wonder whether imagined communities are increasingly moving beyond words.... The global ecumene is, for one thing, a place of music video and of simultaneous news images everywhere. Leaving aside the important fact of bilingualism and multilingualism (many people now switch, situationally and routinely, between a national and one or more world languages, and this could also have some implications for the communities they imagine) the various symbolic modes which are now medialized probably entail their own literacies,
and perhaps we belong to differently distributed communities of intelligibility with regard to different kinds of meaningful form.

In the following subsections, I present an overview of works in SLA theories that deal with the connection between imagined communities, language and identity that Hannerz hints at above.

_Imagined Communities and Second Language Acquisition Theory_

In 1998, Wenger expanded the notion of imagined communities by linking it to the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to this theory, learning is a situated, social, ongoing process that takes place as newcomers become increasingly involved in a community of practice. Echoing Anderson’s insights, Wenger (1998) frames imagination as a source of community, in that “our identity includes our ability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our forms of belonging” (p. 145). Furthermore, he expands the notion of situated learning by theorizing that an individual’s imagination plays “both an educational and an identitary function,” in that “imagination is a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice and a way in which individuals locate themselves and others in the world” (Pavlenko 2003, p. 253). For Wenger, human beings can be directly engaged in tangible and concrete communities of practice such as workplaces, educational institutions, or families. However, imagination allows us to engage with communities that extend beyond direct or local sets of relationships. Finally, Wenger (1998, p. 164) makes the point that we not only produce our identities through the practices we engage in, but we also define ourselves through the practices we do not engage in. Our identities are constituted not only by what we are but also by what we are not. To the extent that we can come in contact with other ways of being, what we are not can even become a large part of how we define ourselves.
Intrigued by Wenger's (1998) notion that an individual's non-participation in certain practices can be interpreted as an act of self-definition, Norton (2001) examines the relationship between imagined communities and the non-participation of learners in ESL classes. Norton re-examined data from an earlier study (Norton Peirce, 1995) in which she explored the relationship between identity and the language learning experiences in the home, workplace and school of five women who had recently migrated to Canada. Supporting her claims with data collected from diaries, questionnaires, interviews and home visits with the participants, Norton proposed that learners invest in a second language with the understanding that doing so will help them acquire a wider range of symbolic (e.g., language, education, friendship) and material resources (e.g., capital goods, money). This increase in the value of the learners’ cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) may in turn facilitate their access to hitherto unattainable resources. Thus, Norton theorizes, "an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 16-17). Or, as Ibrahim (1999, p. 365) succinctly observes, “one invests where one sees oneself mirrored.”

Norton’s theory of social identity and language investment would greatly impact current notions of learner identity and motivation in SLA theory. In her re-examination of this work, Norton (2001) focuses on the stories of non-participation in an ESL classroom of two of the participants from the previous study: Katarina and Felicia. According to

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11 It is important to note that Norton strongly emphasizes that her definition of investment does not equate investment with a unitary, historical language learner driven by instrumental motivation.” Rather, her use of the term “emphasizes how learners recognize their identity and relationship with the social world as they invest in language” (Dagenais, 2003, p. 274).
Norton, Katarina and Felicia's stories of non-participation can be interpreted with reference to the communities of practice that Katarina and Felicia imagined being a part of, and the extent to which the desire to belong these imagined communities influenced the learning decisions and investments made by each learner.

When the ESL teacher tried to discourage Katarina from taking a computer course because she believed that Katarina's level of English was not "good enough," Katarina left the course in anger. For Katarina, who had worked as a teacher in Poland for almost two decades, the computer course represented increased access to a community of professionals in which she believed she had already achieved old-timer status. The teacher's attempt to discourage her from taking the course was an affront to Katrina's claim of legitimate participation in the community of professionals. Felicia, who invested greatly in her Peruvian identity, dropped out of the course after her teacher remarked that Peru was not a major country under consideration in a particular class activity. Norton observes that the realm of Katarina and Felicia's envisioned communities extended in time and space beyond the classroom. However, these imagined communities were not accessible to their ESL teachers, whose unwitting failure to validate Katarina and Felicia's imagined communities influenced their decision to drop the class.

Norton makes important observations based on these findings. She notes that "different learners have different imagined communities, and... these imagined communities are best understood in the context of a learner's unique investment in the target language and the conditions under which he or she speaks or practices it" (p. 165). The notion of investment "presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are also organizing
and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (Norton, 2001, p. 165-166). Thus, the exploration of Katarina and Felicia’s experiences of non-participation suggests that an individual’s learning is affected not only by the individual’s current social participation, but also—and perhaps even more powerfully—by their past and future imagined affiliations. Norton (2001) concludes by stressing the need to acknowledge the imagined communities of the learners, so as to not exacerbate their non-participation or impact their learning trajectories in negative ways.

*Kanno and Norton (2003)*

In a special issue of the *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* dedicated to identity, imagined communities and language learning, Kanno and Norton suggest that a learner’s imagined affiliations “are no less real than the ones in which learners have direct engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment” (p. 242). Along with other scholars (Appadurai, 2001; Norton, 2001; Simon, 1992; Wenger, 1998), Kanno and Norton emphasize that “imagination should not be equated with fantasy or withdrawal from reality” (p. 244). Fantasy connotes a way of thinking that is individualistic and divorced from action. Imagination, on the other hand, entails a sense of projection; it is a “prelude” to some sort of expression. Fantasy may dissipate, but imagination, personal or collective, may serve as fuel for action (Appadurai, 2001a). In this context, fantasy is to “wish” what imagination is to “hope.” A “wish” indicates no possibility of action, whereas “hope is constituted in the need to imagine an alternative human world and to imagine it in a way that enables one to act in the present as if this alternative had already begun to emerge” (Simon, 1992, p. 4).
Hopeful imagination may thus inform a learner’s actions and initiatives in his or her struggle for a better future (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

*Kanno (2003)*

Building on the work of Anderson (1991) and Norton (2001), Kanno (2003) demonstrates that the notion of imagined communities can also be applied to educational institutions. Kanno conducted a 19-month ethnographic study to investigate “the relationship between the schools’ visions for their students’ future, their current policies and practices, and their students’ identities” (p. 286). She gathered data from observations and interviews with teachers, administrators and parents in each school. Additionally, she collected documents that contained information about the schools’ vision for the students, such as school policies, newsletters, timetables, and class handouts. The sample included four pioneering bilingual schools in Japan that served very different groups of bilingual students: The students in a public school that offered a partial English immersion program to Japanese ‘mainstream’ students; a non-accredited school designed to educate the children of Chinese residents in Japan; a private school that catered to the children of Western business and government personnel and privileged Japanese families; and a public school that served a large number of immigrant and refugee children from various Asian countries.

Kanno discovered that each institution had a clear picture of the roles—present and future—that their students were expected to fulfill. As a consequence, the children in each of the schools were being prepared for radically different kinds of bilingualism. The students in the first three schools were expected to play “useful and fulfilling” roles in society, although in different contexts. Their bilingual education—either in English-
Japanese or Japanese-Chinese—reflected this expectation. On the other hand, the least privileged students—the children of immigrants and refugees—were being socialized into the least privileged imagined communities. Kanno writes that it is as if these students “suffer not only from their impoverished present, but also from an impoverished future” (p. 298). Kanno concludes that educational institutions are “powerful social agents that can create images of communities for their [students’] future and give these visions flesh and blood” (p. 295). In the same way that “individual learners’ current learning is affected by their imagined communities... schools’ collective visions of imagined communities for their students will also have a powerful impact on their current pedagogical policies and practices” (p. 287). Furthermore, schools can not only direct students to particular imagined communities, but they can also help perpetuate educational structures that disadvantage certain groups of students.

Pavlenko (2003)

In a related study, Pavlenko (2003) applies a postructuralist critical pedagogy perspective to investigate the imagined professional and linguistic communities available to pre-service and in-service ESL and EFL teachers. She approaches the concept of imagination by focusing on the nexus of three functions: ideological, identitary, and educational. According to Pavlenko,

The ideological function allows us to consider imagination not as a personal attribute but as a terrain of struggle between different and often incompatible ideologies of language and identity in particular sociohistoric contexts. The identitary function allows us to view appropriation of newly imagined communities as an important aspect of a learning trajectory, which transforms apprentices or peripheral community members into legitimate participants. And the educational function underscores the need for teacher education to offer identity options that would allow teachers to imagine themselves and others as legitimate members of professional communities (p. 253).
Her study addresses two crucial questions for critical praxis for teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL): “How are the students’ imagined communities linked to their perceived status in the profession?” and “How can critical praxis engage the students’ imagination and broaden their options?” Pavlenko collected data from forty-four TESOL students enrolled in a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) graduate class at a large urban university. The course emphasized discussion of readings intended “to offer the students a complex and nuanced understanding of multilingualism, second language learning, and linguistic diversity” (p. 255). The participants wrote linguistic autobiographies in which they reflected upon their language learning and teaching history within the framework of the concepts discussed in class. Pavlenko analysed the autobiographies from a discursive positioning perspective. She found that during the course many of the students found new ways of thinking about themselves as speakers of English and as language professionals. They were able to reflect on their position in the controversial “native/non-native speaker” continuum, and to challenge this position by reimagining themselves as multicompetent (Cook, 1992), multilingual individuals. Pavlenko concludes that classroom discourses can play a crucial role in helping students challenge the “legitimize[d] social identities” available to them in established linguistic theories. Furthermore, classroom discourses can have just an important impact “in shaping students’ memberships in imagined communities and legitimizing new identity options” (p. 266).
Dagenais (2003)

Dagenais reminds us that “discussions of imagined communities more generally refer to learning processes, highlighting the role of imagination in building our relationship to particular communities and articulating how we draw on past and present experiences as we pursue future opportunities.” These concepts, she writes, “share an emphasis on social dynamics in language and education” with “constructs of linguistic capital, the symbolic value of language, investment and transnationalism, which focus more specifically on power relations and people’s interests in language or education” (p. 274). Dagenais weaves these theoretical frameworks into a heuristic to analyze the complex perceptions and intentions of immigrant parents in Canada who promote multilingualism in their children by enrolling them in French Immersion programmes and by maintaining their family language. In a four-year longitudinal ethnographic study, she explored the “family experiences, practices and values related to language learning and language maintenance” of twelve families of diverse origins in western Canada. The children of these families—which had all been living in Canada for at least seven years—were enrolled in an Early French Immersion programme at the elementary school level. Dagenais found that the parents’ investment in French immersion education was part of a complex strategy to secure both economic and symbolic capital resources for their children. The parents saw multilingualism in English, French and the family language as increasing “the children’s social status and membership in a number of valued language communities,” namely “both Canada’s official language communities” and the family’s heritage community. Furthermore, parents viewed multilingualism as a valuable resource that would allow the children to perform effectively on national and international
markets. Dagenais concludes that “[i]n providing access to various imagined language communities that cross national boundaries, these parents also foster the construction of transnational identity in their children, hoping that it will position them at an advantage with respect to unilinguals in numerous locations around the globe” (p. 281).

_Norton and Kamal (2003)_

Norton and Kamal (2003) incorporate the work of Simon (1992), Wenger (1998), Norton (2001) and Anderson (1991) to understand, from a geopolitical and historical perspective, the imagined communities of English language learners in a Pakistani school. From 2001-2002, the authors conducted three stages of data collection in the form of interviews, questionnaires, and observations. The main participants were students at a private elementary school for children of both low and middle-income families in which English is the medium of instruction, but where Urdu is also commonly spoken. The students in the sample were at the time participating in the Youth Millennium Project, a global community-building project through which the students created a plan of action to help develop the literacy and English skills of a group of Afghan refugees. During the second and third stages of the study, the participants were asked to their perceptions of literacy and the English language, and the kind of society they envisioned for the year 2020.

Norton and Kamal’s findings suggest that the students’ imagined communities were multiple and hybrid. They saw themselves as members of the Islamic Pakistan nation, as well as members of the international community of English speakers. The authors also note that the students’ linguistic or religious affiliations did not seem to be compromised by their appropriation of English. On the contrary, they “had no difficulty
acquiring English without sacrificing their identity as muslims” (p. 313). The students imagined a community “one in which the needs of the local are balanced against the imperatives of the global,” and were particularly aware of “the ways in which global technologies might enhance connection between people of diverse backgrounds and histories” (p. 313). Norton and Kamal underscore that, although the students recognized Pakistan’s “marginal” status in the international community, they were far from considering themselves as “second-class citizens” of English-speaking superpowers like the United States or the United Kingdom (p. 315). In fact, the students strongly asserted their desire for a society that is not only literate, knowledgeable about English and technologically advanced, but for a society that is at the same time peaceful, true to the principles of Islam, and respected by the international community. Norton and Kamal conclude that, for these students, “the struggle for literacy, access to English, and technological progress are interdependent, and reflect the desire of a country in a postcolonial world to engage with the international community from a position of strength rather than weakness” (p. 314). “Such views,” they write, “suggest that the relationship between literacy and community-building is perhaps even more profound than what Anderson (1991) had predicted, transcending national boundaries, and emerging in a variety of ways” (p. 308-309).
CHAPTER III: METHODS

As stated in Chapter I, I began the study with the assumption that the imagined communities of Lengua Inglesa students are affected as a direct result of participating in the Lengua Inglesa program. I wanted to investigate how the imagined communities and the identities of Lengua Inglesa students are negotiated as they move within and across linguistic and cultural communities. To do so, I set out to answer four main questions:

- What are the students’ imagined communities at the beginning of the program?
- What are the students’ imagined communities towards the end of the program?
- What are the futures that the faculty envision for students?
- What impact does receiving instruction in English while surrounded by their native Mexican Spanish-speaking community have on students’ identity?

These questions derive directly from the theoretical framework described in the previous chapter. In drafting these questions, I wanted to address “the role of imagination in building our relationship to particular communities,” in this case the Lengua Inglesa community, by exploring the ways in which students “draw on past and present experiences as [they] pursue future opportunities” (Dagenais, 2003, p. 274).

Justification and Time-frame

I conducted a multiple case qualitative study. The rationale for using this method was threefold. First of all, the exploratory nature of qualitative research makes it useful in cases where the researcher is not aware of the variables that might influence the study, and where the topic is new or has not been addressed from certain angles (Creswell,
Although research on language and identity has grown significantly in recent years, there have been few attempts at exploring it in contexts such as the one described in this study. Secondly, Yin (1994) observes that in exploratory studies nearly any research strategy can yield significant results if applied adequately. However, he also notes that in situations in which the researcher has little control over behavioural events, and in which the focus is on contemporary events—as was the case in this project—the case study is the most adequate strategy to follow. Finally, the nature of the qualitative case study allowed me to bring to light the complexity of the participants’ experience in greater detail, paying attention to nuances of meaning and expression that could be lost in a quantitative study.

I selected face-to-face interviewing as the main data collection approach for my study. This format does have certain limitations, such as the possibility of inhibiting the participants’ responses, or interfering with the participants’ everyday lives. Nonetheless, the format is desirable for practical reasons. First of all, it allowed me to gather information from primary sources; this was essential since the study is primarily concerned with student identity and imagined communities. The interviews also made it possible for participants to share detailed historical and biographical information that may have been lost in other data collection approaches, such as on-site observations. Furthermore, it made far more sense to obtain information from the participants themselves than to try to extricate the same information from secondary sources such as documents and audiovisual materials that may not be readily available. I found this to be the case with documents containing statistical information regarding Lengua Inglesa students.
After my supervisory committee reviewed and approved the research proposal, I submitted it to the UBC Behavioural Ethics Review Committee in the first week of December 2005. The proposal was cleared by the Committee at the end of January 2006. In February, I travelled to Mexico to spend eight weeks conducting the interviews, as well as transcribing and coding them for analysis. I returned to Vancouver in April to conduct the analysis and interpretation of the interviews.

Sampling Procedure

I applied purposeful sampling to select five first-year students, four fourth-year students, and seven professors who would participate in the study. Since the majority of Lengua Inglesa students are female (approximately a 3:1 ratio), I was able to set up a sample proportioned according to gender. To be eligible to participate in the study, candidates had to meet the following criteria: (1) they had to be Lengua Inglesa students enrolled in the first or fourth year of the program; in the case of professors, they must have worked at Lengua Inglesa for at least a full semester; (2) student candidates had to be willing to reflect on their experiences as English-speakers and as students in the Lengua Inglesa program; the professors had to be willing to reflect on their own expectations of students, the characteristics of the students, and the role the program is expected to play in students' lives; (3) all candidates had to be available to meet with me to participate in interviews on at least two separate occasions during February-March, 2006; and (4) they had to be willing and able to keep in touch with me via e-mail from April-July, 2006, in order to check on the progress of the data analysis.
Recruitment Strategies

I recruited the nine student-participants by posting invitations in visible spots around the Lengua Inglesa facilities. The invitations were posted in both Spanish and English; they included information about the questionnaire and interviews, as well as my contact information. Because it is important for the success of the interview to promote the interviewees' interest in the research topic (Miller & Glassner, 1997), these invitations drew attention to the potential benefits of being a participant in the study. Since no monetary compensation would be provided, the invitations highlighted that being involved in this study would be an opportunity for participants to reflect on their unique experiences as Lengua Inglesa students and as English-speakers in an EFL context. The invitations also mentioned that a deeper understanding of themselves as speakers of English and the impact of language on their identities could be an asset in their professional lives. For those graduates who will work as English teachers, participation could help them gain insight into the process of becoming an English speaker in terms of their students' investment in the language, perceived needs, and background. For those who will go on to become translators, participating in the study could help them develop a greater sensitivity to their own attitudes towards the language and how those attitudes might come into play during the translation process. Participants could also benefit from the interaction with the researcher, an insider-outsider whose experience as a former student and teacher informs her research on Lengua Inglesa programs. I approached faculty members to discuss the project with them. I made introductory letters available to those who expressed interest in knowing more about the project. These letters mentioned some of the possible benefits that participating in the
study might have for faculty-participants, such as gaining a greater understanding of the Lengua Inglesa students’ attitudes towards English and how those attitudes might come into play in their development as language professionals. This knowledge could in turn be useful in the professors’ everyday praxis and in the faculty’s decision-making processes.

Once I recruited the participants I set up individual appointments to conduct interviews in locations selected by the participants. I had made provisions to meet the participants in off-campus locations, as I was concerned about the ethical implications of conducting interviews on campus regarding the level of comfort of the participants and my ability to protect their privacy. Lengua Inglesa is located in a relatively small physical space, and the chance of being observed by people who know the participants was high. Elwood and Martin (2000) suggest that, in situations where the researcher has a certain degree of flexibility, as was my case, it may be useful to allow the participant to choose the location in which the interview will take place. This approach is advantageous in various ways: first of all, it underscores the participant’s agency in the interview process, and may help him or her to feel empowered in relation to the researcher. Secondly, it may enable to researcher to gain a greater understanding of the participant’s experience in a particular place and of issues discussed in the interview. The careful observation of the interview locale may also be an opportunity to collect rich and detailed information that generates new questions and ideas. Through this observation the researcher may learn something about the community, places, or individuals involved in the research and how they may impact the interview and data collection processes.

With this in mind, when I made interview appointments with each participant, I invited them to select the place where the interview would take place. I suggested that
this should be a place where they felt comfortable speaking and where they would have no concerns about privacy. To my surprise, with the exception of a first-year student who chose to be interviewed at home, all the other participants decided that the most convenient and comfortable meeting place would be in the Lengua Inglesa premises. Most of the student participants and all of the professors have other work- and family-related duties in the afternoon, and so they requested to conduct the interviews either early in the morning before classes started or at noon after classes ended.

Before conducting each interview I described both the purpose of my research and the interview process to participants, and invited them to ask any questions they might have about the study. If the participant decided to go ahead with the interview, I presented him or her with the Informed Consent Form. Although participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences, none of them chose to do so.

In the following charts I provide a brief description of each of the participants. This information is provided only to give the reader an idea of the general background of the participants. The names of each participant has been omitted to help protect their confidentiality.
## About the Participants

### Table 3: About the first-year participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Language</th>
<th>General Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Spanish</td>
<td>Participant 1 is 20 years old. She attended a private elementary school and public secondary institutions. She took basic English courses throughout her elementary and secondary education. In high school she took more advanced English courses. Before entering Lengua Inglesa, participant 1 studied in the Diplomado de Ingles offered by Instituto Tecnológico de Chihuahua. Both her father and brother speak some English, but they never use it at home; her mother does not speak English. She and her family have gone on trips to California and Texas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Spanish</td>
<td>Participant 2 is 20 years old. She attended public elementary and secondary schools. From the 3rd grade and through the 8th grade, she also took English lessons with a teacher who ran an informal English school in the neighbourhood. In her third year of high school she enrolled in an advanced English program offered by her school. Before entering Lengua Inglesa, participant 2 also had contact with English through music and television. She and her family have gone on shopping trips to El Paso, Texas, and to visit Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Spanish</td>
<td>Participant 3 is 21 years old. She comes from a small city in the south-western part of Chihuahua, where she attended public elementary and secondary institutions. After finishing high school in Mexico she attended high school in the United States for two years, taking immersion English classes along with her regular courses. Participant 3 works part-time as a bilingual costumer service operator for a transnational car parts company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Spanish</td>
<td>Participant 4 is 20 years old. He was born in the United States, where he lived until the age of four. In Mexico, he attended a private elementary school and then public secondary education institutions. In his third year of high school he moved to the United States to obtain his high school diploma there. At home he speaks in both English and Spanish. Participant 4 works part-time as a bilingual costumer service operator for a transnational car parts company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 English</td>
<td>Participant 5 is 20 years old. She attended both elementary and secondary institutions within the public education system. Participant 5 notes that she learned English on her own, mainly through contact with music, television and reading. The English courses in elementary and secondary school served mostly to reinforce her previous knowledge of the language. In high school, participant 5 enrolled in the advanced-English program offered by her school. She and her family sometimes go on shopping trips to El Paso, Texas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: About the fourth-year participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Language</th>
<th>General Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Spanish</td>
<td>Participant 6 attended a private elementary school, and then a public middle school. After that spent an additional two years in middle school in Spain. She received English courses while in elementary school, and then in middle school in Spain, where she also took a 3-month self-directed English course. Back in Chihuahua, she enrolled in the Open High school system (Sistema Abierto). During this time she also took a one-month course at the Diplomado (NSU) to polish her formal knowledge of English. Participant 6 has taught English privately, but is not teaching at the moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong> English</td>
<td>Participant 7 is 23 years old. When she was 2 years old her family moved to Canada for a brief time, and it was there that she began learning English. After returning to Mexico, she attended a number of private schools from kindergarten through high school. All of these schools offered bilingual education, and in at least two English was the primary language of instruction. Participant 7 sometimes practices English with her mother, who is an English teacher; she also keeps in contact with English-speaking friends in the United States via telephone and the internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong> Spanish</td>
<td>Participant 8 is in her late 20s. As a child she attended a public elementary school, and then entered a commerce middle school. When she was 15 she began working as a secretary, and would continue doing so for nine years. During this time, she enrolled in the Open Secondary school system, and obtained her middle school and high school diplomas. After getting her high school diploma she registered for the Diplomado at NSU in preparation for the entrance examination at Lengua Inglesa. Participant 8 has had contact with English through the media and the internet. Participant 8 works as a part-time English teacher in two private institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong> Spanish</td>
<td>Participant 9 is 22 years old. He attended public elementary and secondary schools, where he took basic English courses. In high school he signed up for the advanced-English program at his school. Except from a brief excursion to the U.S.-Mexico border, participant 9 has never travelled abroad. He has had contact with English through the media, and often practices English outside school with a friend who used to live in New York. He has taught in various English schools for the past seven years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: About the faculty-participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview Language</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Full-time professor Spanish</td>
<td>Lengua Inglesa graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Full-time professor Spanish</td>
<td>Lengua Inglesa graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Full-time professor English</td>
<td>Founding member of the Lengua Inglesa program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Full-time professor English</td>
<td>Founding member of the Lengua Inglesa program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sessional instructor Spanish</td>
<td>Lengua Inglesa graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Sessional instructor Spanish</td>
<td>Lengua Inglesa graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Sessional instructor English</td>
<td>Lengua Inglesa graduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods for Data Collection

Using an open-ended interview guide (see Appendices for interviewing protocols), I carried out an initial round of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each participant. Since all of the participants were fluent in both Spanish and English, they were given the choice of conducting the interview in either language to ensure they felt comfortable during the interview. My previous experience in Lengua Inglesa suggested to me that some participants—and perhaps even I—would occasionally switch between Spanish and English to get their meaning across; any instances of code-switching\textsuperscript{12} were duly noted on the transcription of the interview. The questions in the protocol were presented in clusters of topics and given to the participant before the interview began so that he or she had an opportunity to ask questions about the protocol and the interview process. The questions for the student participants were clustered as follows: 1) personal and educational backgrounds; 2) participant’s expectations for the future and whether he or she thinks Lengua Inglesa will serve as a bridge to reaching those expectations; 3) participants’ processes of adaptation to the program; and 4) participants’ self-perception as members of the Lengua Inglesa program.

An adapted version of this protocol was used to interview the faculty participants. The questions in this protocol were clustered as follows: 1) personal and educational backgrounds; 2) the role that the program is perceived/expected to play in students’ lives; 3) changes in the students’ identity and social interactions from the time students enter the program to the time they graduate; and 4) the professors’ perception of themselves as members of the Lengua Inglesa faculty. Also, because many of the instructors at Lengua

\textsuperscript{12} Hidalgo (1986, p. 217) defines Spanish-English code-switching as “the alternating, continuous, and systematic stretches of Spanish and English in the same discourse.”
Inglesa are themselves graduates of the program, it was be possible to ask these participants some of the questions designed for the student-participants.

During and following each of the interviews I took field notes, which I summarized as soon as possible after each interview. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Even though creating full written verbatim transcriptions is a laborious process, it was worthwhile to do so at the time of conducting follow-up interviews. Having verbatim transcriptions during the follow-up interviews served three main purposes. First of all, the verbatim transcriptions allowed me to scan for terms and ideas that come up in the interviews. This in turn made it easier for me to ask participants for additional information on key points that they brought up in the previous interview(s). At the same time, it facilitated the process of member-checking with each of the participants, as they were be able to see what was “on record” in their interviews. Finally, going over the verbatim transcriptions gave participants “a better chance to rethink and alter what they said during an interview and to reshape the written text” (Ibáñez-Carrasco, 1997, p. 114). The possibility that participants might change their minds about a certain piece of information is a challenge that qualitative research practices have inherited from the traditional standards of validity and reliability.

Conducting follow-up interviews thus addresses the need for the research schedule and structure to be flexible enough to allow participants to modify their responses (idem).

Before the follow-up interviews I gave each participant the transcription of our previous meeting, and I invited him or her to go over the transcription and comment on it. During this process participants were also be invited to express concerns regarding the information they shared in the interviews, and how this information would be handled.
and analyzed. I have honoured the participants’ requests to omit sensitive information or information that might otherwise compromise their anonymity. Because of time constraints, I did not produce verbatim transcriptions of the follow-up interviews, but instead created log entries for each interview. In addition I transcribed a) those passages that related to the themes that emerged in the first interviews; b) those passages that suggested new themes for analysis; and c) those passages that provided information contradicting or challenging the data from the first round of interviews. Each participant was issued a copy of his or her follow-up interview log-entry and was invited to review it and determine whether the information included in it is suitable for analysis. I kept in touch with the participants by e-mail after I returned to Vancouver in early April 2006. This allowed me to send each participant preliminary drafts of the analysis of the interviews for his or her feedback and final approval. To protect the anonymity of participants, the e-mail exchange was strictly conducted on a one-to-one basis. The electronic communications I received from each participant were copied and stored in a private file; each original e-mail was deleted from my mailbox.

**Pilot Study**

To test the interview questions, I conducted a pilot interview with “M,” a volunteer from the Lengua Inglesa community and a good friend of mine for several years. M is a graduate of the Lengua Inglesa major, and has also worked in the program as a sessional instructor. The pilot interview took place on February 7, 2006—two days after my arrival to Chihuahua, and a few days before I started the participant recruitment process. This interview was intense in that M turned out to be a very eloquent and enthusiastic interviewee who provided rich descriptions of experiences in the program.
This pilot interview was digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. Afterwards I carefully surveyed it, looking for ways in which to improve the protocol.

The pilot interview served various purposes. It alerted me to the wealth of knowledge that sessional instructors such as M could offer, in their dual position of former students and current instructors in the major. In the original design of the study I had planned to focus primarily on professors with more seniority, yet after the interview with M it became evident that the junior faculty could bring an entirely different perspective on the identity of Lengua Inglesa students. As a result, I interviewed a total of three sessional instructors instead of only one. The pilot interview also helped me refine the protocols for interviewing students and faculty members. It also made me aware of links between questions that I had not previously seen. I rearranged the clusters of questions into what turned out to be a much more coherent and fluid sequence.

*Interview Transcription*

Lepadat and Lindsay (1999) assert that “transcription is theory laden; the choices that researchers make about transcription enact the theories they hold and constrain the interpretations they can draw from their data” (p. 64). On the same note, Tilley (2003) challenges the notion that the transcription process is objective, mundane, or dispassionate. She considers that the manipulation of the text is likely to reflect the transcriber’s assessment of what is important in the conversation and what is not. Similarly, the transcriber must constantly make subjective decisions on how best to describe the way things are said, including the participant’s tone of voice, length of pauses, fillers, long breath, et cetera. In addition to acknowledging the complexities of transcription work and how they may affect the trustworthiness of the data analysis,
Tilley underscores the importance of considering the level of detail that is necessary for the purpose of the research prior to the transcription process.

With this in mind, I followed the general guidelines suggested by Slim and Thompson (1995, p. 87) for the preparation of interview transcriptions:

The basic rule of transcription is to render the original speech into written text as accurately as possible by including hesitation, repetition, exclamation, emphasis and dialect. It is important not to correct grammar or word order, or to attempt to make the account read more like a written one…. References within the text which might not be clear to an outsider—for example, allusions to local dignitaries, organisations, cultural events—[should be] briefly explained in notes at the end of the transcript.

As we can see, these guidelines do not specify the “best” ways to describe the way things are said, or what level of detail should be attempted in describing hesitation, repetition, and other oral gestures. As Tilley (2003) cautions, these will largely depend on the purpose and design of the research, as well as on the transcriber’s assessment of what is relevant or not. This study is primarily concerned with the exploration of themes and patterns in the participants’ identities, and is not designed for a more specialized linguistic analysis. Therefore I did not attempt to create a meticulously detailed transcription that marks, for instance, the length of a pause or hesitation. Nonetheless, during the analysis of the interviews I recurrently went back to the audio recording to make sure I did not overlook significant nuances in the participants’ speech.

Tilley (idem) points out the importance of using field notes to capture other paralinguistic details like setting descriptions, body language, and power relations between participants—or, in this case, between researcher and participant. Poland and Pederson (1998) add that what is not said is just as important as what is said; therefore transcriptions should include contextual information regarding pauses or silences in the
conversation. In addition to my field notes, throughout the transcription process I kept a file with reflective thoughts on the information from the interviews. This memo file included, among other items, thoughts on links to theory, reformulations of research questions, notable quotes that might evolve into themes for analysis, and personal responses to the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This memo file also elicited concepts and ideas that made it into the final analysis.

In spite of all these precautions, there came a point when as a researcher I had to "settle" on the form the transcription took—a point stressed by McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig (2003). These authors deliberately use the term "settle" to highlight the fact that "despite all best intentions, the textual data will never fully encompass all that takes place during an interview" (p. 65). Because transcriptions are artificial written representations of an oral mode of communication (Kvale, 1996, p. 163), they "cannot ever produce a verbatim record of discourse, given the ongoing interpretive and analytical decisions that are made" during the transcription process (McLellan et al., 2003, p. 65). Furthermore, McLellan et al. observe that

transcription guidelines should help researchers systematically organize and then analyze textual data, regardless of the analytical techniques and tools used. They should not impose constraints on the data collected but rather accommodate an iterative process. Further, guidelines should help achieve a high level of certainty that transcripts were generated systematically and consistently (idem, p. 64).

Each transcript was given a code number indicating the participant’s file number, the academic year they are in, and a number specifying whether this was the first or second interview conducted with him or her. Once a transcripts were checked for accuracy with each participant, I removed all information within the transcription that could identify the participant. The electronic documents containing the transcriptions was
at all times be kept in my computer, protected by a password. The list matching the participants’ names, pseudonyms, and file numbers was kept in a separate file also protected by a password. While I was still in Mexico, all hard copies (one per interview) to be used in the coding process along with the CDs containing the original physical interview recordings were kept in a locked file cabinet at my home. Once I returned to Vancouver, an additional hard copy of each transcription and the CDs containing the original physical interview recordings was kept in a locked file cabinet in my supervisor’s office.

_Translating the Data_

As stated earlier, participants were able to decide whether to conduct the interview in English or Spanish. The interviews of those participants who choose English were transcribed directly in the original language. The interviews of participants who choose Spanish present a dilemma for me, as a translation into English was necessary. According to Slim and Thompson (1995), three questions are crucial to determine the procedure for the translation of transcripts: Who will benefit from the study? How will the material be used? What audiences does the researcher wish to reach? The answers to these questions will largely determine “which languages are required and what the translation and transcription procedures should be” (p. 88). I expect that Lengua Inglesa students and faculty will be the main beneficiaries of the study. If this is the case, including full or partial translations of the transcriptions in Spanish is not too problematic, as both faculty and students are bilingual. The second and third questions are more difficult to answer, especially because the matter of the dissemination of the findings weighs heavily on me. I would like the results of the study to be made available
in Spanish to the Mexican higher education research and policy community. However, my other intended—and more immediate—audience is my research committee, external reviewer, and the extended research community at the University of British Columbia. This means a predominantly English-speaking audience.

Ideally, I would have been able to provide full translations into English of the interviews conducted in Spanish. However, time constraints and the already daunting task of transcribing all interviews made this virtually impossible. To strike a balance between these pragmatic matters, the need to make information accessible to my immediate audience, and the desire to respect the participants’ choice of language, I created verbatim transcriptions of the interviews in Spanish; however, I have translated into English those passages which are included in the analysis of the data. This analysis will include a translation of the original Spanish excerpt into English, done to the best of my knowledge and ability. I checked with the participants to ensure that my translation of their comments is a satisfactory approximation of their Spanish original.

Procedures for Data Coding

Once I transcribed the interviews, I applied Tesch’s (1990) coding procedures for descriptive/interpretive analysis, which are well-suited for case studies. Tesch proposes that there are at least four sources from which we can begin to systematically code the topics in the data: the research questions and sub-questions, the research instrument(s), the concepts of categories used by other authors in previous related studies, and the data themselves. These four sources can be combined and utilized to varying extents. I relied on all four sources in my search for topics and themes in the interviews, a process that took place concurrently. In fact, all four sources of topics and themes fed on each other,
and it was difficult at times to determine which topics "jumped out" of the data itself and which I was purposefully looking for.

In the case of the first three sources of topics and themes, the nature of the questions I asked as a researcher is likely to have influenced the kinds of responses I obtained from the participants. Even though I did my best to allow the participants to determine the course each interview took, the very nature of semi-structured interviews may have guided the participants' responses in certain directions. In light of this, I have paid attention to the concepts I explicitly addressed during the interview and which were central to my research question. Some of these concepts were prompted by items in the interview protocol that asked participants to describe their plans for the future, their ideal job, the places where they would like to live after graduation, et cetera. I tried to keep in mind that participants may use different words, or they might express similar concepts implicitly. Also, comparing the different perceptions of participants on the same issues helped me elicit additional themes to investigate, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Finally, taking advantage of the coding procedures in previous related studies, I also focused on words used by participants to describe their plans for the future and the way they envision themselves and others in the program. Words such as "hope," "plan," "would like," "imagine," "expect" have been used in previous studies (e.g., Norton & Kamal, 2003) as indicators of the participants' imagined communities.

I have adapted the eight steps that Tesch (1990) suggests for dealing with topics that emerge from the data themselves. I did not intend the following steps to function as a checklist or a recipe for coding the data from the interviews. Rather, I expected them to serve as a guide that helped me carry out the coding process systematically. Indeed, as I
followed these steps I found myself not only looking for topics and themes that came out of the interviews themselves, but also those suggested a priori by the research questions, the research instruments, and the concepts or categories used in previous studies. During the process of looking for themes that emerged directly from the data, I strived to put aside my preconceptions and expectations and try to listen to what the participants said. I often found myself caught by surprise by themes that emerged in the interviews which had not occurred to me, and that forced me to reconfigure my understanding of the participants' experiences. This was a crucial aspect of learning to listen to what the participants said and not only what I expected or wished them to say.

1. I read the interview transcription that first became available. As I read, I jotted down ideas about the data as they occurred to me. I repeated this exercise with the next two or three sets of transcriptions that became available.

2. I selected one of the transcriptions that I worked with in the first step. This time I read it paying attention to the transitions or switches from one topic to the next. At this point I started taking notes not in terms of the contents of the data, but the topics it deals with. I tried to identify the various topics along the data and to write them down in the margin of the transcription. I went through the same process with three additional transcriptions.

3. On a sheet of paper, I drew a chart with a column for each of the transcripts reviewed and I wrote down the topics identified in the previous step in its corresponding column. I compared the topics that emerged in each column by drawing lines (using different colours) to connect similar or related topics.
Whenever I came across a topic description whose meaning I did not recognize, I would go back to the original transcription, find the topic and make sure I understood it correctly.

4. On a separate piece of paper clustered together related topics, and then chose a name for each cluster that captured the gist of the topics in it. Next, I chose an abbreviation for the name of each cluster and wrote it down next to the original name. This became my preliminary list of codes.

5. I created a new chart with three columns in it. In the first column, I wrote down the names and abbreviations of the topic clusters that appeared most frequently in the transcriptions. In the second column, I included the clusters of topics that seemed important even though they appeared less frequently. Finally, in the third column I included those clusters of topics that did not fit in either of the other two columns.

6. Next, I went back to the transcriptions. On a clean copy of the transcripts I previously worked with, I identified information segments that referred back to the topics included in the first and second columns in step 4. I marked each segment with the code abbreviation (s) that best described the topic (s) in that segment. During this process, I sometimes discovered segments dealing with topics not included in the preliminary coding system. When this happened I included in a new list those emerging topics that were relevant to my research and made a note of why the topic seemed important. I continued refining the codes as I went through the rest of the transcriptions.
7. Next, I made a list of the topics that occurred in all or most of the transcriptions, and tried to determine which topics were the most relevant in terms of my research purpose. I tried to uncover relationships between the topics, and even hierarchies of topics. The emerging relations between topics were displayed in a conceptual map with lines indicating the connections between different categories and subcategories of topics.

8. I determined the number of categories to be used in the analysis of the data; this number was largely dependent on the purpose of the project and the nature of the data. I followed Creswell’s (1998) suggestion of drawing an initial list of five or six categories, each of which could be named using the participants’ own words and metaphors. I kept a list matching the codes and the categories they stood for in a separate document. The list of initial categories was expanded and be modified as I advanced in the data analysis process.

9. At this point, I had to decide on a final name and abbreviation for each category of topics to be used in the analysis. These names and abbreviations were alphabetized to make sure there were no duplicates with different meanings. Next, added these abbreviations to the conceptual map of topic categories and subcategories. Once this process was complete, I began the complete coding session of the interviews utilizing these refined codes, keeping in mind that some information segments may call for more than one code.

10. Once the coding process was complete, I copied and pasted the data material belonging to each category into a separate file; I did this separately for each interview. Next, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the data within each
category, this time paying close attention to the content of the data. I identified and summarized the content for each category, paying close attention to commonalities, uniqueness, and contradictions in content, as well as missing information important to the research question. Although many aspects of the data were of great interest, not all of them were necessarily relevant to my research purpose.

11. At this stage I tried to assess the usefulness of the coding/categorizing system I developed through this process. Were the categories sufficiently different from each other? Were they too narrow or too broad? How much overlapping was there across categories? When necessary, I made adaptations to the coding system and recoded the data accordingly.

12. Finally, I used the results of the coding procedure as a guide for the follow-up interviews. What information had yet to be gathered? What issues required elaboration or clarification? As I advance in the analysis of the data, it was useful to consider whether some of the categories I discovered could be refined into concepts that suggested research outcomes.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Tesch (1990) observes that “analysis is not the last phase in the research process; it is concurrent with data collection or cyclic. It begins as soon as a first set of data is gathered and does not only run parallel to data collection, but the two become integrated” (p. 95). The distinction between data organizing and data interpretation is theoretically useful, even though in practice the organization and interpretation of data are “intellectually intertwined and sometimes happen simultaneously” (p. 114).
Once the coding process was complete, I displayed the initial findings on a series of tables. First, I created a table in which to compare and contrast the themes that emerge within each interview. Then, I constructed a matrix in which I compared the themes that emerged among the 1st year participants, and another matrix to compare the themes that emerged among 4th year participants. Next, I compared the themes between these two groups and tried to determine whether there were significant differences or similarities between them. I then analyzed the findings in light of the framework of identity, language and imagined communities as presented in the review of the literature. Next, I triangulated the findings with the institution’s own perception of the students’ identity. The latter was determined from an analysis of the semi-structured interviews with faculty-participants, which were analyzed following a process similar to that used in the interviews with student-participants.

In the discussion of the findings, I have tried to use rich, thick description to represent the themes that emerged from the data. Thick descriptions do not simply report facts; they are “deep, dense, detailed accounts” of the setting, the participants, and the themes of a qualitative study (Denzin, 1989, p. 83). The ultimate goal of thick description is to make the reader feel like they have experienced—or could experience—the events or situation being described. Thick description seeks to recreate an experience, action, or situation vividly enough to convey the trustworthiness of the author’s account. This level of detail is also useful when the reader is trying to determine the transferability of the findings to other contexts (Cresswell & Miller, 2000).

My field notes were an essential aid in the creation of detailed, rich descriptions of the participants, the setting, and the interactions that took place during the interview
and the research process at large. Sanjek (1990) makes a distinction between “scratch notes” and “field notes proper.” Scratch notes are brief notes jotted down while engaged in research, as during an interview, to “fix an observation or to recall what someone has just said” (Clifford, 1984, in Sanjek 1990, p. 96). These notes are then processed into field notes, which are distinguished from scratch notes in that they are notes “organized, categorized, complete, and available for later access” (Yin, 1994, p. 96). During the interviews I kept only scratch notes on a small pad so I could dedicate my full attention to the participant. Later, with the aid of memory and attentive review of the interview recordings, I built on these scratch notes to generate more extensive descriptions of the interviews, trying to add as much detail as possible in terms of setting, the participant’s general physical and emotional condition, and their paralinguistic gestures. Additionally, I have included quotations that illustrate the multiple perspectives put forth by the participants. In addition to keeping field notes, I also kept a journal/diary in which I systematically kept track of the data gathered from the interviews, field notes, and documents during the research process. This journal/diary also contained my own reflections on the data and the research process itself, ideas for themes, questions, and possible links to theory.

Ethical Considerations

Any study involving human participants raises serious ethical issues. As Miller justly (1992) observes, the main obligation of the researcher is to respect the rights, needs, desires and values of the participant(s). In light of this, it was essential that I applied a number of safeguards to protect the participants’ rights and privacy. To ensure that the research proposal and the protocols for interviewing were acceptable on ethical
grounds, I submitted them to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of the University of British Columbia. Likewise, even though I already had the informal consent of the Lengua Inglesa faculty to carry out the study, I obtained the written permission from the School of Humanities at Northern State University before beginning my research. Once I was authorized to proceed by both UBC and the School of Humanities, I began to identify and contact potential participants. Before the interviews I articulated—verbally and in writing—the research objectives and data analysis procedures to all participants, and I obtained each participant’s written permission to proceed with the study as articulated. During the study I informed the participants of all data collection devices and activities, and made all verbatim transcriptions and written interpretations readily available to them. The final draft of the data analysis section in the study has given priority to the participants’ rights, wishes and interests when making choices regarding data reports. Finally, I have protected the participants’ anonymity by replacing their names with pseudonyms, and all interview data have been kept in a secure location. Only my research supervisor and I have had access to the interview data, although participants have been able to request access to their own data.

Limitations of the Study

A possible limitation of this study is that it presents a snapshot of students’ identity at a fixed point in time. In order to keep track of any possible identity shifts with more precision, it would be necessary to carry out a longitudinal study that followed students from the beginning of the program well into the time after graduation. However, I believe that by focusing on the imagined communities of these students it is possible to gain valuable insights into the present and imagined identities of Lengua Inglesa students.
Furthermore, as this is a relatively unexplored aspect of the literature on language and identity in EFL contexts, it would be unwise to carry out a larger project without first conducting an exploratory study that suggests further and more refined lines of inquiry. It is my hope this study may serve as the basis for a more comprehensive longitudinal study in the future.

Role of the Researcher

The process of undertaking research is “suffused with biographical and identity work” (Coffey 1999). Positioning myself as a researcher is an essential component in the design of the present study. From a very early age I have been fascinated with words and languages. It was this fascination that in 1998 led me to enrol in the Lengua Inglesa program at Northern State University. Shortly after graduating in February 2003, I was offered the opportunity to work as a lecturer in the department, as one of the full-time professors would be on leave of absence. My involvement with Lengua Inglesa led me to believe that the program significantly influences students not only in terms of their academic development, but also in their worldviews and expectations for the future. After teaching in the program for approximately seventeen months, I left the position and moved to Canada to work on master’s degree in higher education at the University of British Columbia.

As an outsider-insider to the Lengua Inglesa program in conducting this study, I found myself in a hybrid position that provided me with certain advantages. As a former student and instructor of the Lengua Inglesa program I possess a close knowledge of the institution, faculty and students. This facilitated access to participants, gatekeepers, and various sources of information that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. The faculty at
Lengua Inglesa was not only aware of my project, but they were actively involved in it by providing me with access to people and documents that were essential to my study, such as internal curricular reviews, historical accounts of the Lengua Inglesa program, and internal proposals for reforming the program. Likewise, through the years I have come to know and have developed a good level of trust with many of the students in the major. During the summer of 2005, just before beginning to draft my thesis proposal, I had the opportunity to speak with some of these students during a three-week trip to Mexico; a significant number of them expressed interest in the project and willingness to participate. Finally, my hybrid background has interpretive advantages. Being thoroughly acquainted with the Lengua Inglesa setting enabled me to provide detailed descriptions about the setting and the participants.

On the other hand, the insider-outsider position also created various dilemmas and concerns that I may not have faced if I were a complete outsider. For instance, my experience as a former instructor in the program raised serious questions in my mind regarding power issues and personal biases. Having recently worked as a lecturer in the program, I used to teach some of the current students, namely those in the fourth year of the program. Even though I no longer had any formal authority over these potential participants, it was still possible that interviewing former students could raise issues of power inequality. I hoped this would be countered by the fact that I am within a similar age range to that of most Lengua Inglesa fourth-year students, and also by my interviewing an equal or greater number of first-year students, none of whom has known me in the role of instructor. Furthermore, as a researcher, I was aware that I would bring my own background as a former student and instructor of the Lengua Inglesa program
into the study, and that my own experiences could shape my interpretation of the data. I therefore strived to preserve the validity and trustworthiness of the research process as much as possible. Part of this involved conducting member-checks with the participants at various stages of the research process to ensure they felt their contributions were represented accurately. Similarly, the analysis of the findings has been subject to the scrutiny of my supervisory committee.

My hybrid position was also an added incentive to carrying out this research project. As I have stated before, one of the main objectives of this project was to examine the possible influence that Lengua Inglesa has on the students' identities. However, the research study was also part of a journey to understanding my own experiences with language and identity. Also coming into play was my identity as a former student in Lengua Inglesa within the sociocultural context of Mexico, and my identity as a graduate student within the context of Canada. I believe that as a student of the Lengua Inglesa major I gained certain privileges, which included the opportunity to study abroad. Nonetheless, the increased awareness of the relationship between language and identity that I gained through my studies at UBC led me to reconsider my previous views on Lengua Inglesa. Much of what I once took for granted in the program became a source of inner struggle, as I began to frame it within the larger and often problematic processes taking place in higher education around the world. Throughout the research process I found myself negotiating not only these two roles, but a complete flux of identities—former teacher, former student, colleague, female, researcher, interviewer, graduate student, temporary resident of Canada, bilingual and so on. Part of my challenge was to not close myself to the conflicts or dilemmas this could bring about, but rather to find
ways in which to “celebrate the contradiction,”\textsuperscript{13} and make the most of my itinerant identities.

Context of the study

\textit{Geographical Context}

Covering an area of 247,087 squared kilometres, the state of Chihuahua is the largest in Mexico. Located at the northern end of the country, it is bordered to the north and northeast by the United States; to the east and southeast by the Mexican states of Coahuila and Durango; to the south and southwest by the states of Sinaloa and Sonora; and to the west and northwest by the state of Sonora and the United States. The latter decades of the twentieth century brought increased urbanization and industrial growth to the state. According to the 2000 census (INEGI, 2001), Chihuahua has over 3 million residents, most of which are concentrated in a few urban areas. The municipality of Chihuahua has well over half a million inhabitants, while the municipalities of Cuauhtémoc, Delicias, and Parral are also significant population centers. The largest municipality, Juarez, is home to approximately 1.2 million people; its capital, Ciudad Juarez, is the twin border-crossing city of El Paso, Texas.

\textit{The Institution}

Northern State University operates in the city of Chihuahua, the capital of the state. The origins of this institution date back to 1835, with the creation of the Literary and Scientific Institute of Chihuahua. In 1954, the State Congress granted the Institute

\textsuperscript{13} R.E.M.’s “Walk Unafraid”
university status and the right to issue its own degrees. Originally, the university comprised five faculties: Medicine, Engineering, Law, Physical Education and Pharmacy. In 1967—one year before being granted legal autonomy—the University annexed the former School of Philosophy, Letters and Journalism, which then became the School of Humanities. Initially, the School of Humanities offered two majors: Philosophy and Spanish Literature. Nowadays, the School of Humanities hosts four different majors: Filosofía (Philosophy), Letras Españolas (Spanish Literature), Ciencias de la Información (Information Sciences—a program akin to library and archival science) and Lengua Inglesa.

_The Lengua Inglesa Program at NSU_

In the early 1980s, a group of professors drew attention to the need for a language centre or a language major similar to the language programs then offered at the National University (UNAM) in Mexico City. Given the rapid growth of unregulated English schools in the city, it was decided that English should be the first language taught in the Centre. A commission of professors and language experts gathered to outline the curriculum of what would become the Lengua Inglesa major; this original curriculum was based on the programs then offered at UNAM and the University of Guadalajara. Designed as a professional degree with a strong cultural component, the Lengua Inglesa major began operating in 1982 with an initial class of twenty students. The stated mission of the program is to train professionals of the English language with the capacity to pursue careers as teachers of English as a foreign language and as translators. The program provides students with an education of the highest quality, based on solid cultural, linguistic and pedagogical principles. Its integral, humanistic foundations foster a critical vision and a tolerant attitude towards linguistic differences, which
responds to the needs of the region, the country, and the higher education unit to which the major belongs.

The following is a description of the program based on personal observations, discussions with the Lengua Inglesa faculty, and excerpts from an institutional self-assessment document.

Cultural Influences of the Program

From its beginnings, the Lengua Inglesa program at NSU has been greatly influenced by two outside cultures: those of England and the United States. In the formative stages of the program, the British Council became an important source of curricular advisors who made suggestions as to the choice and justification of the courses to be offered. Also, the British Council arranged for visiting scholars from England to teach in Lengua Inglesa on semester- or year-based appointments. Similar relationships have been established with the American Embassy in Mexico.

Since 1985 the British Council, the American Embassy and the Fulbright Scholarship Board have donated books on a regular basis, and they have continually participated in the evaluation of the Lengua Inglesa program. Both students and faculty have benefited from the seminars, courses, and academic exchanges promoted by the British Council and the American Embassy.

Additionally, Lengua Inglesa has established exchange programs and other kinds of collaborations with several American universities, especially along the border region, including the University of Texas at El Paso, California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, the University of New Mexico at Las Cruces, and Sul Ross State University in Texas.
Both cultural influences are reflected in the program's curriculum. As Table 3 illustrates, courses on American and British literature make up an important part of the programme of study. In recent years the faculty has discussed including courses that focus on cultural aspects of other English-speaking countries, for the program to better reflect the realities of the English-speaking world. So far no concrete measures have been taken to implement these courses.

Table 6: The Lengua Inglesa Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>First Semester</th>
<th>Advanced Spanish I; Topic Discussion; Interpretation of Essays; Research and Study Skills; Survey of English Grammar I; Phonetics; General Linguistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Semester</td>
<td>Advanced Spanish II; Speech and Debate; Introduction to Computers; Interpretation of the Short Story; Survey of English Grammar II; Research Methodology; Phonology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Third Semester</td>
<td>Spanish Composition; History of England; Computers II; Writing: Organization; Morphology; Victorian and Romantic Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Semester</td>
<td>Applied Spanish Composition; History of the United States; Writing: Style; Syntax; Semantics; Psycholinguistics; XIX Century American Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Fifth Semester</td>
<td>TEFL: Methods and Approaches; Introduction to Translation; Analysis of the Novel; Second Language Acquisition; Discourse Analysis; XX Century Hispanic-American Literature; XX Century American Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sixth Semester</td>
<td>TEFL: Planning; Translation Techniques; Poetry Analysis; Sociolinguistics; Contemporary Hispanic American Literature; XX Century English Literature; Elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Seventh Semester</td>
<td>TEFL: Teaching Language Skills; Building Translation Skills; Thesis Research; Contrastive Analysis; Stylistics; XVIII Century English Literature; Elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eighth Semester</td>
<td>TEFL: Material Design; Technical and Scientific Translation; Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Literature; Historical Linguistics; Origins of English; Elective; Elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Ninth Semester</td>
<td>Curriculum Design; Literary Translation; Professional Orientation; Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature; History of the English Language; Elective; Elective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the self-assessment report, this curriculum meets the main objectives of the Lengua Inglesa program, in that it prepares students to carry out a variety of professional activities, including "teaching English as a foreign language; conducting educational, methodological and linguistic research; designing and creating learning materials; translation from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish; writing and editing." In addition, the plan of studies provides students with "a vast historical, cultural and literary knowledge of English-speaking peoples." Taken as a whole, the document concludes, "the Lengua Inglesa plan of studies satisfies the needs of the Chihuahuan community and of the country, in terms of education, labour, industry, and social relevance in general."

Curricular Structure

The curriculum of the school, as that of most public universities in Mexico, is organized after the Napoleonic model for higher education, which emphasizes training for the professions and civil service. Institutions like NSU are composed by a collection of separate facultades coordinated by a usually powerful rector. Each facultad is managed discretely and offers a distinct curricular path; this means that when a student enrols at a university he or she is signing up for a specific professional track or major. If the student does not change majors midway, he or she will remain in that track until graduating. In cases where the student does decide to change majors, it is very difficult to take his or her course credits to another professional track even within the same institution (Kent, 2003). According to this model, once a student is admitted to Lengua Inglesa he or she is required to adhere to a predetermined set and order of courses which must be completed in order to graduate. From the beginning, all of these courses are
related to the major the student has selected. During the third and fourth year of instruction, the students may take a small number of electives, but in general students have little say as to what their course load will be at any point of their studies.

**English as the Language of Instruction and Approach to Learning**

Until recently, the Lengua Inglesa program at NSU differed from most other English Language programs in Mexico in that students are expected to be proficient in English by the time they enter the major, as most of the courses are offered in English. In general, professors in the program tend to follow a student-centered approach rather than a teacher-centered approach to instruction—still the traditional approach in many Mexican public universities. As we have seen, the course load includes courses on the interpretation of essays, short stories, novels, and poetry from the American and British literary traditions. In these courses, students are required to read these texts critically and form an opinion of the author’s intentions, explicit or implicit. Students are evaluated on the basis of how well they support their points of view with facts not only from the story, but from their own experience.

Lengua Inglesa students must also carry out coursework that promotes self-learning and the ability to work in different environments, especially in the fields of linguistics and language teaching methodology. Courses such as Phonetics and Phonology, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics and Historical Linguistics focus on various aspects of linguistics in the English language, yet they also provide opportunities for students to apply the knowledge obtained in class to local linguistic phenomena.

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14 A growing number of Lengua Inglesa programs have begun implementing this entrance model. The drive to be accredited by the Ministry of Education and other education agencies may be a factor behind this change.
These are often presented in the form of final projects and thesis research projects. Such student projects include studies on language acquisition, bilingualism, Spanish-English code-switching, and dialectology.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Because of the complexity of the participants' personal histories and stories, and
the difficulty of establishing the boundaries of an imagined community, I have organized
the data according to overlapping layers of complexity. Each of these layers speaks to an
element of Dagenais' (2003) summary of previous works on imagined communities,
language and identity. Dagenais writes that “discussions of imagined communities more
generally refer to learning processes,” articulating “how we draw on past and present
experiences as we pursue future opportunities” and highlighting “the role of imagination
in building our relationship to particular communities” (p. 274). These elements are, of
course, intertwined in multiple ways, yet for the sake of clarity I have chosen to treat
them as discrete units of analysis.

The first part of the presentation of the findings addresses the point of how
Lengua Inglesa students “draw on past and present experiences as [they] pursue future
opportunities.” This pertains to research questions 1 and 2: “What are the imagined
communities of first-year students?” and, “What are the imagined communities of fourth-
year students?” Here I focus on the participants’ envisioned futures, and on how they
expect that studying in Lengua Inglesa will help them reach those futures. This latter
aspect is discussed in further detail in a subsection dedicated to the reasons why the
participants chose to study in Lengua Inglesa. Also, since of the intended goals of this
project was to determine whether any changes occur in the students’ identity from the
time they enter the program to the time they graduate, this part of the presentation of the
findings also includes a section dealing with how the participants re-imagined themselves
as Lengua Inglesa students.
Next, I introduce the findings from the interviews with faculty-participants. The data in this section provide a frame of reference to analyze the possible changes that the students' identity may undergo during their time in Lengua Inglesa. Secondly, the data also provide important insights into the futures that the professors envision for Lengua Inglesa students. In the final part of the presentation of the findings I introduce data that addresses research question number 4 more explicitly: “What is the impact on the students’ identities of studying in English while being surrounded by their native Spanish-speaking community?” This part of the presentation of the findings addresses “the role of imagination in building our relationships to particular communities”—in this case, the Lengua Inglesa community. Here I present data illustrating how the participants must constantly negotiate belonging to at least two different linguistic communities: the English-speaking Lengua Inglesa community, and the surrounding Spanish-speaking community within and beyond the School of Humanities.

Professional Flexibility and Transnational Mobility: The Envisioned Futures of Lengua Inglesa Students

Each of the participants has a rich, unique life history that is impossible to capture in this brief study. Yet as I analyzed the interviews, I began to discern some common threads in the participants’ stories that suggested the existence of similar plans and hopes for the future. My analysis of the interviews indicates that the plans and hopes for the future of both first- and fourth-year participants consistently pointed toward their envisioned career and work opportunities. At the same time, all but two of the participants envisioned working, studying, and/or living outside of Mexico after
graduating. In fact, in some cases the participants' vision of transnational mobility seemed much better defined than their professional goals. In the following subsections I present the findings from the interviews with first-year participants, followed by those of the interviews with fourth-year participants.

The Envisioned Futures of First-Year Participants

The desire of first-year participants to experience life outside Mexico stood out as soon as I began analyzing the interviews. Interestingly, the theme consistently appeared in relation to the participants' envisioned career and work plans.

Among first-year participants, Eileen and Arturo were the only participants who indicated having a specific career that they would like to pursue in the future. Both of them envision themselves as teachers in the United States. Arturo [1yr, OS],\textsuperscript{15} for instance, sees himself in the future working as a teacher, only "perhaps not here in Mexico" but in North Carolina, where his mother’s family is from. “It’s really cool, I’ve been there twice—on holiday. And I don’t know, I was fascinated by everything there. I really liked the interaction I had with people there.” It would make no difference if he had to English or Spanish, as long as he could teach either the high school or college level “because I could not teach children,” he concludes with a grin. Arturo adds that even though this is his ideal at the moment, he would not rule out teaching in Mexico.

While for Arturo teaching and living in the United States seems to be a preference that does not preclude the possibility of working in Mexico, for Eileen [1yr, OS] it

\textsuperscript{15}Throughout the analysis I use the following notation to help identify the student participants: [1yr] for first-year participants, [4yr] for fourth-year participants; [OS, Original in Spanish] indicates that both the initial interview and the member-checking interviews were carried out in Spanish, whereas [OE, Original in English] indicates that the interviews were carried out in English. In the former case I provide my own translation of the interviews.
appears a crucial condition to her envisioned career. As I described in the introduction to each participant, Eileen applied to the teacher's training program at a small university in the United States during her senior year in high school. Not only was she accepted, but she was also awarded several scholarships. However, her request for a student visa was turned down and she had to leave the country. Eileen speaks with evident conviction about her plans to return to the United States and work as an elementary school teacher. “My future—it’s not that it is there, but I already visualize it there. That is, how do I see myself ten years from now? As a teacher in an elementary school in the United States.”

Whereas Eileen and Arturo envision themselves embracing teaching careers, the rest of the first-year participants described having more flexible plans for the future. Alicia, Isabel and Miriam expressed a preference for translation as a future profession, but the three of them believe that at some point or another they may teach English as well. Interestingly, the three of them seem to regard teaching English as a sort of professional wildcard. Teaching English can be both a potential permanent profession, but they seem to think of it more as a stepping stone to even more work and career opportunities. For instance, Alicia [1yr, OS] indicated that after obtaining her Lengua Inglesa degree she would like to teach for a while to earn some money. It would be after that that she could pursue her true heart’s desire: to study in Italy. “It seems to me like a place to go and live and learn,” she said, adding that she would like to experience first-hand the Italian language, cities, people, and landscapes. Alicia counts on her sister’s experience in France as a precedent. Her sister lived in France for about two years, working as a live-in babysitter for a French family while she worked on a master’s degree. Since at first she could not speak French, she communicated in English. Alicia’s
plans include going to Italy to learn Italian, get a master’s degree and gain experience as a literary translator. “I’d like to start to grow more, because to [translate] you need to know a lot. What I’ll get out of the major—I think I’ll leave with a good deal of knowledge but to do that I will need so much more.”

Isabel’s envisioned future resembles Alicia’s in several ways. Isabel [1yr, OS] told me that because she enjoys writing and has a flair for it, translation might be a possibility. “I think it’s kind of cool to go from one language to another—even though I don’t really know any,” she smiled self-deprecatingly. Isabel smiled patiently when I asked her what she sees herself doing ten years from now. People often ask that kind of question, she explained, and she finds it strange. Yet she considered the question for a moment, and her voice grew increasingly animated as she started telling me about her desire to travel and get a master’s degree in England. “To leave the small town that is Chihuahua and to go—I don’t know—of course my dream is to go to London and study there, and live there for a long time, and find a job. That would be like my ideal.” She added that, for people who do not like clubbing and partying that much, life in Chihuahua can be unexciting. She yearns for a more intellectually challenging environment, one where she could find greater cultural diversity. Isabel imagines London as embodying these qualities.

I asked Isabel what type of job she thinks she would be most likely to do in London. Like Alicia, she sees herself working as an English teacher while she finds her way to other professional activities.

I don’t know—the first job I’ll get, I’m almost positive, is as a teacher. Because everyone finds jobs as teachers right away. But I don’t know—something like translation would be very interesting, although I know it’s very difficult.... Or something in relations between companies. I don’t know—like a maquila here.
needs to contact the headquarters in Houston or something like that, it would be cool.

Isabel is well aware that Lengua Inglesa might not offer her some of the skills needed for this type of position, but she says she could take a short course to make up for that. She says that she could easily pick up the skills on the job, but taking a course would be better because "it would give it an air of 'I do know how to do this.' Like more authority." Furthermore, she is also conscious that whether she stays in London permanently or not may depend on both pragmatic and emotional factors.

I don't know—maybe not permanent. Because I'm not sure that the city is like all that fantastic, or that I will find a job and stuff. If I found a job there I would like to stay there for good. But also, for instance—I don't know, to have the opportunity to come back here for a few months. Not weeks, but to stay for like two months so I can see my family. Because, for instance, I have cousins—I have a cousin who lives in Cancun, I have my relatives in Juarez. So to come back here for a week or two—I wouldn't see anyone! I would only see my parents and my uncles. I don't know, it would be nice if I could come back here for a decent time and see everyone, and see how everything has changed.

Like Alicia and Isabel, Miriam seems to see teaching English as a temporary occupation. "I know that I have to start teaching although I don't like it," she said, "because I think that, as in any case, you have to start with something." She added that, in fact, her "ideal job would be to be a translator," preferably of literary texts. Like Alicia and Isabel, Miriam also mentions her desire to get a master's degree, although she does not know in what field. Yet pursuing graduate studies is important to her since "I've always thought that in anything that I will do in my life, I will have to do it at all levels." I asked Miriam where she would like to get her master's degree. She responded that she "would like to go some place else, but I'm also—I'm really attached to my house, to this place. But I would like to travel because I will learn so much more with different people,
but I’m really not sure yet.” Miriam concluded that, even though she would like to study abroad, she imagines herself residing in Chihuahua.

The Envisioned Futures of Fourth-Year Participants

As I analyzed the interviews with fourth-year participants, I noticed that their envisioned futures were in fact quite similar to those of first-year participants. I observed a strong link between the participants’ plans of transnational mobility and their envisioned work opportunities. However, in the case of two of fourth-year participants, a more complex perspective emerged regarding the feasibility of working or studying outside of Mexico.

Echoing the responses of Alicia, Isabel and Miriam, Gina [4yr, OE] does not envision herself as part of just one professional community after graduating from Lengua Inglesa. Rather, although she stated a preference for a certain profession, she remained quite open to the possibility of trying out alternate career and labour opportunities. When I asked Gina how she imagines herself ten years from now, she sighed deeply before answering. Then she said, “I hope to be out of here—out of this city, out of the country…. Maybe I will be married, I will have a family, and I will be working for a company.” I asked her if she would like to work in Chihuahua. Her answer was a firm “No.” Instead, she would like to work in Canada. She explained to me that even though there are many jobs available in Chihuahua, the city does “not fulfill my expectations.” Gina is looking for a greater professional challenge than local positions might offer. “For instance, there might be people here who need interpretation, but very basic, and that’s not what I want. I want like a higher level.” She added that she is taking a class called “Business Translation” that might prepare here for the kind of job that she would most
like to do. “That’s what I like. Legal translation or business terms, marketing terms, things like that.”

Like Isabel in the case of first-year participants, Gina has a country in mind in which she would like to live in the future. However, she also foresees that the work opportunities she encounters might lead her to relocate to other places. Gina was very clear in that part of why she likes Lengua Inglesa is that the major “doesn’t attach me here. I know that if someday I have the possibility of going somewhere—I’m not saying only the United States or Canada, this career is going to help me a lot, to find a job and stuff.” I found myself intrigued by the resolution in her voice when she said she would not want to stay in Chihuahua. During our member-checking interview, I asked her to tell me what life in Chihuahua is like for her.

In general, I think, I like Chihuahua. I like the lifestyle, the people, the weather even though it’s crazy. But if I think about my career—what I’m going to do later, find a job or to grow professionally, I don’t think Chihuahua is the right place. Because it’s too—although it’s a big city, it’s like a town, you know? So maybe, the expectations I have or my dreams, professional dreams, I think I will not fulfill them if I stay here.... And I realized that before thinking of this career.... But in general, if I didn’t have professional dreams maybe I wouldn’t think of leaving Chihuahua.

Gina’s words came to my mind as I analyzed the future envisioned by Carmen. Ten years from now, Carmen would like to have already obtained master’s and doctoral degrees. “I want to teach English classes—or literature, which is what I like. I’d like to keep on learning. I’d like to somehow help to improve the major—I don’t know how, but I’ve tried to already.” Carmen pointed out that if she could choose a place to live, it would be either in Spain or in the Mexican state of Zacatecas. She was as emphatic about not wishing to live in the United States as Gina was about not wanting to stay in
Chihuahua. I asked her to tell me more about this during our member-check interview. She responded that “it has a lot to do with the comfort of the ‘known,’ of living in a place she is familiar with.” Then she added that lately she has been reconsidering this position. Although she would not pick the United States as her preferred country of residence, she would consider living there if a job or study opportunity required her to.

Lately I have been asking myself—since last time we talked, I have been asking myself that, living in the United States and getting a master’s and stuff. And it doesn’t sound so bad. The thing is that it is not a place that I’m immediately attracted to. ‘My ideal would be to live in the States’—I mean, not really. But I think I could live there. It wouldn’t be my choice as in saying ‘I’m going to pick a place to go and live there...’ I wouldn’t choose it because I like it; I would do it out of work-related interests, not because I’d say ‘I want to educate my children under George Bush’s regime.’ No.

Mario hesitated for a moment when I asked him how he imagined himself in the future. When he replied he seemed uncharacteristically shy. “Well, I would really and sincerely like to work here,” he said with a soft chuckle. “I would like to be a teacher here. Because,” his voice trembled a little, “because I love this major. And I would like to help open the eyes of other people so they can love it as much as I do.” When he first enrolled in the major, Mario was under the impression that it would help him to become a translator, more so than to become a teacher. He still likes translation, he clarified, but he feels more compelled towards guiding students in Lengua Inglesa. He has asked several of the professors in the major about their own graduate studies “to see which way it would be okay to go.” Mario is very conscious that, in order to fulfill this dream, he would have to obtain at least a master’s degree, and that he would like to get it from a Mexican university. I asked him if he would consider pursuing graduate studies elsewhere in the world. He thought for a few seconds before replying.
What happens is that to me that seems very difficult—well, I feel that me studying somewhere else in the world is a world away. I’m 20 years old and I don’t have a passport. My only trip to the United States lasted 30 minutes! And for instance I’ve seen that universities in the United States are so expensive, I mean it’s incredible, it’s impossible. And many things like that that make me say well, the United States is very expensive. And I mean, UNAM is not so expensive—it’s cheaper than NSU.

Mario brought a different perspective to how Lengua Inglesa students may envision transnational mobility. He was the only participant who mentioned the cost of studying abroad as an impediment to pursuing a graduate program out of Mexico. At the same time, his answer suggests that it is quite possible for someone in Mexico to remain in touch with the global. He explained that, years ago, he used to think that higher education was very bad. However, this perception changed as he learned more about universities in Mexico.

I started looking up information on master’s degrees and doctorates and everything. And I have seen that in higher education there is this great seriousness and that people from all over the world come to Mexico to study. For instance at UNAM, in the master’s I’m interested in, in linguistics, they have teachers who can teach a class in Russian, Japanese, Polish, Swedish, German, English, Spanish. And that, I mean, wow.

Similarly, although Nora expressed a wish to continue studying and to relocate abroad, she emphasized that she has more pressing needs at hand. In particular, Nora’s main concern is the education of her four-year old son. When I asked her how she envisions herself ten years from now, Nora said, “I expect to have a decent job, teaching English—anywhere.” Although she would prefer to teach adults, she would not hesitate to work in an elementary or secondary school either. She would work anywhere “to ensure my boy’s education—because I want him to have a bilingual education.” As for herself, “as soon as I can afford a decent education for him, I want to work, work work. I
have no choice—I’d like to get a master’s degree, but to be honest I also have to think of my boy.” Like other participants, Nora has also imagined herself moving to another country. “Even when my husband and I were together I would try to convince him that we should go abroad.” She would have liked to go to the United States or Canada. However, because she and her husband have joint custody of their child, this plan remains out of her reach.

Looking at the legal stuff, I think I would have to get [my husband’s] consent to take my son with me, and I honestly don’t think he would agree. So I don’t think that will be possible. I will not leave without my child. But if that wasn’t an issue—I would be doing the paperwork already!

Commentary on the Futures Envisioned by the Student-Participants

The participants’ comments suggest a strong link between the participants’ plans of transnational mobility and their envisioned work and further study opportunities. This link is evident in both first-year and fourth-year students. In the case of first-year participants, all of them spoke casually about relocating to the United States and Europe—for work, for study, for life. The length of their experience abroad could range from a few months or years—necessary to complete a master’s degree, as is the case with Miriam—to settling down abroad for good, as Eileen expects to do. Yet others, like Isabel and Alicia, envision themselves embarking on journeys of discovery that will take them across continents, then back again. Residence in the host country will depend on how well the country responds to the participants, and not necessarily the other way around. Isabel’s vision is a good example of this. If circumstances are favourable, Isabel would have no problem with trying to make a life in England; yet if circumstances are adverse, she would just as easily be able to live elsewhere. In this respect, the official
accreditation invested in a Lengua Inglesa degree may be important to facilitate her plans. Isabel is conscious of the importance of accreditations for transnational mobility. She is aware that Lengua Inglesa may not provide her with some of the skills necessary in a PR position. Although she could try to pick up these skills on the job, adding specialized training to her Lengua Inglesa degree would add to her "authority" in the eyes of employers.

In the case of fourth-year participants, the link between transnational mobility and the participants’ envisioned work and career opportunities is illustrated in Gina’s assertion that “if I didn’t have professional dreams maybe I wouldn’t think of leaving Chihuahua.” It is also suggested in Carmen’s imagined scenario for living in the United States. Whereas for Gina the pursuit of her professional dreams leads her away from Chihuahua, for Carmen it opens up the possibility of living in a country that she would otherwise not consider appealing. In both cases we can appreciate the interplay between the participants’ expected mobility and their envisioned professional futures.

Most of the participants appear to have had enough experience with international mobility to consider it a matter of course. It seems to have also made it possible for them to imagine themselves in a future where geographical barriers are in no way insurmountable. With the exception of Eileen, who was required by U.S. immigration to return to Mexico, first-year participants do not mention any possible legal or financial constraints that they might find in moving from one nation to another. Among fourth-year participants this is also the case with Carmen and Gina. Yet with Mario and Nora, a more complex picture is revealed in terms of the participants’ views on transnational mobility. Mario and Nora give aspects such as parenthood and financial and legal matters more
consideration than the other participants. As the student with the least international travel experience, it is perhaps significant that Mario is also the only participant who considered the financial implications of studying abroad. It is also likely that Mario’s limited experience abroad makes it more difficult for him to take transnational mobility for granted. Similarly, although Nora states her desire to pursue graduate studies and/or move to the United States, she does not see these as feasible plans for the near future. Her priority is to “work, work, work” to support her son and herself. Rather than thinking of her own future, Nora is planning ahead for her son’s, whom she would like to have a bilingual education. Both cases suggest that even though there is a strong discourse in favour of transnational mobility and further education the participants, reaching these futures may be more feasible for some students than others. Factors such as financial capital, parenthood, and even age may play a role in who gets to reach the most ambitious imagined futures.

"I See More Future in It:" The Participants’ Reasons for Choosing to Study in Lengua Inglesa

In the previous section, I illustrated how the envisioned futures of the participants point towards a wide range of imagined professional and academic communities located both within and outside of Mexico. The participants’ responses to the question “Why did you choose to study in Lengua Inglesa?” revealed that the participants had these envisioned futures in mind when they decided to enrol in the major. The participants imagined Lengua Inglesa as a bridge to reaching their envisioned futures; in turn, this visualization of the program led participants to form a number of expectations from the major. The comments of both first- and fourth-year participants suggest that they
imagined Lengua Inglesa as a program that provided important advantages over other majors offered locally.

In most cases, the participants viewed Lengua Inglesa as a program that would expand their opportunities to build a financially secure future for themselves. This belief seems inextricably linked to the fact that English is the language of instruction in the major. Arturo’s [lyr; OS] case is a good example of this. After obtaining his high school degree in the United States, Arturo considered attending college there as well. However, he realized that he missed his family in friends in Mexico too much to remain away from them for several years more. He asked his family in Mexico to advise him on the careers available in Chihuahua. In the end, he decided to enrol in a psychology major at a small private university. He chose psychology, he explains, because he wanted to “help people.” Yet he soon began having second thoughts about his studies:

I don’t know, my dad gave me the money to pay for the first term [but] in the end I started thinking, am I going to make a living out of this? Will this support me—am I going to make any money? And it didn’t convince me.

Arturo’s mother, who works as an English teacher at NSU, suggested that he look into the Lengua Inglesa program. Once he learned more about the major, Arturo decided to drop his plan of studying psychology. “I said, I can become an English teacher—something that I use everyday and I would like it more. I see more future in it than in psychology.” For Arturo, the idea of taking courses in English at the university level, without leaving Mexico, increased the attractiveness of the major. “That is, it was not just any school of English; this was a university major.”

For Eileen [1yr, OS], who is planning to pursue a teaching career in the United States, studying in Lengua Inglesa meant an opportunity to improve her knowledge of
English while she prepares to return to the United States. She emphasized that from the beginning she has had “other plans”, and that she is in Lengua Inglesa “only in the meantime.” However, the program has been useful to her in the sense that she “would not want to stop practicing English.”

Some participants were more explicit in stating what they perceive to be Lengua Inglesa’s advantages over other majors offered in Chihuahua City. For instance, Nora [4yr, OS] observed that majors such as accounting and law are “saturated” and that it is not unusual to see people “who spent five years studying a difficult five-year majors, working as secretaries.” She saw different possibilities in Lengua Inglesa. “Even if I didn’t work as a teacher as it says in the [graduate] profile, as a translator, as this or that—in a maquila—there is always need for bilingual people. Or even going abroad. If you’re bilingual it’s easier.” Nora found an added appeal in training to become a teacher. Although she was always keen on becoming a teacher, she was also attracted to other majors, like medicine and computer science. However, “as a woman, even then I was contemplating the idea that sooner or later I would want a family, I was going to want children.” A career in engineering or medicine would not lend itself to this, as they can be “very absorbing, and one is too removed from the family.” Furthermore, Nora was not sure whether her husband and family would support her through the long years it would take to get a medicine degree. Teaching, on the other hand, seemed more family-friendly. “That way I could do both things: I could be a professional and have enough time for my family.” For Nora, then, obtaining a degree in Lengua Inglesa promised the compounded benefit of being highly marketable while giving her the flexibility to raise a family.
Some participants commented on the uncertainty and anxiety they felt as they came close to graduating from high school, and were faced with the daunting task of choosing a major. Alicia [1yr, OS], for instance, reflected that as a high school senior she faced a great deal of anxiety over having to choose a major.

It’s a really important decision—something that you will do for the rest of your life! I spent the whole summer without sleeping at night—just thinking of my options and... how it was really going to change my life. I didn’t feel capable to make a decision that would have an impact even in my 40s or 50s. Even my children, economically—everything! Everything!

Alicia stated that she still does not have a clear idea of what she would like to do for a living in the future. This is one of the main reasons why she chose to study in Lengua Inglesa:

When I was looking for a major, like I said, I wanted to go to the Normal\textsuperscript{16}.... I wanted to be a teacher, and here I have the opportunity to be a teacher, but I’m not sure that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. So I also have the option of doing translation—literary translation, which is what I really like... I don’t know, it’s like I see it as having more opportunities for work, it’s more open, with more freedom to grow.

The participants’ comments suggested that local higher education institutions may not offer many inviting options for individuals with an interest in the humanities and social sciences. As Isabel [1yr, OS] searched for a major in the humanities, she first discarded Spanish Literature and Philosophy on the grounds that they would not allow her to make a living or they would not be intellectually challenging. Reflecting on her friends’ choice of majors after high school, Isabel mentions that programs in human resources, engineering, law, and administration seem to be the most popular. Isabel then

\textsuperscript{16} Escuelas Normales are Teacher’ Colleges supported by the federal government. Graduates of these programs typically work as elementary, middle school and high school teachers in the public state and federal education systems.
points out that most majors offered in public universities in Chihuahua are directed towards the needs of *maquilas*. There are very few options for people who are not interested in these fields of study. She also observes that more majors in the humanities seem to be offered by private institutions. In public universities, on the other hand, the majors in the humanities are very long and don’t have very good job prospects: “To spend five years [of study] to end up as a middle school teacher telling students ‘paint here, paint there;’ I don’t think so.”

Finally, for some participants, studying in Lengua Inglesa also meant balancing the need for professional training while also catering to other aesthetic or intellectual needs, such as a love of language and writing. While still in high school, Miriam [1yr, OE] was planning to enrol in a psychology major. She emphasized that at the time she “wasn’t very clear about what I wanted to do, but I was very clear about what I didn’t want to do.” Miriam knew she would not want to attend medical school or majors that would require a lot of mathematics. Miriam had always known that she would like to dedicate herself to a more “humanistic” career, and so psychology seemed like something that would better suit her talents and interests. However, when she heard about Lengua Inglesa, she realized that “it was more for me—that it identified more with me, who I am. And one of my goals is to learn several languages, so I wanted to learn English first.” Miriam felt that she identified more strongly with Lengua Inglesa than with psychology partly because of how much she enjoys taking English lessons and speaking in English.

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17 Maquilas or maquiladoras are factories established in Mexico near the U.S. border. They are “used for the production of goods based on the temporary importation of raw materials and equipment for transformation in Mexico with subsequent export to foreign markets including the United States” (ICF, 2006).
Gina’s [4yr, OE] decision to study in Lengua Inglesa was influenced by similar motives. For a long time, Gina had entertained the idea of becoming a fashion designer. However, things did not turn out as she expected. “I started to look for schools here in Mexico, and I found out that—what they said—that I was going to starve to death,” she said with a smile. At that point she started looking for another major that she liked. When she found out about the Lengua Inglesa major through her mother—a teacher at the university’s language centre—Gina thought it would be a good option for her, especially because of her fondness of English. “I’ve always been involved in the language and I’ve always liked it a lot. I thought it was very interesting to study a major in another language, and I thought,” her voice became almost a whisper, “‘ok, I’m going to be here.’”

Carmen’s [4yr, OS] decision to pursue university studies was influenced by her desire to dedicate more time to her own writing. Carmen “wanted an easy major—not easy in the sense of getting in and graduating right away... but in the sense that it would be something that came easily to me, so I would have time to write.” Carmen did not find out about the existence of Lengua Inglesa until the day she was presenting her admission exam for law school. “Kind of late, isn’t it?” she laughs. “Just like now I find about other majors I would have liked to study.” On the morning of the exam, she and a friend walked by the School of Humanities on their way to the School of Law. Her friend mentioned that Carmen might like Lengua Inglesa because of her natural ability for English and her passion for writing. Carmen saw Lengua Inglesa as “the only major where I thought I could do well—and do something useful as well. Because if I only
wanted to do well, I would have enrolled in Letras Españolas [Spanish Literature].”

Carmen saw more “hope” in majoring in Lengua Inglesa, because it seemed to offer a greater job market. “You can teach English privately or you can work for a larger school of English.” On the other hand, “in Spanish Literature, there is no one—at least here in Mexico—who requires the services of a private Spanish literature teacher. Or to open your own Spanish school.”

The excerpts presented in this section indicate that, for many of the participants, Lengua Inglesa was not the first choice of major. Rather, studying in Lengua Inglesa appears to be a strategic move on their part to maximize their range of professional and personal opportunities—which at the same time implies attaining a greater degree of financial and employment security. As we can see, the participants imagined Lengua Inglesa as a bridge to reaching their envisioned futures even before enrolling in the major. Based on this vision, the participants formed a number of expectations from the major. It is important to note the extent to which these expectations are linked to the fact that English is the predominant language of instruction in the major. “Even if I didn’t work as a teacher as it says in the [graduate] profile, as a translator, as this or that—in a maquila—there is always need for bilingual people. Or even going abroad. If you’re bilingual it’s easier.” Nora’s statement resonates—implicitly and explicitly—in the words of the other participants. Some participants indicated that they considered studying in programs that could well be considered the equivalent of Lengua Inglesa but for the language of instruction. In each case, Lengua Inglesa is considered to have greater value

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18 It is important to note that participants—and indeed, all members of the Lengua Inglesa community—typically say the names of the other majors in Spanish, even if they are speaking in English at the time. I have tried to preserve this use throughout the analysis whenever it occurs in the participants’ comments. Elsewhere I use the English equivalents of these majors to preserve the flow of ideas in English.
in the labour market and to offer more professional alternatives. In Alicia’s case, studying in Lengua Inglesa was preferable to studying in the Teacher’s College because she perceives that a Lengua Inglesa degree will allow her to pursue a greater number of work and career opportunities. Similarly, Carmen may have found a degree in Spanish Literature intellectually and aesthetically pleasing, but as she indicates, few people in Mexico require “the services of a private Spanish literature teacher.” This bespeaks the notion that speaking English opens the way to a wider range of imaginable futures.

Re-imagining Oneself at Lengua Inglesa

One of the intended goals of this project was to determine whether any changes occur in the students’ identity from the time they enter the program to the time they graduate. There obvious caveat in the methodology is that I was comparing the experiences of two different groups of students. Only a longitudinal study that followed students from the time they enter the program to the time they graduate could capture the subtle ways in which the imagined communities of students may expand—or remain the same, if that were the case—during their time in the major, and the various external factors that may influence this process. That being said, the analysis of the interviews with students did appear to reveal a number of identitary changes in both first- and fourth-year participants.

“Where Can I Grow?” The Experiences of First-year Participants

In the case of first-year participants, choosing to study in Lengua Inglesa implied envisioning different futures for themselves than they had in mind before learning about the existence of the major. It was interesting to note that, at the same time that the first-
year participants decided to study in Lengua Inglesa, they also had to reinvent themselves to a certain extent. For instance, when Arturo decided to shift his interest in psychology to a career with better financial prospects, he sustained an inner dialogue through which he reconfigured his future. “I said, I can become an English teacher—something that I use everyday and I would like it more. I see more future in it than in psychology.”

Eileen spoke about undergoing a similar process. Faced with having to enrol in a major that would not prepare her for the specific niche she had envisioned for herself—elementary school teacher in the United States—she sought the way to adapt to the new circumstances. A rose is a rose is a rose, even if planted in a different garden. “I said, if I’m going to be a teacher, I’m going to be a teacher; and if I already know some English, if I can study in this major…. I want to be an English teacher.” Yet Eileen expects this identity as an English-teacher-in-training to be temporary, as she is determined to find a way to return to the United States and pursue her dream of teaching elementary school children.

Other participants in fact expect that the process of re-imagining themselves will extend into the future. Alicia, for instance, commented that she and her friends in the major envision themselves experimenting in different work scenarios.

We’re all like, ‘yeah, I want to teach for a while—but not really. Only while I make some money, and then we’ll see.’ They’re all like, ‘we’ll have to see where can I find a job, where do I have more opportunities, where can I grow, or what do I like more. I’ll work here for a while, then somewhere else and we’ll see…’ We all have a plan, but all the same we know we can do other things; we want to try and see.

“Where can I grow?” Alicia asks herself; how she answers the question eventually could in turn invite any number of new identities, professional and otherwise. She
expects that obtaining a degree in Lengua Inglesa will give her that freedom of choice. For Isabel, studying in Lengua Inglesa seems to be linked to her vision of transnational mobility, during which she envisions herself experimenting with new/different ways of being. Isabel sees herself as growing into someone more independent, who has "her own stories" to tell. In this sense, Isabel expects that her envisioned transnational experiences will play a role in creating new identities for herself. During our first interview, Isabel mentioned that before entering Lengua Inglesa she had considered studying journalism. However, because NSU does not offer a major in journalism, this would have implied her moving to Juarez City, in the U.S.-Mexico border. Her parents would not allow it—they saw life in Juarez as too dangerous; Isabel found herself agreeing with them. She described herself as being too trusting and carefree at times, and reflected that this might put her at risk in a big border city like Juarez. Isabel added that she did not consider studying journalism elsewhere in Mexico because

> Going to Juarez would've meant having my relatives there—my grandmother, my uncles. If something happened to me I would have someone to turn to.... And being out [beyond that] would be like, I don't know—I'm so used to always being around my parents and my brother... we're very close. To go farther away wouldn't be nice.

I found it intriguing that even though Isabel decided not to move to Juarez City out of concerns about safety and being far away from her family, she could nonetheless speak of moving to England—possibly for good—with patent enthusiasm. I point this out to her during our second interview. She explains that her parents have been somewhat protective with her, and it is only recently that she has begun to be more independent. Being around on her own can be a bit scary right now, but she expects that by the time she graduates it will be easier. "I think of traveling like—when I'm older. To go around
alone, to do as I please—to get lost on my own! I don’t know, to have something to tell that happened to me… because leaving right now—no, it doesn’t sound good to me.”

Isabel says that living abroad would give her the opportunity to challenge herself in the sense of being more adventurous.

Love and Disappointment in Lengua Inglesa: The Experiences of Fourth-year Participants

I observed a similar re-imagining process among fourth-year participants. However, in their case, the re-imagining process seems to have continued throughout their time in Lengua Inglesa and to have taken idiosyncratic forms for each of them. In the cases of Nora, Mario and Gina, studying in Lengua Inglesa appears to have contributed to expanding the range of futures that these participants can imagine for their future.

Nora: “My shell cracked open”

Altogether, studying in Lengua Inglesa has been a positive experience for Nora. When I asked her to tell me what she considers to be the best and the worst things in the major, she could not think of any truly bad experience. Her best experiences have been linked to the people she has met while in the major. It is interesting that in her response she indicated a strong relationship between expanding her horizons and speaking a second language, namely English.

I have met really nice people; I think that’s the best thing. Including teachers and classmates. I mean, my world opened up. My shell cracked open. English has allowed me to know many other things. Even things like—I don’t do it very often, but from the moment you enter a chat room and you meet people from other parts
of the world, and they tell you things that make you go, ‘wow!’ And that’s within my reach by knowing a second language.

Furthermore, Nora appears to have discovered new professional directions during her time in Lengua Inglesa. Last year the School of Humanities organized an international forum with guest speakers from the United States, Canada, Germany and Cuba. The School asked Lengua Inglesa students to volunteer as simultaneous translators during the presentations. Nora was then in her sixth semester in the major, and she and four other classmates volunteered as interpreters. “We translated from English into Spanish, but because they had also brought some American guests, we also translated the conferences in Spanish into English. It’s really hard; you have no time to be nervous because you don’t even get a chance to blink!” The school obtained the special equipment for simultaneous translation from a well-established translation company in the city, owned by one of the first students to obtain a Lengua Inglesa degree. Her company often recruits new employees from among students in the program; this is precisely how Nora came into her current job. “They were listening to us there... they took our contact information and gave us their card.”

Nora surprised herself by taking on such a challenge. There was awe in her voice as she told me about it. Afterwards she kept wondering “I can’t believe I just did that!” Yet looking back, she added, “I think it’s one of the best experiences I’ve ever had.” Nora feels she is at a stage in her life where she is confident that she can “do whatever I set my mind to,” so if an opportunity to do professional simultaneous translation came up she would consider it carefully. However, she is aware that her choices may be restricted by her circumstances. “To be honest, I think I have more possibilities in teaching, it’s
something more stable and I can’t afford the luxury of traveling constantly, which is often the case with simultaneous translators.”

In Nora’s case, the process of imagining more possibilities for her future is also evident in her comments on global mobility. When I asked her if she ever thought of going to college somewhere else in Mexico, she replied that, “More than outside Chihuahua, I used to think of going out of the country.” She added that she “always felt this curiosity to go to the United States,” yet it never occurred to her that she could study there. Yet this changed during her time in Lengua Inglesa. Being in the major “did open the opportunity to see that there is a world out there. And that there are many things to do.” I asked Nora if studying outside Chihuahua was ever a possibility for her when she was looking for a university major. “I had honestly not thought about it,” she says. Yet now she does. “I would really like it, I would really like it. There are strong forces that would not allow me to but I would really like it,” she concluded in a soft voice.

Nora’s metaphors to describe her experience in Lengua Inglesa are quite striking: “my world opened up. My shell cracked open.” This bears a strong resemblance to the descriptions made by faculty-participants regarding the role that Lengua Inglesa is seen as playing in expanding the students’ horizons. The opportunity to volunteer as an interpreter seems to have been a pivotal moment in Nora’s time in the program. The experience certainly seems to have expanded the range of professional communities in which she is able to imagine herself. Similarly, she credits her studies in the major with making her aware that “there is a world out there” in terms of pursuing further studies abroad—a possibility she never considered before.
Mario: “Your major is part of yourself”

Mario [4yr, OS] has discovered an intense affection for Lengua Inglesa during the course of his studies. In his case, this affection has led him to envision himself as a professor in the major. Mario’s interest in teaching in Lengua Inglesa stemmed from his concern that the major was losing some of its best teachers. At the time of our interview two of the full-time professors had gone to the United States to pursue doctoral studies as part of the PROMEP program, and two more were applying for sponsorship from the same program. New sessional instructors were hired on a contractual basis to take over some of the classes normally taught by these professors. Mario noted that although some of the new professors are good, others are not up to the standard to which Mario and his classmates were accustomed.

It was like the teaching quality was split in two. And I told myself, ‘I’d like that the wow education were available to all.’ So if I can help with something, I will. Whole-heartedly. That’s why I would like to teach here, not because I want to brag about teaching at the university, or say I’m part of an elite, but because what they [the students] are learning is valuable and they must learn it well.

19 PROMEP (Program for Upgrading Teacher at Institutes of Higher Education) is part of a government-initiated series of programs that aim at increasing the individual performance of faculty in Mexican universities. Among the standards that PROMEP stipulates for faculty members is that they hold a master’s or a doctoral degree to teach at the undergraduate level. Since the majority of university professors in public university held only bachelor’s degrees, part PROMEP’s mission is to sponsor full-time faculty to pursue graduate degrees in high-ranking universities in Mexico and abroad. The program aims at doubling the proportion of full-time professors (from 31 percent to 70 percent) by 2006, and to double the number of full-time professors with doctorates to 22 percent (PROMEP, 2004). One of the troubling aspects of the project is its excessive reliance on per-hour faculty to achieve its objectives. Even though PROMEP has helped increase the number of full-time faculty with advanced graduate degrees from 14,270 in 1996 to 23,054 in 2003, the majority of the faculty in public universities still work on a per-hour basis. Also, as PROMEP sponsors full-time faculty only, it is left to contractual faculty to take over the classes of the full-time professors who obtain sponsorship. As Mario observed, in the case of Lengua Inglesa, students may interpret this as having the quality of instruction “split in two” when courses that were normally taught by full-time faculty are taken over by per-hour professors—most of whom are recent Lengua Inglesa graduates.
When he first entered Lengua Inglesa, Mario thought the major would help him to become a translator. Although he is still interested in translation, he feels “a greater commitment towards guiding” new Lengua Inglesa students.

B: Guide them where?
M: Towards a commitment to themselves and the major.
B: The commitment to the major—what will the major give them in exchange for that commitment?
M: Why, the major gives you many things. It gives you, first and foremost, the pride of being in a major where you will always find employment. Or, it is a major through which [you will find] work, well-paid work. The image of your major is very important in relation to other majors. No matter how trivial they think you are, your major counts. Your major is part of yourself because you chose it, and also because at the time you took the admission exam, they chose you—the teachers. Your major is giving you an excellent future and you have to make the most of it. Besides, this is a public university, a major that is not offered just anywhere.

Mario’s comments bear a remarkable similarity to the faculty-participants’ vision of Lengua Inglesa. It is evident that Mario feels a fierce pride in being part of a learning community that will provide him with a practical professional training. His comments on the “image” of the program seem loaded with meaning, particularly the way in which he uses the word “trivial” in Spanish. His use of the word seems to make reference to both the perception of Lengua Inglesa as “and English course” devoid of the academic legitimacy of other university majors, and to the perception of Lengua Inglesa students as “preppy” individuals overly concerned with outward appearances. Yet Mario indicates that despite these misguided perceptions, “your major counts.” Also, his statement that “your major is part of yourself” suggests how strong his identification with the program is. It would appear that for Mario the dual act of choosing Lengua Inglesa and being chosen in turn by the major’s gatekeepers—the professors—signals the beginning of a new identity for students who, like himself, are truly “committed” to the major.
Embracing this identity entails the right to access the benefits granted to members of the community, such as acquiring useful professional skills that guarantee one’s entry to the labour market. Finally, the last sentence in his statement seems just as loaded with meaning. Lengua Inglesa is a part of a public university. Yet through it students can access a similar range of opportunities as students in private, better connected institutions of higher education. For Mario, Lengua Inglesa thus makes accessible to middle-class students like himself opportunities that may have otherwise been perhaps out of their reach.

Gina: “I can do more than just translating or teaching”

Like many participants, when Gina [4yr, OE] first enrolled in Lengua Inglesa she was not sure what line of work she would like to pursue after graduating. “I didn’t have a specific reason, you know? It was just that I had kind of a trauma because I couldn’t study fashion design.” She rolled her eyes and said she felt “lost” when she first applied to the major. Gina’s attitude towards the major has also changed significantly over the last four years. “It’s very strange,” she told me during our initial interview, “because as I said, when I first entered the career [major] I didn’t have any clue about what was going to happen to me and I didn’t know anything about my future or career at all. Right now I can say that I love it, the career [the major]. I like it.” She also has a clearer idea of what line of work she would like best. “Translation, but most of all I like interpretation,” particularly of legal matters. I asked her to tell me more about this change during our member-checking interview.

B: You told me that, at first, when you entered the major you didn’t really know what you were going to do; you didn’t know what you wanted. But then you said that now you really like the major.
G: Yes.
B: What do you like about it?
G: Well, I like the fact that it makes me read more, for instance. I'm more interested in literature and reading. It even has opened like a—door that was closed to me, regarding literature. And I don't know, maybe [pause] when I was going to do the entrance exam I thought this major was only to be a teacher—or translator, yeah. A translator or a teacher. But now I realize there are more things to do, like more exciting. Because I know that [with] the knowledge I can do more than just translating or teaching.
B: What other things can you do?
G: Well, I can work as a—uhm [in Spanish] editorial?
B: Publishing company?
G: Yeah, in a publishing company. Like more original things than just teaching.

Speaking about her first months in Lengua Inglesa, Gina added with amusement that she “chose this career because it was my second choice, so I didn’t think of it as my salvation.” During the first semesters in the major, “all I did was to enjoy the classes because I actually started to like them and understand them.” I was not until her fifth term (third year) in the program that she “started thinking about my future with Lengua Inglesa… that is when I started thinking of me as a translator.” The time at which this change occurred is perhaps significant. It is in the fifth semester of the plan of studies that students begin to take specialized courses in translation and language teaching methodology [See Table 6—the Lengua Inglesa curriculum]. In Gina’s case, the contact with specific courses in the program seems to have played a role in her re-envisioning her professional alternatives. Even though Gina believes that she would find fulfillment in a career in translation, she does not exclude the possibility that she might want to experiment with other career and work opportunities. In fact, she recently has even begun to “see myself as a literature teacher, because I am starting to be fond of medieval literature as a student.” For Gina, taking courses in translation and literature appears to
have helped her define better her career goals, as well as to encourage her to consider alternative career paths that she had not imagined for herself in the past.

*Carmen: “I’m not asking or demanding more than what this major can give”*

Carmen brought a completely different perspective than her other fourth-year peers. During our first interview, she was outspoken about what she sees as the shortcomings of the major. Carmen made it clear she has never felt challenged enough in the program. Her words suggest that she began to grow disappointed with Lengua Inglesa within the first few months of her studies there.

I thought it would be more demanding in many aspects. Especially in that the people who studied here would truly be people with a high proficiency in English and who had the capacity to write—not capacity or talent, but—will? To write; that they wanted to. That this would truly be a school where people said of a graduate “Hey, this person is a complete English professional.” Maybe I myself would not have made it in if it were so demanding, you know? But at least that way you would have to work for it, make an effort. I think the program is very deficient, that it has holes all over. Sometimes they put courses—semantics right along syntax, and both are very hard. And things like that that don’t help you to learn as a student.

This disappointment soon translated into a lax attitude towards her studies. “When I first got in, I spent the first three semesters bumming around. I was always absent, always copying homework from classmates—doing very little.” At some point, she decided that this attitude was harming no one but herself. “Until one time when I realized that if I didn’t do it, no one would do it in my stead, and I would graduate knowing little more than I did when I first got in. A blank page, and no one would do anything about it.” She underscored that her change of heart came from herself, and had little to do with the major itself. “And sure enough, I went from a 7 average to the 9.5 average I now have. But it was because I decided so, not because the major invited me to change.”
During the time between our first interview and the member-checking interview, I found myself very puzzled—even a little disturbed—by why Carmen’s words. I wondered why anyone would remain in a major that did not seem to live up to their expectations. I was even more surprised when I started transcribing our first interview and came across the part where she talked about her plans for the future. As we saw earlier, Carmen said she would like to pursue graduate studies and teach literature. What struck me most was what she said right after that. “I would like to keep on learning. I would like to somehow learn to improve the major—I don’t know how, but I’ve tried already.” I delayed our interview until the very end to give myself more time to think about her transcription. When we met for our member-checking interview a thought had occurred to me and I shared it with her. To my surprise, she agreed with my assessment of her feelings towards Lengua Inglesa.

B: My first impression was that you have a rather negative view of the major. But the more I read—this is just my impression—I could see that things are much more complex than that?
C: [Softly] Yes.
B: My impression is that you are very aware of the problems and the shortcomings of the major, but that at the same time you feel great affection for it.
C: [Nodding] Mm-hmm.
B: What inspires your affection for the major?
C: The idea, the ideal that people have of the major. I wish people really worked towards achieving that profile. I think we can be much more competent people, really dedicated to what the major stands for.

I was surprised to hear the extent to which Carmen believes in the “idea” of Lengua Inglesa. During the long conversation that ensued after this exchange, she made it clear to me that she believes that the vision that professors have for the students’ future is attainable, but that some problems in the major make that vision true only for a handful of students. One of the main problems she sees lies in the sequence of courses in the
major. According to Carmen, there is a discrepancy between what the students expect from the major when they read the program’s description, and what they encounter when they start taking classes. The discrepancy lies in that during the first two years of the program, there are no courses that deal explicitly with translation or teaching methodology issues.

You don’t get to see any of those courses until the end of the major. And in the beginning you’re looking at phonetics, interpretation of short stories—you don’t see much future in that. They don’t tell you that studying phonetics will help you to understand later on morphology and phonology. You go taking baby steps; they don’t let you look ahead. You just take a step and this is what you find. They don’t show you the big picture.

Carmen said she understands that these courses provide students with important background before undertaking more specialized topics; however, she has observed that for many students, not knowing where the program is leading them to for two years can be demoralizing.

Four semesters of not knowing what you’re doing here, because they told you that here you would study in order to translate, to teach. And you’re four terms into the major not having seen any of those things they said you would, no preparation to teach or to translate. It’s not that you haven’t received the training. What happens is that they don’t tell you that those courses you’re taking will be necessary for the next level. There are people who don’t need to be told. But many people reach the fourth term and they tell you, ‘You know what? I don’t know what I’m doing here.’ Many people leave in their third, in their second term because they say, ‘You know what? This isn’t what I expected.’

Carmen related this phenomenon to the previous learning experiences of students in Mexico. She said that part of the problem is that students in Mexican public schools take nothing but courses with a practical orientation “from the time you’re 3 to the time you turn 18 and leave high school.” The shift to some of the classes in Lengua Inglesa that rely greatly on discussing readings in class is too difficult for some of the students.
When you first enter the major you’re totally disoriented because you don’t know what’s awaiting you, the courses, the fact that they speak to you in English and all. You get to class and they say, “Ok, we’re going to read this.” And if you notice, [those] classes don’t seem to have an educational usefulness; it doesn’t seem like they’re teaching you anything during half the classes.”

What ends up happening, she continued, is that it is usually only three to five students who participate in this type of class, and that it sometimes seems as if the professors were interested in teaching “for those three students, and the rest of the students don’t exist.”

Interestingly, Carmen’s insights bring to mind Gina’s process of adaptation to Lengua Inglesa. Even though their experiences in the program seem to be radically different, there seems to be an important point in which they converge. During her first two years in the program, Gina was content with taking courses simply for the sake of learning and with little concern for their applicability in teaching or translation. When she finally came in contact with specialized courses, she also began to think of herself as a translator. Eventually she began to realize that with the knowledge she acquired in the different courses she could “do more than just translating or teaching.” Carmen’s comments point toward the different phenomenon, but from the point of view of a student who may not have the time, patience, resources, or even prior learning skills to enjoy courses that do not seem to be directly related to teaching or to translating. For students who may enter the major under the assumption that it will train them to be teachers or translators this may be very discouraging.
The Futures that Professors Envision for Lengua Inglesa Students

The interviews with the faculty-participants also provide important insights into the futures that the professors envision for Lengua Inglesa students. In this respect, the analysis of the interviews with faculty-participants suggests that the Lengua Inglesa professors have an ambitious vision for the students’ future. This vision emerged most clearly when the faculty/participants discussed what they perceive to be the short-term and long-term impact of studying in Lengua Inglesa. The professors perceive that, during their time in the major, students develop professional skills and a strong work ethic that allows them to succeed in a wide range of work and academic environments. Furthermore, the faculty aims at helping students envision themselves as English language professionals who can gain access to a wide range of professional imagined communities. The professors also envision Lengua Inglesa having a profound personal impact on students.

*Extensive Work and Study Opportunities*

All of the faculty/participants expressed that one of the most important benefits of studying in Lengua Inglesa is that students are able to find jobs even before graduating from the program. At the same time, they emphasized that a Lengua Inglesa degree is a solid foundation for students who wish to pursue further studies.
Catalina, a junior full-time [JFT, OS] professor, joked that those students who may enter the major “thinking they’d become millionaires” are probably wrong. However, for those who are interested in working or pursuing graduate studies, Lengua Inglesa is a good option.

If you like teaching, you’re in the best place for that—to teach English, for instance. Also, it being such a complete major, you become critical, you become reflexive. These are abilities that will help you in any master’s degree. I think that if you’re interested in studying more, the major is very good because that is the attitude that graduate students have. And if you’re interested in entering the labour market, it can also help you. Most of our graduates—there was a study recently—I think about 95% of our graduates were working in an area related to their university studies. So it can help you to get a graduate degree or to work.

Patricia, another JFT professor, also mentioned that Lengua Inglesa graduates find opportunities that go beyond working as language teachers and translators. “Economically speaking, the graduates that I know of are doing very well in the long term. Many have worked on master’s degrees, others are working in editorial companies like Oxford, and they’re doing well.” Like Catalina, she believes that Lengua Inglesa is a good springboard for students who want to pursue further studies. “Almost all students—at least all of the ones I know—who have gone off to get master’s degree have completed them. Yes.” [OS]

Rosario, a SFT professor, concurred with this description. “The short term impact is that they can do something with the language. Most of them want to speak it, or want to improve it, and they want to use it.” For many students, this means taking positions as

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20 In this section, I use abbreviations to refer to three main categories of Lengua Inglesa professors. SFT indicates a “Senior Full-Time” faculty member—that is, professors who have been in Lengua Inglesa from its inception; JFT indicates a “Junior Full-Time” faculty member—professors with full-time status in the institution, who have been teaching in Lengua Inglesa for several years, and who used to be students in the program; SSN indicates “sessional instructors,” all of whom are relatively recent graduates of the program and teach in Lengua Inglesa on a contractual basis.
teachers of English. The professors emphasized that it is not just that students can easily find jobs, but that their work and career opportunities are not restricted to teaching and translating. Rosario believes that “today, students need to be very dynamic because the jobs are not there in one particular area.” Accordingly, Lengua Inglesa students have the ability to adapt to the needs of the labour market.

If there are jobs in the teaching area they can take it; if there’s a company that requires some translation they can do it; if the government wants you—the educational department—to design particular courses for a particular need, they can do so. So they have a variety of places where they can go and they can still make a living.

Rosario indicated that the major’s broad curricular spectrum is one of the key elements that give Lengua Inglesa students this flexibility. Lengua Inglesa graduates can pursue master’s degrees in various academic fields, given that “they have the background for linguistics, for TEFL, they have the background for literature, if they enjoy that area; they have the background for education; they have the background for translation.” Rosario believes that Lengua Inglesa provides a broad educational base for students; if they need further specialization they can always attain it at the master’s level.

Richard, a SFT professor, listed some of the opportunities that Lengua Inglesa graduates have enjoyed. He said that, among the first graduates of the program, very few ended up working as teachers or translators because “they were offered so much money” in other types of positions.

One of our early graduates became a patent representative to get patents from small companies from the United States; people work at embassies, people do all sorts of jobs that require language skills that aren’t necessarily teaching and translating. And a lot of people in the beginning worked in their own business, and people who did go into public schools tended to go as administrators and language coordinators and things like that. And as we have more graduates now people are teaching and translating as well. And also teaching kids more often.
Even though the primary purpose of the major is to train English teachers and translators, these excerpts suggest that the professors envision Lengua Inglesa graduates as having access to a wide range of imagined professional and academic communities. The critical thinking skills that students are expected to develop while in the program, along with the major’s broad curricular base, are seen as two key elements that give students the flexibility necessary to succeed in the labour market. These two elements are also seen as preparing students to pursue further specialization in graduate degrees.

**Developing a Strong Work Ethic**

However, the professors also expressed that prompt insertion into the labour market was just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the impact that the program has on students. Richard [SFT, OE] believes that one of the most important things that the Lengua Inglesa faculty do is to encourage students to think of themselves as language-professionals-in-training with a strong work ethic.

Our students—on the whole—leave here with an idea of professionalism. I think compared to this university our students have a very strong work ethic. They are very geared towards doing quality work; I think they have a very large range for how to do things, and I think they are capable of adapting to problems that come up. I don’t think they’re just completing the degree—I think by the time that they graduate they’ve developed personal qualities, a professionalism that they’re probably not aware of and that goes beyond the university education and getting a degree.

Various factors are seen as influencing the development of this strong work ethic. Richard believes that when students first enter the program, “they come in thinking as students.” However, one of the things he and other faculty members try to do from the beginning is to “treat the students from the time they enter in the first semester kind of like colleagues, to try to figure out problems together, and not see them so much as a
student.” He added, “I think one of the things we do here is kind of validate them or
expect them to see themselves as experts.” As a result, during their time in the program,
students “change their concept of themselves…. I think that we’re able to some extent
widen their horizons, make them see what the whole range of possibilities are.”

For Patricia [JFT, OS], the fact that many students begin working at an early stage
in the program plays a key role in the development of these professional attitudes and
values. She observed that many students who have just entered the program “go around
wasting time and they don’t seem to adapt. But it’s like there comes a moment in fourth
semester, when they say ‘Ah! I can see the use of this now! Ah, I can see that my
classmates are working already and they’re earning money.’” In her view, the students
begin to compare themselves not only to other Lengua Inglesa students, but to students
from other majors. This comparison leads to the realization that not only can they make a
living with a Lengua Inglesa degree, but that they can make a better living than their
peers in other majors.

There comes this point when they realize that they can make a living out of this...
and they start comparing themselves with classmates who work—for instance the
females. And that they can earn in one hour of work what other students earn in
an 8-hour shift. So those who can really find the utility in it, they stop wasting
time. They focus—’I want to finish this.’ Or ‘I want to finish soon, get good
grades so I can find a good job, and have a good resume.

Patricia has observed how students change their appearance during the time in the
major. When they first enter Lengua Inglesa, most of them prefer very casual clothes.
However, “once they start working, their attire changes.” Patricia observes that once
students “have an economic power” (even if it is not a lot of money), their attire changes.
Males cut their hair short and wear more formal clothes, while females sometimes dye
their hair, and many who used to wear low shoes begin wearing high heels. In addition to the physical changes, the students' mind-frame also changes. On the one hand, once students start working and earning money—even if it is not a lot—they “start taking part in class with greater ease, because teaching their own classes gives them great confidence.” On the other hand, being part of the Lengua Inglesa community itself seems to increase their self-confidence. Patricia added an interesting perspective on the process through which new students move from the periphery to the center of the Lengua Inglesa community.

I feel that when they enter the major, they see how things work, the way people think. And the desire to belong, to be part of this community of students—they change the way they dress, everything. And then they realize how other majors perceive Lengua Inglesa. Because when you study here, you make some money. But when you see that among other majors you’re seen as having some prestige, as it happens to us, their confidence also grows.

The comments of Richard and Patricia suggest that Lengua Inglesa offers students the opportunity to develop an identity as language professionals. This identity is then reinforced when the students find jobs in areas where they can put their English expertise to practice—most frequently as teachers of English. This identity may be reflected outwardly in the way students alter their attire when they begin to work. A significant aspect of the comments of these two participants is the implied distinction between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors. Richard compares the work ethic of Lengua Inglesa students to that of their peers in other programs; Patricia believes that as Lengua Inglesa students become aware of the advantages they have over peers, their confidence and their pride in being members of the Lengua Inglesa community grows. Her comment suggests that Lengua Inglesa students define themselves not only as
members of the Lengua Inglesa community, but in relation to neighboring learning communities. I will return to this point in the next and final section of the presentation of the findings.

Deeper Long-Term Effects

Interestingly, the majority of the professors consider this to be the short-term impact of the program on students. They consider that studying in Lengua Inglesa has a subtler, deeper effect on the identity of students. They expect that, in addition to preparing students for successful careers, the major also broadens the students’ horizons by helping them become critical and reflexive individuals. Catalina [SFT, OS] provided an example from one of her literature classes. The class was discussing the main theme in a story by Katherine Mansfield.

Catalina: I mentioned what to me seemed to be the main theme. And there were some students who said, no, they got a different sense from the story. This is what I think is valuable, that the major gives them the confidence to say ‘No. To me, this is what the story is about, this is the message that it gives to me.’ So because of this confidence, they can say ‘Well, this is my opinion, and others may agree with it or not, but it is my opinion.’ So they are more critical and more confident in their own ideas.

Blanca: This is not something that they have at the beginning of the major?

C: I don’t think so. I think that yes, the major gives it to you.

B: In what way?

C: Well, you start to read and you realize that—you don’t always agree with the teacher. And then you don’t always agree with your classmates. And if the teacher asks you to defend your point of view in an exam or in a class discussion, it starts becoming a habit. It’s like you start to see that you have a right to disagree with others. The teachers or the major train you to do that.

Richard [SFT, OE] provided a similar insight. In his case, he argued that in addition to help students become critical thinkers, the major helps them to step out “the culture they come from and kind of give them the means for looking at the world in a
larger context."

Not just because we’re teaching them here about a different culture but because—well different cultures actually—more aware that a person can live in the two cultures I think. I think that a lot of what we do in our major is to help people become more critical of—looking at things from a broader perspective, of going beyond the perimeter of the place they grew up in, and be able to maybe go from there to other new kinds of situations and be able to manage.

In this respect, the perspective of the sessional instructors provided important insights. Since most of them have only started working in the program recently, they spoke from their own experience as students. Roberto [OE], for example, is a recent Lengua Inglesa graduate currently working in the program as a sessional instructor. His views on the long-term and short-term effects of the major on students greatly resembled those envisioned by Richard.

Well, I can say that those who can deal with all the pressure and all the work we do here, change many things—they change their views on life. Of the world and everything. We study so many things here, from history to literature... We learn from many different people, we have contact with many different cultures, and we are not just focused on ourselves as people in Mexico usually are. Like they think Mexico is a small world and the rest of the world is the United States, you see. But here we learn that there are many other cultures, and many other things to learn and to know about the world to understand how it works right now. Well, that’s what happened to me. And [students] change their attitude towards education in general. Most of the people I have met here at least want to do some more studies, like graduate studies—especially somewhere else. They want to know other parts of the world, other universities, other systems, other people, other habits. People are very enthusiastic about that, from the very beginning.

Sofia, another SSI [OS] that students change as they advance in the major. “By the time they get to fifth semester, sixth semester, they’re very involved in the major, very focused on and certain about their goals.” By the time they graduate, “if they’re not working already, they find jobs—good jobs. Jobs that they like.” However, she also believes that as students advance in the program, they start “falling with love” with it,
and come to realize that the major offers them much more than that. She told me an
anecdote that illustrates her own experience. As a sessional instructor, Sofia has taken
part in the curricular reform currently taken place in all academic departments at NSU.
The faculty members of Lengua Inglesa meet regularly to discuss the planning and
implementation of the reform process. During one of these sessions, the professors had to
review the study plan for the Interpretation of Poetry class, which Sofia took as a student.
In each class, in addition to reading various poems, the professor introduces a new theme
about which students must write a poem. During the faculty meeting, the reform
coordinator asked the professor in charge of the poetry class to state the course
“objectives.” At first, the professor objected, saying he could not assign a specific
objective to a course like that. However, the reform coordinator indicated that NSU
policy required him to set down specific class objectives. The professor finally named
“the student will become acquainted with Anglo-Saxon literature through poetry” as the
main class objective. For Sofia, it was difficult to reconcile this statement with her
experience of that class.

As a student, my reaction was that this is absolutely nothing compared to... the
richness that students can obtain from that class. Because, in the end, the class
material consists of nothing but poems. [...] But the fact that you would get home,
sit down, think of the theme, turn back to examine your life—turn back to see all
that your life has been, all that you can perceive as a person, of any circumstance
related to the theme, is an experience that one rarely finds in a university major
[...] When you aren't used to writing poetry it is a very enriching experience....
To look back in my life and say “this is what I think about this topic, and this is
what I write”—I think that it has no [comparison]. That is, the objective of getting
to know Anglo-Saxon culture is nothing. Nothing, nothing, compared to all that
you can get out of it...

The Limits of this Vision

Ismael [SSI, OS] concurs with the notion that there are other benefits to getting a
degree in Lengua Inglesa besides being able to find jobs. He views Lengua Inglesa as one of the “rare cases in which you can find a real and necessary training for work, potentially well remunerated, and that at the same time provides you with an opportunity for culture, for knowledge, and for a broad personal enrichment.” However, he also believes that one of the weaknesses of the major is the assumption that all students have the type of life-changing experience that Sofia and Roberto seem to have experienced.

“No all students have that kind of grand revelation where they see that the major has not only a practical use. That comes later—if it comes at all.” He proceeded to offer a sober contextualization of this phenomenon.

One thing of which we must be very conscious is that this is a country with great needs, with Germany-like costs of life and Guatemala-like—or Mexican-like, in the end it’s the same thing!—salaries. And it is a country where nothing is secure. Nothing. There is great insecurity, in the streets, in the labour-market, in the government, in medical attention and so on.

For students entering the major, these needs and insecurity are watchwords to live by. Like everyone else, they are under the obligation to earn a living, “because no one will do it for them.” “I think the need for labour is very important. And it’s very interesting that in fields such as these, long despised by our engineering-, maquila-, accounting-oriented culture, labour is becoming so relevant.” In light of this, Ismael believes that the Lengua Inglesa faculty needs to pay attention to the way in which the major is presented to prospective students.

We should not just tell them at the beginning, ‘with this major you’ll be able to make lots of money.’ One could find this type of publicity in Archie comic books—those mail-order courses to learn to hypnotize people and entertain children at parties. This kind of empty promises—they don’t apply. I think it’s very necessary that the major turns towards the labour market and assess the outcomes that a major like this can produce in terms of generating employment,
The major, he concluded, should assess the needs the actual needs and potential of
the labour market. This would put the major in the position to tell students just what
labour-related opportunities they may have as Lengua Inglesa graduates. "Then, based on
this image we can get an idea of what is extra—what represents personal enrichment and
growth. In addition to. Yes?" Ismael’s comments provide an important context to
understand the preoccupation with the labour market that permeates the interviews with
both student- and faculty-participants. When we consider the social and economic
realities of living in Mexico, as he does, it does not come as a surprise that Lengua
Inglesa students are so determined to obtain practical professional training and that the
professors place such emphasis on providing it.

As we can see, the faculty-participants believe that Lengua Inglesa students
experience deep changes as a result of their studies in the program. In the professors’
view, Lengua Inglesa encourages students to create an identity for themselves as
language professionals characterized by a solid work ethic, critical thinking skills, and a
broad knowledge base in linguistics, literature, language teaching methodology and
translation. The professors believe that these characteristics make Lengua Inglesa
students prime candidates for accessing a wide range of imagined professional
communities. Additionally, the professors observed that studying in Lengua Inglesa has
an impact on students that goes beyond professional training. The experiences of Roberto
and Sofia as students in the program lend support to the notion that studying in Lengua
Inglesa may expand the students’ horizons by exposing them to different cultures and
points of view. Also, by encouraging students to become self-reflective and critical, the professors expect that students will gain the confidence to develop points of view of their own. This vision, as Ismael’s comments suggest, may have limits. His comments bring to mind Carmen’s commentaries on what she perceives to be the shortcomings of the program.

Not an English Learner, Not an Unemployed Philosophy Student: Negotiating Identities as Lengua Inglesa Students

As I analyzed the data, it became apparent that English as the language of instruction in Lengua Inglesa played a crucial role in how participants construct an identity as members of the Lengua Inglesa community. The participants must constantly negotiate belonging to at least two different linguistic communities: the English-speaking Lengua Inglesa community, and the surrounding Spanish-speaking community within and beyond the School of Humanities. A struggle to establish the legitimacy of their identity as members of both communities was evident.

The use of Spanish and English in Lengua Inglesa is complex and more nuanced than could possibly be illustrated in a thematic analysis like this. However, having a sense of what these practices are provides a context for the analysis of the findings. As a preamble to the findings, I briefly illustrate the linguistic practices of the Lengua Inglesa community. To do this I have relied partly on my own experience in the program, and on descriptions participants made of their use of English and Spanish when interacting with peers and with professors. In general, all participants described similar language use regardless of how advanced they are in the program.
When students enter the major, they gradually adopt the practices of the community, including an idiosyncratic language use. It seems safe to assume that this process took hold early in the participants' experience in the program. After no more than six months in the program, the first-year participants have already adopted the linguistic practices of the community, to the extent that their reported language use was virtually identical to that of fourth-year students.

Linguistic Practices in Lengua Inglesa

While in class, Lengua Inglesa students use English as the predominant language. Outside the class context, Spanish becomes the predominant language. Code-switching is common in either context. When communicating with peers speaking outside the classroom in Spanish, it is quite common for students to use words and phrases in English. These words and phrases are, in most instances, linked to the students’ academic register in English. This is illustrated in the following exchange between Nora [4yr, OS] and I.

Blanca: En que idioma se comunican normalmente tu y tus compañeros?
Nora: Aquí en inglés, pero afuera [del salón] en español.
B: Y alguna vez usan inglés afuera?
B: [Pienso por un momento, y me rio] Caray, yo tampoco se! Fíjate, en eso nunca he pensado.
I: Pues la dirección de tu—la dirección de tu ensayo! No: una thesis statement. Y ya te entienden.

B: In what language do you and your classmates usually communicate?
B: Do you ever use English outside?
N: Yes—yes, I mean—we use Spanish outside [the classroom], but—well, we really use Spanglish. It's quicker to communicate that way, with more precise terms. We use about half and half, but mostly Spanish. Like, you could say to a classmate, 'Oye, de que se trata tu thesis statement?' And in Spanish I don't know how to say that. What is a thesis statement? [Nora smiles]

B: [I think for a moment, then laugh] Geez, I don't know either! Go figure, I'd never thought about it.

N: Well, it's the direction of your—the direction of your essay! No: it's a thesis statement. And they understand.

Mario [4yr, OS] explained that Lengua Inglesa students switch languages in this way out of convenience. "We do it because we know the meaning in both languages, we do. And we don't worry because we know our interlocutor speaks them as well. So, why bother saying everything in English or everything in Spanish, if you can use both?"

The linguistic exchanges with professors are just as complex, and there seems to be a clear distinction between language use within the classroom and outside the classroom. As with peers, the participants indicated using English to address professors within the context of the classroom. However, once they cross the classroom's threshold and leave the class environment, the use of Spanish and English with professors becomes more complex.

Mario's answer illustrates the complexity of linguistic exchanges between students and professors. Mario chooses to address professors in English or in Spanish depending "who requires me to speak [in either language] and on whether I can communicate more effectively." He also mentions one of the professors who speaks English as a first language. Although this professor can speak Spanish competently, Mario believes that "if I speak to him in Spanish, he will understand, but I will not communicate well." Similarly, he always uses English to address the professor who asks

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21 I use italics in this section to indicate that a participant used English for a word or phrase within his or her original comment in Spanish.
students “to speak to her 100% in English.” He adds that this is not the case with the rest of the professors. He mentions several professors whom he typically addresses in Spanish outside the classroom. All of the professors he mentions are graduates of the program currently working as either sessional instructors or full-time professors. He includes me among the former. “[With] the rest of you, I feel absolute confidence in speaking to you all in Spanish. Outside the classroom.” Finally, Mario points out that even within the classroom the exchanges with professors are not always in English. “There are times when I want to ask something right away, so I tell myself, I’m going to say it in Spanish or I’ll forget…. And the question comes out in Spanish even though I am following the class in English.”

Similarly, among the first-year participants, Miriam [1yr, OE] noted that her exchanges with professors take place “sometimes in English, sometimes in Spanish.” Outside the classroom the interaction turns more informal, so she “can speak in Spanish.” Similarly, Arturo [1yr, OS] indicated that his choice of English or Spanish “depends on the moment.” Like Mario, he addresses one of the professors for whom English is a first language in English, “because he doesn’t know much Spanish.” He mentioned the same professor who encourages students to use English. In class, “she wants everyone to speak in English. Even just a joke, a comment, but say it in English.” Even though he is not taking classes with her this term, Arturo noted that “if I see her, I speak to her in English.” This is not the case with other professors, whom he tends to address in Spanish outside the classroom. “Other teachers don’t tell you ‘yes, everyone here speaks in English.’ It’s not the same encouragement.”
“Who Do You Want to Impress?” Language Use Monitoring Among Peers

I was curious as to why the participants would not speak in English outside the classroom as well, since after all they are expected to practice English to become competent translators and teachers. The question first occurred to me while interviewing Miriam [1yr, OE]. Her answer clued me in to the possible presence of language monitoring among peers in the program.

B: What do you think your classmates would say if you spoke in English all the time?
M: Oh my god, I think they would say “the teacher is not here; who do you want to impress?” [She rolled her eyes]. Maybe. Some of my classmates speak really well, but I think that some times they just want to impress, and for me—well I want to do really well because I want to be understood, but because of my—that’s not a good reason to speak English, you wanna be like, impressing the teacher.”

Isabel’s [1yr, OS] answer pointed in the same direction: “Bah! They would say I’m a little nerd or a weirdo... yes, that’s what they would say. Because generally you come out [of a class] and you’re [already] speaking in Spanish.”

In Eileen’s [1yr, OS] case, the peer pressure to use Spanish in specific contexts resulted in a painful experience. Eileen had just returned from the United States after a two year absence, and she did not know what to expect from her classmates. “I already had the pressure of thinking that everyone would see me as the kid from Cuauhtémoc, from the small ranch. So I would ask myself, ‘how am I going to talk, how am I going to speak.’” Eileen thought that, because a high proficiency of English is necessary to enter the major, many of her classmates were likely to have studied abroad. “Everybody came from some place, and I would tell myself, ‘to study there you have to have money,’ so I
imagined something kind of like La Salle, and I would be the girl from Cuauhtémoc who’s coming. So I imagined them like that—like very materialistic.’

When I asked Eileen what she thinks her classmates would say if she spoke in English all the time, she told me about her first day in Lengua Inglesa. One of the professors had the students introduce themselves to the class. While she attended high school in the United States, Eileen had learned to say her last name—Hernández—with an English pronunciation. Instead of keeping the silent H from Spanish, people around her would pronounce the first syllable as “her” in English. They expected her to do the same. “Whenever someone would ask me, ‘what’s your last name?’ I would respond, Hernández. ‘Oh,’ they would say, ‘H-E-R-Hernandez!’ Everyone! They would call me “Hi, Miss Hernandez” [English pronunciation]. And I would think, ok, I’m not Hernandez, but ok.”

When it was her turn to introduce herself to the class, Eileen went with the English pronunciation of her last name. “I said, ‘Hi, my name is Eileen Hernandez.’” This did not sit well with her classmates. “Everybody was like, ‘gee, how silly,’ or ‘why do you say it like that?’ In fact they told me, ‘gee, you looked pretty bad there.’” The episode weighed heavily on her, so she went to consult with a Lengua Inglesa professor whose first language is English. “I asked him, ‘This is my last name, how would you say it?’” The professor replied that, since he was from Texas, he would pronounce it as Hernandez. Eileen asked him to repeat the pronunciation one more time, to make sure she heard correctly. The professor confirmed that, indeed, he would say her last name with an

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22 An expensive private school in Chihuahua

23 I have changed Eileen’s last name to protect her anonymity. I have done my best to use a last name that would reflect as much as possible the anglicization that her own last name went through.
anglicized pronunciation. “And I didn’t say anything to [my classmates], you see? ‘That’s how you pronounce it,’ or ‘everybody pronounces it like that over there.’ I kept quiet, and one of my fears came back. Now every time they ask me, I’m Eileen Hernández.”

Eileen’s voice broke down at this point, and her eyes began welling up. I could see that this was a sensitive topic for her, and one that brought up many different emotions. I try to let her know I empathize with her experience by telling her a little about how I never know how to pronounce my last name ever since I have been in Canada. Because I was unwilling to give up my mother’s family name while filling out my student visa application, I had to resort to a long, clunky, hyphenated last name in English: Torres-Olave. It is not uncommon for people to assume I am married and that my husband’s last name is Olave, and so I end up being “Ms. Olav,”—with one less syllable than in Spanish. Eileen listened attentively, and after a pause she spoke up again.

“Right now I’m in a ‘to be or not to be’ conflict. My friends there speak to me one way, and then I come here and they tell me ‘how silly, why do you speak like that, you look so...’” She left the sentence unfinished. After regaining her composure, Eileen told me about how her classmates still tease her about the pronunciation of her last name. She laughed and said that if I were to go to her classroom and ask about her name, they would all laugh, not in mockery but as playful banter.

Commentary on the Linguistic Practices in Lengua Inglesa and the Peer Monitoring Mechanism

The language monitoring mechanism described above is one of the most striking examples of how participants negotiate their identities as speakers of English within a broader Spanish-speaking context. As we have seen, the participants described similar
language use with their peers. As could be expected from the nature of the program, participants indicated that they use English to communicate with peers while in class. Yet some participants disagree with the notion that English is the only language used in class. Carmen, for instance, observes that she and her classmates “never speak definitively in English” in class, but that they are “always shifting” from English to Spanish. English may be the primary language in the classroom, but students will resort to Spanish every now and then, especially in small group activities.

On the one hand, crossing the classroom threshold marks a movement out of the formal class context and into an informal context, where the predominant use of Spanish gives students the opportunity to “unwind.” On the other hand, there seems to be a greater symbolic significance in the linguistic shift that accompanies the classroom threshold. English is sanctioned in the classroom by its status as the language of instruction. However, once students cross the classroom threshold it becomes necessary for them to negotiate the linguistic and physical space with the dominant Spanish-speaking community. In this mixed context, code switching from Spanish to English and vice versa is considered normal, even adequate. However, speaking exclusively in English is interpreted as an undignified attempt to “impress professors.”

Eileen’s traumatic episode with the pronunciation of her last name suggests a subtler yet even more powerful aspect of this linguistic negotiation. Unlike other participants, Eileen not only had to negotiate being one of the students “who had learned English abroad.” She also had to negotiate her identity as someone who was raised in a small city in Chihuahua, had lived in the United States for two years, and had now returned to study in the capital of the state. Eileen drew on all of these past experiences
and identities to try to imagine who her classmates might be. Her decision to use an anglicized pronunciation of her last name was the result of a complex process through which she tried to discern what kind of behaviour—linguistic and otherwise—would make her more legitimate in the eyes of her classmates. As it turned out, she was chastised for her choice.

Eileen’s experience is sore evidence of the power that the peer language monitoring mechanism can exert, even within a context where the anglicized pronunciation of her last name could well have been considered adequate. It is also a reminder of the fact that Lengua Inglesa students must constantly negotiate their identities as English-speakers within the broader imagined community of Mexican citizens/native-Spanish speakers. To use Alicia’s words, studying in Lengua Inglesa means entering “a different world” that, as we have seen, operates according to a number of unspoken yet powerful sociolinguistic norms. These rules in part dictate how the participants negotiate their identity within the larger Spanish-speaking community, as evidenced in the peer monitoring mechanisms discussed above. Likewise, the implementation of these linguistic norms also creates identity markers that help differentiate Lengua Inglesa students from two main groups: learners of English as a foreign language, and students from other majors within the School of Humanities.

**Defining Membership in Relation to Learners of English as a Foreign Language**

I was interested in finding out how the participants defined themselves as members of the Lengua Inglesa community. To do so, I asked them the following question: “When someone who is not familiar with the major asks you about it, what do you say?” There was great consistency in the responses from first- and fourth-year
students. When describing the major to an outsider, both groups of participants called attention to the difference between learning English and being a Lengua Inglesa student. “First of all,” said Carmen [4yr, OS], “they don’t ask you about that because they think ‘Oh, it’s the Diplomado.’” “I tell them we are studying to become English teachers, translators—that we can even teach English literature in the United States and other places—under optimal conditions, of course.” She added that people find it surprising “that to be admitted here you have to have an English proficiency of 80%. They think you come here to study English and that you learn stuff along the way.” The other participants voiced similar experiences. According to Nora [4yr, OS], people tend to be “very surprised because, first of all, not a lot of people know that Lengua Inglesa exists. Secondly, many people think that studying a major in English is similar to studying English in high school, in middle school—just like fodder.” Some go as far as thinking that studying in Lengua Inglesa is a last resort for people who could not make it into majors in law or accounting. “That’s what they imagine. So when you tell them about it, oh wow, they are surprised. They are surprised to hear we study literature, poetry, or history.”

The perception that Lengua Inglesa is “like all those places you go to in the afternoon to learn English” is not well received by the participants. For Miriam [1yr, OE] it is particularly upsetting “because it’s my [major]—it’s like when you’re doing something and you’re working all the time to do it and then someone tells you it’s stupid or it doesn’t mean anything, I think you would get mad too.” Alicia [1yr, OS] expressed similar outrage. “It’s horrible! They ask me, ‘Is it an English course?’ And I tell them, ‘no.’ ‘Why don’t you just take another English course instead of studying that for four
and a half years?’ And I go: ‘No!’ It makes me so angry.” Alicia then reflected why people have this perception of the program. “A lot of people know English in Chihuahua; we have the border with El Paso and all. And it’s like in schools they don’t ask you for a certain level of English. As long as you know some English they hire people in private schools, in public schools.” This can lead to misinterpretations about what the work of English teachers. “People think you can spend a year in the United States, and then you can speak English, you can teach already.”

“What makes me mad,” Alicia continued, “is this attitude of ‘if you can speak English already, why would you study that?’” She tries to counter this attitude by explaining that Lengua Inglesa students “are learning to become translators.” She also tells people about the courses she takes in the major. “I try to explain, about pronunciation—when I start telling them about phonology they all go ‘what is that?’ As soon as I show them all the little symbols, they go quiet.” Other participants also mentioned the specialized courses offered in the major as a way of distinguishing between studying in Lengua Inglesa and studying in an English school. For instance, when Isabel comes across someone who thinks that Lengua Inglesa is “a kind of English course,” she tells them about “the courses and what they are about,” to show that Lengua Inglesa is “an in-depth study of English.” Similarly, Miriam tries to explain to outsiders that Lengua Inglesa students are not learners of English, but that they take courses in writing, phonetics, and literature—and that these courses happen to be taught in English. Gina [4yr, OE] does the same and tells people that Lengua Inglesa students take courses in literature, and explore topics such as “the origins of English, its evolution.” She also
tells them that with a degree in Lengua Inglesa she “can either teach or work as a translator.”

Mario [4yr, OS] takes to heart the task of educating the public about Lengua Inglesa. “The first thing I tell them is, ‘It is not the Diplomado… We are not learning English, we are learning to use English.’” Still, some people insist in asking whether he is studying English. “They still have the notion that ‘oh, it’s like the Diplomado, but longer.’” When I asked him why it is important to make this distinction, he offered an interesting analysis of the difference between being an English learner and a Lengua Inglesa student.

Why? Because it is not the Diplomado. The Diplomado—they give you the tool so you can use it; here we are using it. Now. We’re not building the tool; we learn how to handle teaching, translation, literature. We’re not learning the language. The difference is between acquisition and the use we make of English.

As this section suggests, the participants emphasized that they are not learners of English, but that they are learning in English. The difference appears to be crucial for how the participants’ identity as members of the Lengua Inglesa community.

Defining Membership in Relation to Students from Other Majors

At the same time, the participants also made it clear that Lengua Inglesa students are different from students in other majors within the School of Humanities. As we saw in the section dedicated to the participants’ reasons for studying in Lengua Inglesa, this theme permeated many of the participants’ contributions. However, the theme was most visible in the answers to the question, “How do students from other majors view Lengua Inglesa students?” The data presented here is of course not taken from outsiders themselves. However, I agree with Vila’s (2000, p. 82) assertion that “the question of
who I am is never separated from whom I see as the “other,” nor from how those “others” see me (or, more accurately, how I think they see me)” [original emphasis]. Thus, my intention in asking this question was to form an idea of how the participants think outsiders view them, and the ways in which participants may construct their own identity in relation to how they think outsiders view them.

Once more, the responses of first- and fourth-year students showed little, if any, variation. The participants’ perception is that students from other majors have a negative view of the linguistic practices of Lengua Inglesa students. Isabel shared an anecdote which illustrates this point. The classrooms at the School of Humanities are distributed along two long corridors which accommodate the four majors. In the morning shift, Information Sciences students occupy the classrooms along the ground-level corridor, while Lengua Inglesa occupies the upper-level corridor. In the evening shift, Spanish Literature students occupy the ground-level corridor, while Philosophy students occupy the classrooms along the upper-level corridor.

To accommodate two students with restricted mobility, Isabel and her classmates were temporarily relocated to a classroom at ground level. This change made her aware not only of how different the “atmosphere” is in the physical space used by each major, but also of how Lengua Inglesa students are perceived by other students. During a conversation with a friend from Information Sciences, Isabel mentioned that she felt “weird” taking classes downstairs, because in the Lengua Inglesa corridor students come out of the classroom during breaks, whereas in the Information Sciences corridor “there are very few people…. The hall is always empty.” This makes her and her Lengua Inglesa classmates very conspicuous. “If you speak in English, everyone can hear you
and they say 'gee, what a show-off.'” Her friend expressed his own view of the Lengua Inglesa corridor. “‘Up there,’ my friend says, ‘You’re all such show-offs, you go by and everyone is speaking in English—it’s ridiculous.’ And I thought ‘ugh, I used to do that.’ I try not to anymore.” Isabel’s experience is all the more interesting considering her initial impression of Lengua Inglesa. Isabel told me that her first day of classes was “weird” because she had always imagined university students would be more “relaxed.” “Everybody was kind of dressed up, all the girls wearing make up and stuff…. everybody looked so preppy and I was like wearing my worn out Converse tennis shoes and—I felt kind of weird.” She reflected that even though she did not use to wear make up, once she entered the program she “started to dress up more.”

Isabel’s anecdote brings to light the underlying tension between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors within the School. Her friend is not the only one who has described Lengua Inglesa students as “preppy show-offs.” When I asked the other participants how outsiders view Lengua Inglesa students, I obtained almost identical answers from all of them. For instance, Arturo has heard some of his acquaintances from Information Sciences describe Lengua Inglesa students as “preppy” kids who “think much of themselves because they speak English.” Alicia first heard similar comments through her sister, who is an Information Sciences graduate. “I remember [my sister] used to say, ‘those girls at Lengua Inglesa are so full of themselves; they walk by downstairs speaking in English. Right, like no one

24 Alicia does not use the word “girl” in Spanish while recreating her sister’s comments. However, she consistently uses feminine pronouns and verb conjugations in this excerpt.

25 The downstairs corridor, where Information Sciences students take classes.
understands what they’re saying.’’ Alicia has a clear memory of hearing comments like this, usually followed by laughter, from her sister and her friends.

The responses of fourth-year students were virtually identical. Gina said that students from other majors tend to have two different ideas of Lengua Inglesa students. “Some see us—they think we’re studying English, like we’re part of the Diplomado. And others say we’re arrogant because we speak English.” In turn, Mario said that Lengua Inglesa students in general “are very different from the students in this School, because we have many more people who are considered preppy.” An indicator of this, he said, is that Lengua Inglesa has “the highest number of girls who wear high heels, and the lowest number of people who always dress in black and wear dreadlocks.”

Mario’s response points towards another facet of how Lengua Inglesa students may be perceived by outsiders. Stereotypes about students in the School of Humanities are quite common even beyond the university community. The common idea, Gina chuckled, is that “we all smoke pot. That we’re kind of hippies,” and that students who enter any of the four majors in the School will end up in low-end jobs. Some participants observed that the stereotype is mostly associated with students from majors in the evening shift—Philosophy and Spanish Letters—but that it is often applied to all students in the School. “In general, someone might say, ‘he studies in Filosofía,’ and—whoa!” Nora raised her eyebrows as though in shock. “That’s what they imagine…. That we all have looooong hair, and the peace and love thing.”

It is important to observe that the participants rejected these stereotypes only when they were used to describe Lengua Inglesa itself. The following excerpt from Carmen’s interview suggests how the use of these stereotypes helps to establish as
difference between Lengua Inglesa students and from students in other majors within the School.

Our impression is that in Ciencias—the common joke is to ask “where are they?” Because they are never around—it’s only a half-joke, right, because it turns out to be true most of the time. The people from Ciencias are always outside the classroom. Then for instance, the people from Filosofía—potheads, right? All of them. Weirdos, dressed in black.... always with that “life stinks” attitude. Then, the people from Letras Españolas, we don’t even know how to identify them, right? But also, Lengua Inglesa students feel the burden of being in this school, because every time you say “I study in the School of Humanities” you are associated with the pothead, with the lazy guy, and with the idea that you’ll never amount to much. A year and a half ago I had to make it clear to my uncle that I’m not studying philosophy, and I’m in my 4th year in the major.... It’s not the same—they confuse the School itself with the majors. So according to us our major is the most decent one, but of course, the Ciencias students must think the same thing. But it is a burden on us to be confused [with them] and that we have no credibility in that sense, the way Accounting would. It’s not the same to say, she studies in Lengua Inglesa than to say, or she studies accounting, or law.

Some participants described their efforts to resist this stereotype only as far as it concerns Lengua Inglesa, but not the entire School. Isabel, for instance, said that “the School has this stereotype of people being junkies, and kind of crazy, and with communist ideas, all sort of weird. And then you try to explain to them that it’s a whole different world in the morning, and they don’t get it.” Likewise, Arturo mentioned hearing similar comments about students from the afternoon shift. Unlike many other participants, Arturo was not familiar with this stereotype before he entered Lengua Inglesa, but he has since become familiar with it. “Whenever someone asks, and I say I study in Philosophy [and Letters], they say, ‘oh, the junkies!’ So I prefer to say I’m in Lengua Inglesa.”
Commentary on the Boundaries Established by the Participants

As these two sets of data suggest, that participants actively sought ways in which to legitimize their identity as Lengua Inglesa students in relation to learners of English as a foreign language and as students from other majors within the School of Humanities. I found Wenger’s (1998) notions of boundary and peripherality useful in analyzing the role that imagination plays in how participants define membership to the Lengua Inglesa community, and also in reinforcing the community’s boundaries to assert the shared identity of its members. According to Wenger,

The terms boundaries and peripheries both refer to the ‘edges’ of communities of practice, to their points of contact with the rest of the world, but they emphasize different aspects. Boundaries—no matter how negotiable or unspoken—refer to discontinuities, to lines of distinction between inside and outside, membership and nonmembership, inclusion and exclusion. Peripheries—no matter how narrow—refer to continuities, to areas of overlap, to windows and meeting places, and to organized and casual possibilities for participation offered to outsiders or newcomers (p. 119-120)

As the participants learned to speak as legitimate members of the Lengua Inglesa community, they also adopted new ways to envision themselves in relation to other linguistic and academic communities. In the first place, the participants re-envisioned themselves from learners of English as a foreign language into Lengua Inglesa students. This is evidenced in the frustration that participants feel regarding the common misconception that Lengua Inglesa is “an English school.” The participants resented this comparison, and they were quick to point out that they are not learning English, but in English. Mario emphasized the need to make it clear to outsiders that Lengua Inglesa students are not learning English but “about teaching, about translation, about literature.... The difference is between acquiring English and doing things with English.” This attitude hints at the ways in which the identity of Lengua Inglesa students is
expressed in linguistic terms. At the same time, making this distinction fulfills an important and practical function: Unless outsiders can be persuaded to envision Lengua Inglesa as "more" than an English course, the existence of the program could be put into question. This is not to say that there are no factual differences between Lengua Inglesa and the study of English as a foreign language. The academic practices of the Lengua Inglesa community make it as different from an English course as the academic practices of a Computer Science major make it different from learning how to use computer software. In each case, the former would be impossible without first mastering the latter, but they are clearly not the same.

The crux of the participants' frustration then seems to be that the comparison to an "English course" puts into question the legitimacy of their identity as university students. By making a distinction between Lengua Inglesa students and learners of English, the participants are also establishing who is and who is not a member of the Lengua Inglesa community. Setting this boundary is crucial in the construction of an identity that outsiders can recognize as valid. In this view, many individuals may learn English, and may learn it very well, but it is only Lengua Inglesa students who have a legitimate claim to being envisioned as English professionals. This legitimacy is granted by their systematic, in-depth, and academically sanctioned study of English. In light of this, it is not surprising that participants like Gina, Miriam and Alicia make reference to the courses they take in the major when they describe the program to outsiders.

Another type of identititary boundary becomes evident when we examine the relationship of Lengua Inglesa students to students from other majors within the School of Humanities. As we have seen, in addition to Lengua Inglesa, the School of Humanities
hosts three other majors: Philosophy, Spanish Literature, and Information Sciences. Like Carmen and other participants indicated, students from these majors are often described by “types.” Philosophy students are “potheads” who always dress in black; Ciencias students are never to be found in class, and Spanish Literature students are, quite simply, non-descript to the point of invisibility. Part of the stigma associated with these labels is that graduates of these programs will be unfit for the labour market, either because of unreliable work ethics or because of their Spanish-only academic training in arts degrees. The participants concurred in that these negative stereotypes may be detrimental to the image of Lengua Inglesa students; that is, to the way in which the Lengua Inglesa community envisions its collective identity.

The physical space in which Lengua Inglesa co-exists with the other three majors in the School of Humanities seems to have great symbolic importance as the place where different imagined communities meet and sometimes clash. As in the rest of the university, Spanish is the language of instruction in Philosophy, Information Sciences, and Spanish Literature. In the presentation of the findings I described the physical arrangement of these majors in the School building. This building is divided into two main corridors that accommodate the four majors in a morning and an evening shift. Information Sciences and Lengua Inglesa share the morning shift—Lengua Inglesa along the upper-level corridor and Information Sciences along the ground-level corridor.

As we have seen, English is the predominant language in the formal Lengua Inglesa classroom context. But as soon as participants step out of their classrooms during breaks, Spanish becomes the predominant language. Switching from English to Spanish is subject to certain rules, but in general code-switching is accepted as occurring naturally.
in the Lengua Inglesa community, whether inside our outside the classroom. However, outsiders may draw very different interpretations of this practice. The consensus among participants who know students from other majors within the School is that the latter perceive Lengua Inglesa students as “preppy” kids who “think much of themselves because they speak English.” The attire of Lengua Inglesa students may contribute to this perception. To an outsider it could seem that the students come (or pretend to come, which is seen as even more reprehensible) from a higher socioeconomic status, and that this is reflected in their clothes. Certainly, it is possible that this might be the case for some Lengua Inglesa students. However, what outsiders may perceive as “preppiness”—for lack of a better word—in the attire of Lengua Inglesa students, may be simply a professional necessity for many of the latter. These conflicting perceptions may be intensified by the fact that Lengua Inglesa students frequently use English in casual conversations outside the classroom. For an outsider, the code-switching of Lengua Inglesa students is pretentious and perhaps even offensive. Lengua Inglesa students seem more likely to encounter this perception outside the upper-level corridor, where the Lengua Inglesa community is concentrated.

“They Had a Different Future for Themselves:” Boundaries and Peripherality Defined by the Professors

In the previous section, I showed that Lengua Inglesa students most negotiate their identities as English speakers/English professionals-in-training and Mexican/Spanish-speakers within the School of Humanities. Interestingly, the same types of tension can be observed among the Lengua Inglesa faculty. The faculty-participants expressed being aware of the students’ struggle to establish their identity in opposition to
EFL learners and other students in the School of Humanities. The comments of the faculty-participants suggest that they too participate in the creation of boundaries and peripheries that help establish the identity of the Lengua Inglesa community.

The professors indicated that they were aware of the negative ideas that outsiders may have about the major. In this respect, Catalina [JFT, OS] added that there is a common belief that Lengua Inglesa students come from well-off families, "something that may not be necessarily true. It's like the general perception is that if they can speak English they had the economic means to study it, or the means to go abroad." It is curious, she added, that even people beyond the School of Humanities seem to share this perception. She illustrated this point by telling me about a recent incident when a representative from Rector's Office had a meeting with 4th-year students. The representative was inviting the students to participate in English course for senior citizens, for which they would get credit towards their mandatory community service.

It really caught our attention that the representative from the Rector's Office kept saying, 'just because you speak English doesn't mean you can't help those in need.' It was like she had the stereotype or the perception that Lengua Inglesa students are elitist, just locked up in their own world.... I have never perceived them that way. And they were very surprised—she repeated that about three different times.... I don't think any of them applied to work with her for their community service.

Patricia [JFT, OS] has observed a similar phenomenon during meetings with faculty members from other majors. "From the beginning they have seen us, Lengua Inglesa, as the major for preppy girls, the rich kids, those with power. Even if it isn't true," she smiled. "Just the fact of speaking a second language... it makes us different." There was one time during a meeting when the faculty members of the four majors were discussing the possibility of creating a School journal. The proponents of this plan
indicated that the journal should focus on Philosophy, Spanish Letters, and Information Sciences only. The underlying message was that Lengua Inglesa faculty did not need financial support from the School to come up with their own journal. “That was where I perceived it. ‘Oh, wow! What’s going on? How can they think we don’t need financial support?’”

These comments illustrate the surprise that Catalina and Patricia felt when they realized outsiders view Lengua Inglesa as “different.” The underlying perception behind this “difference” seems to be the idea that speaking English equates a higher socioeconomic status, and that this socioeconomic status sets Lengua Inglesa students and faculty apart from the rest of the community. In these examples Catalina and Patricia see this “difference” as something negative; however, there were other instances in the interviews with professors in which “difference” was constructed in another way. This was in fact a common theme during my interview with Richard [SFT, OE]. As one of the founders of the Lengua Inglesa program, Richard is generally recognized by the Lengua Inglesa community to be the “heart” of the program and one of the driving forces behind the vision that Lengua Inglesa has for students. I present this extended excerpt from my interview with him because I believe it encapsulates the discourse of difference between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors to which many of the professors subscribe.

As we saw in the previous section, the students at the School of Humanities have often been subject to various stereotypes. Richard believes that the stereotypical views about the School of Humanities have in fact diminished over the years. He offered his recollection of how these stereotypes may have originated. Years ago, he said, the School
of Humanities had a very negative image. The common perception was that people in the Philosophy and Spanish Letters programs were very political. As a result, the student population in both majors was at an all-time low. In Philosophy, there were only about "thirty students in the entire four years" of the program. The university gave the School of Humanities an ultimatum: get more students, or we will close down those two majors. According to Richard, the person then in the Academic Secretary position convinced as many of the applicants “who were rejected from Lengua Inglesa and Ciencias de la Informacion” to enter the Philosophy program instead. This measure, meant to maintain a sustainable number of students in that program, contributed to creating the reputation that students in these programs could obtain an “easy” degree.

Richard believes it is “older people in the university [who] say things about Philosophy and Letters, but I think they think of what they’d seen when they were students here 20 years ago or something.” He observed that the problem that used to exist years ago but that has “more or less gone away too” is what he called “a tremendous rejection by people from other majors of students from Lengua Inglesa.”

B: What kind of rejection?
R: Well—they got jobs! [He laughed.] They had a different future for themselves. And it was a very different kind of atmosphere here than the rest of the school. I think that was another thing, the atmosphere of Lengua Inglesa. Well just the thing that our students are expected to go to class. And in Philosophy and Letters a few years ago the teachers never—well, you go in the afternoon nowadays and there’s nobody at school, in class. And so that difference in atmosphere and standards was, I think, a problem too.

Richard reiterated that, whereas “Lengua Inglesa students had all kinds of opportunities,” students from the Philosophy and Spanish Literature programs only had one reliable source of employment: teaching positions in high school. Even in these
positions they faced competition from Lengua Inglesa graduates. “You have graduates from Lengua Inglesa teaching *Letras Españolas* in Bachilleres. The *only* thing people from *Letras* can do our graduates are doing.” Something similar occurred with graduates of programs in Human Resources.

People in the Licenciatura in *Recursos humanos*... are trained only for one thing: to have public relations jobs. They would employ them in the maquilas. And a lot of those jobs were also grabbed by graduates of Lengua Inglesa because they knew English and these guys from *Recursos Humanos* didn’t. Our students got the jobs that other people were trained for too.

B: But is that because of their training here or because they spoke English?

F: Because of—well, because of their training here, to a large degree, right? Because they were capable of doing all the things they would need to do, and it wasn’t just that they happened to know English. They had a lot of professional skills, too.

The boundary that Richard establishes between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors is clear. Lengua Inglesa students are envisioned as the possessors of valuable cultural capital in terms of language and flexible professional skills that will grant them access to a variety of possible futures. Their peers in other majors—even beyond the School of Humanities—are perceived as lacking this cultural capital, and are therefore imagined as lacking the same ease of access to many of the imagined communities open to Lengua Inglesa students. Indeed, according to Richard’s account, Lengua Inglesa students have the potential to monopolize the professional communities of which their peers in other programs are supposed to be peripheral members. Thus the boundary established by the Lengua Inglesa community appears to separate its students from those students whom it perceives as having impoverished futures.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

In conducting this study, I intended to investigate how the imagined communities and the identities of Lengua Inglesa students are negotiated as they move within and across linguistic and cultural communities. I set out to answer four main questions:

- What are the students’ imagined communities at the beginning of the program?
- What are the students’ imagined communities towards the end of the program?
- What are the futures that the faculty envision for students?
- What impact does receiving instruction in English while surrounded by their native Mexican Spanish-speaking community have on students’ identity?

To answer these questions, I conducted a series of interviews with various students and professors of the Lengua Inglesa major at Northern State University. The analysis of these interviews provided interesting answers to the four research questions. In this chapter, I summarize the findings presented in the previous chapter and draw conclusions from them in light of the framework of imagined community discussed in the review of the literature. This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section I present the conclusions pertaining to the futures envisioned by both student- and faculty-participants. In the second section I turn my attention to the conclusions and broader implications gleaned from the data dealing with the negotiation of the participants’ identity as Lengua Inglesa students in their native Mexican Spanish-speaking community.
The Envisioned Futures of Lengua Inglesa Students

The contributions of both first- and fourth- year participants suggest that they chose to study in Lengua Inglesa with a clear idea of what they expected from the major. The participants decided to enrol in the program after considering what they imagined were the advantages that a degree in Lengua Inglesa would provide them in terms of employability, skill transferability, and building on their previous knowledge of English. The participants imagined that investing in a Lengua Inglesa degree would provide them with the linguistic resources and flexible professional skills necessary to access a wide range of imagined professional communities both within and beyond national boundaries.

The data suggest that part of the appeal that Lengua Inglesa has for prospective students is English as the language of instruction. The participants appear to see English as valuable cultural capital that can open doors to even greater sources of financial, social and cultural capital. Studying in Lengua Inglesa is seen as an opportunity to build on their pre-existing linguistic capital—obtained in formal or informal contexts—and to maximize its value by binding it to another powerful source of social capital: a university degree. These findings mirror in significant ways those of Dagenais' (2003) work with immigrant parents in Canada who perceive multilingualism as a valuable resource that will allow their children to perform effectively on national and international markets. Dagenais observes that “[i]n providing access to various imagined language communities that cross national boundaries, these parents also foster the construction of transnational identity in their children, hoping that it will position them at an advantage with respect to unilinguals in numerous locations around the globe” (p. 281). The participants' decision to study in Lengua Inglesa can be seen as an investment in an education leading to an
officially recognized university degree that at the same time allows them to develop a sophisticated knowledge of English. Together, these characteristics are envisioned as increasing the participants' worth in national and transnational labour markets.

At the same time, the participants imagine that these characteristics place them in a vantage position in relation to their unilingual Mexican peers, and on an equal footing with peers in other parts of the world. In this sense, studying in Lengua Inglesa may be seen as an investment in a transnational identity not unlike the one described by Dagenais. Many of the participants imagine that a Lengua Inglesa degree will help them transcend national borders in pursuit of work and career objectives. The participants' drive toward transnational mobility seems to be informed by their past experiences, which for most of them include travel and/or living abroad, informal contact with English through the media, and formal contact with English in educational institutions. Some of them have had the opportunity to study abroad thanks to the transnational networks established by family and friends. Although not all of them have lived or studied abroad, the participants belong to a generation of young middle-class Mexicans who have grown up surrounded by media in English in the form of books, television, radio, movies, and most recently the internet. Some of them have also experienced forms of transnational labour: for example, two of the first-year participants work as phone operators for a transnational company based in Chicago.

This intense transnational contact is likely to influence the way they envision themselves in the world. For most of the student-participants, living in another country appears to be primarily a matter of preference. It would appear from their comments that one can choose the country where one wants to reside—temporarily or permanently—as
one could choose a neighbourhood in a city. This aspect of the findings lends support to
Appadurai’s (2001a, 2001b) notion that mass communication technology and mass
migration movements have enabled the construction of complex transnational imaginary
landscapes through which local subjectivities can be produced and cultivated. Similarly,
it illustrates the idea that, as migration facilitates the creation of transnational ties, more
and more people are able to imagine “the possibility that they or their children will live
and work in places other than where they were born” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 6).

We must also bear in mind the proximity of Chihuahua to the border with the
United States. This proximity to the border may facilitate the participants’ access to a
wide variety of resources in English and from different parts of the world that help
expand their repertoire of imaginable futures. In the north of Mexico, particularly areas
close to the Mexico-U.S. border, the influence of the United States is felt more intensely
than in the rest of the country. Common factors such as transit across the border for
shopping and entertainment, the presence of transnational industries and franchises, and
easy access to the U.S. media make the use of English habitual and frequent in this region
(Hidalgo, 1986; Morris, 1999), although nowadays this may be more and more the case
in other parts of the country as well. This brings to mind Pennycook’s (1998, p. 130)
assertion that those involved in language education “are also inevitably surrounded by
popular culture, by the everyday images of English.” This makes it necessary to consider
the influence of popular culture in the making of English professionals.

The proximity to the United States and Canada could suggest that participants
would think it easier to move around North America, or even that their projected mobility
would be restricted to the United States and Canada. Yet this does not seem to be always
the case. Some participants expressed their desire to work, study and/or reside in different European countries, for instance. It is interesting to note that English is not the official or national language in all of these envisioned countries of residence. Carmen [4yr] plans to obtain a graduate degree in Spain, while Alicia [1yr] plans to study in Italy. Yet both of them are investing in a university program where the language of instruction is English. This suggests the way in which Lengua Inglesa students may envision English: as a cosmopolitan language whose value will be recognized worldwide.

Finally, there is evidence suggesting that participants may not frame their envisioned transnational mobility as a unilateral movement out of Mexico, but rather as multidirectional, allowing for mobility from one country to another if necessary or desired. Notice that Isabel [1yr], for example, is able to imagine herself not only living outside of Mexico, but moving from one country to another—England, the United States, Mexico—in what are essentially liaison positions: translation and public relations. Gina [4yr], too, makes it known that she does not consider Canada and the United States as the only possible places of residence. Further evidence of this multidirectionality emerges in Mario’s [4yr] experience. His comments suggest that going abroad is not the only way in which he can enter the global sphere. Mario indicates that the internationalized nature of many Mexican universities makes it unnecessary to study abroad to come into contact with global issues.

The Futures that Professors Envision for Lengua Inglesa Students

The futures that the faculty-participants envision for Lengua Inglesa students bear remarkable similarities to those envisioned by the student-participants. The faculty-
participants imagine Lengua Inglesa students succeeding in a variety of work and study settings both in Mexico and abroad. They believe that this is not so much a result of English as the language of instruction but of the learning and teaching approach of the Lengua Inglesa faculty. This approach is intended to encourage students to envision themselves as language professionals rather than students. As well, it is intended to foster the development of professional values and work ethic in students, while at the same time helping students to develop critical thinking skills and sensitivity to other cultural and linguistic communities. The faculty-participants expect that the combination of these elements will ultimately expand the students' horizons and range of imaginable futures.

The section on re-imagining oneself as a Lengua Inglesa student presents data suggesting that some of the participants have experienced some of the changes predicted by professors. As we have seen, the participants appear to have chosen to study in Lengua Inglesa as part of a strategy envisioned to prepare them for these envisioned futures. This strategy also involves, to a certain extent, re-imagining themselves in light of the academic/professional identities that the major offers them, as seems to have been the case with first-year participants. Among fourth-year participants the re-imagining process seems to have gone further in the cases of Nora, Gina and Mario, with outcomes that reflect the expectations of faculty-participants. This lends support to Kanno’s (2003, p. 287) observation that “a school can communicate to its students an image of a society in which they have useful and fulfilling roles to play, and the school can make that image tangible and accessible,” ultimately affecting the students' identities. Based on the comments from Nora, Gina and Mario, as well as that of sessional instructors Sofia and Roberto, we can conclude that the Lengua Inglesa program may play a powerful role in
expanding the ways in which students imagine themselves and their futures. However, an aspect that Kanno (idem) does not discuss in this work is the congruency between the educational institution’s vision for its students’ futures and the realities faced by students beyond the school context. This is a topic that has not been given enough attention in works on imagined communities in general, but that emerged on two important occasions in this study.

At the same time that the faculty-participants asserted their ambitious vision for the future of Lengua Inglesa students, Ismael’s [SSI] comments raised a possible caveat in this vision: not all students may experience the type of “grand-revelation” that Rodrigo [SSI] and Sofia [SSI] appear to have experience as a result of studying in Lengua Inglesa. He emphasizes that some of the more profound effects that Lengua Inglesa can have on students may not become apparent to students until years after graduating and, more importantly, that not all students may benefit from this vision. Carmen’s [4yr] account of dissatisfaction with the program lends support to this notion. In her view, one of the shortcomings of Lengua Inglesa lies in its curricular sequence. She sees a discrepancy between the expectations that new students may have of the major and the content of the courses students take during the first two years of the program. During this period, students do not take any courses explicitly related to translation or teaching methodology issues. This can be very discouraging for students who enter the major expecting an immediate and practical training. Her insights seem to be supported by Gina, who indicated that she did not begin to think of herself as a translator until she came into contact with specialized translation courses during her third year in the major.
The experiences of these two student-participants point to the importance of having students see their expectations of the program mirrored in their courses and class activities. If Lengua Inglesa students do not perceive that the major will help them narrow the gap between their present circumstances and their envisioned futures, they are likely to grow disappointed with the program. In some cases, this may lead to dropping out of the program altogether. These findings are consistent with Norton’s (2001) observation that an individual’s learning is affected not only by the individual’s current social participation, but also—and perhaps even more powerfully—by their past and future imagined affiliations. Because the imagined communities in which we envision ourselves play a crucial role in how and what we choose to learn, educational institutions and actors need to acknowledge the imagined communities of the learners, so as to not exacerbate their non-participation or impact their learning trajectories in negative ways.

**Broader Implications of the Futures Envisioned by the Participants**

One broader issue comes to mind when analyzing the transnational mobility that the student- and the faculty-participants imagine for the students’ futures. The first issue has to do with what Norton and Kamal (2003) call a possible “crisis of expectations.” Dagenais (2003) discusses one such crisis of expectations in the case of immigrant parents in Canada who invest in their children’s multilingualism, in hopes that it will open up future opportunities for their children in transnational markets. These parents, she writes, “may or may not see a return on their investments in these areas, particularly since their children’s multilingual resources will not necessarily be recognized or valued by others” (p. 281). Her words may be applicable to Lengua Inglesa students as well. In addition to facing financial and legal barriers—such as those described by fourth-year
participants Mario and Nora—Lengua Inglesa students with plans of transnational mobility may find that their linguistic and professional resources may not always be recognized beyond national borders. Article 1.202 of NAFTA specifies that professionals from one country are allowed to practice in another if they obtain appropriate licenses (Fantini et al. 2001). However, at the practical level such specifications may remain purely rhetorical due to the asymmetry of professional certification across North America. Canada is a case in point. Although the Canadian government has a relatively flexible policy for assessing prior knowledge, there is little agreement regarding the "portability" of professional credentials from other countries. The formal process of assessing credentials and determining equivalencies can be cumbersome, expensive, and does not guarantee that the institution will recognize an individual's credentials (CICIC, 2002). Lengua Inglesa students who envision a semi-permanent to permanent move to other parts of the world, such as Europe, are likely to face similar constraints.

An English-speaking Learning Community within a Larger Spanish-speaking Community: Boundaries and Peripheralities

The findings of this study suggest that the participants must constantly negotiate belonging to at least two different linguistic communities: the English-speaking Lengua Inglesa community, and the surrounding Spanish-speaking community within the School of Humanities. It is significant that the identities of the participants as members of two different imagined communities must be negotiated both within and outside the class context. We can see the clash between the two imagined communities to which Lengua

26 Through institutions such as the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) and the International Credential Assessment Service (ICAS).
Inglesa students belong and the endorsed linguistic practices of each in the experience of Eileen [1yr]. The imagined construct of the Lengua Inglesa community sanctions the mixed use of Spanish and English as a natural phenomenon for students who spend at least six hours per day in a predominantly English-speaking environment. Code-switching from English to Spanish is acceptable for a variety of register-specific lexical items such as “thesis statement.” However, Eileen’s experience suggests that this sanction is not applicable to the students’ proper names, which are instead constructed as identity markers signalling membership to a national/linguistic imagined community. Eileen’s classmates perceived her last name as inextricably linked to her identity as a Mexican/native Spanish-speaker, and therefore expected her to use a Spanish pronunciation. Her departure from this expectation was met with derision.

Likewise, it is important to consider how English as the language of instruction may influence the relationship between Lengua Inglesa students and neighbouring learning communities. The data suggest that participants actively sought ways in which to legitimize their identity as Lengua Inglesa students in relation to learners of English as a foreign language and as students from other majors within the School of Humanities. I have applied Wenger’s (1998) notions of **boundary** and **peripherality** as a useful theoretical framework to analyze the role that imagination plays in how participants define membership to the Lengua Inglesa community, and also in reinforcing the community’s boundaries to assert the shared identity of its members.

First, the student-participants established a boundary between themselves as learners of English as a foreign language. The participants view the comparison to an “English course” as a threat the legitimacy of their identity as university students. By
making a distinction between Lengua Inglesa students and learners of English, the participants are also establishing who is and who is not a member of the Lengua Inglesa community. Setting this boundary is crucial in the construction of an identity that outsiders can recognize as valid. This resonates with Wenger’s (idem, p. 164) assertion that we constitute our identities “not only by what we are but also by what we are not. To the extent that we can come in contact with other ways of being, what we are not can even become a large part of how we define ourselves.” By establishing a boundary between themselves and EFL learners, the student-participants are asserting an identity that goes beyond that of a language learner to that of an English-language-professional—the identity that the Lengua Inglesa major offers them.

At the same time, a recurrent theme in the contributions by both student- and faculty-participants was that Lengua Inglesa students “have a different future for themselves” in relation to other students at NSU, and more specifically other students within the School of Humanities. Faced with the negative stereotypes surrounding the School, the participants find it necessary to establish a boundary between themselves and other students in the School of Humanities to preserve their “credibility” as Lengua Inglesa students. To do so, they resort to their identity as English-professionals-in-training. Thanks to their in-depth knowledge of English and healthy work ethics, participants anticipate prompt and uneventful access to a wide range of labour opportunities. On the other hand, they expect that other students in the School will have a hard time inserting themselves in the labour market due to their unstable work ethic and/or Spanish-only academic training. Significantly, several participants (e.g. Isabel, Carmen, Alicia) mentioned that this was an important reason for preferring to enrol in
Lengua Inglesa rather than in Spanish Literature, which they consider the equivalent of the former but for the language of instruction.

The physical space in which Lengua Inglesa co-exists with the other three majors in the School seems to have great symbolic importance as the place where different imagined communities meet and sometimes clash. We could think of the Lengua Inglesa corridor as a peripheral zone where code-switching is acceptable, since most individuals in the corridor are members of the Lengua Inglesa community. The farther Lengua Inglesa students move from this peripheral zone, the more conspicuous their use of English words and phrases becomes. This movement entails crossing a symbolic boundary into a territory where Lengua Inglesa students are not imagined as English-professionals-in-training, but more as Mexicans-speaking-English-in-Mexico. It is interesting that a phenomenon similar to Eileen’s pronunciation episode takes place as Lengua Inglesa students move away from the upper-level corridor into other areas of the School building. Once students leave the periphery zone, they are expected to comply with the linguistic practices of the dominant Spanish-speaking community—to which they belong—or risk being viewed as arrogant or pretentious. The clash of these two imagined communities results in an underlying tension between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors within the School.

**Broader Implications of the Boundaries and Peripheralities of the Lengua Inglesa Community**

Kanno (2003) observes that educational institutions “can make a significant difference in directing their students to more enabling imagined communities” (p. 298). As I stated in the first part of this chapter, this seems to be true for many of the Lengua
Inglesa students who participated in this study. However, Kanno warns that at the same time educational institutions may participate in reproducing inequitable social patterns. She observed this in the case of four Japanese schools that were preparing their students for radically different kinds of bilingualism based on future roles that their students were expected to fulfill. Whereas the most privileged students were envisioned as having the richest futures, socially and financially, the least privileged students—the children of immigrants and refugees—were being socialized into the least privileged imagined communities.

The present study closely mirrors yet at the same time adds a new dimension to Kanno’s findings. As in Kanno’s study, the boundary established by Lengua Inglesa students and faculty separates Lengua Inglesa students from students who are perceived as having impoverished futures. The most significant difference to Kanno’s study is that in Lengua Inglesa the boundary is established among learning communities belonging to the same institution. My study also represents a significant departure from Norton and Kamal’s (2003) study in which they explored the imagined communities of Pakistani children in a private elementary school where English was the language of instruction. The participants in Norton and Kamal’s study were all members of a self-contained learning community where English was the language of instruction for all students. My findings suggest that a more complex and potentially problematic identititary dynamic may arise when an English-speaking learning community co-exists with learning communities that use the vernacular as the language of instruction. More work is perhaps needed to further explore such dynamics in similar contexts within and beyond the Mexican context.
The boundary established by the Lengua Inglesa community also brings to mind the inequitable distribution of wealth, power, culture and knowledge brought to the fore by the view of the spread of English as linguistic imperialism. The "clash" between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors within the School of Humanities illustrates the identitary negotiation that Lengua Inglesa students have to do as members of two imagined communities with different linguistic and social perquisites. At the same time, this clash may point towards larger issues, such as the inequalities that may be associated with speaking English in Mexico. A source of concern is that the boundary established by the Lengua Inglesa community may help perpetuate the notion that the "superiority" in the labour market of those who speak English over those who do not is not only acceptable but desirable for the benefit of Lengua Inglesa students.

The findings also suggest that most student- and faculty-participants may subscribe to a triumphalist view of the spread of English, in which "English and English teaching in these terms have been considered intrinsically good for the world, a key aspect of global development, and a commodity freely traded on world markets" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 6). In some ways, the identity as English-professionals that students are expected to develop during their time in Lengua Inglesa seems to imply that the students themselves will be commodities "to be freely traded" in the transnational academic and labour markets. Furthermore, in the review of the literature I illustrated how the creed of competition heralded by neoliberalism has helped create an aura of fear and labour anxiety surrounding English in Mexico and other parts of the world. The belief that not speaking English is a serious handicap to one's social status and mobility is implicit in the student-participants' reasons for studying in Lengua Inglesa. As we saw
in the presentation of the findings, the participants viewed Lengua Inglesa as a major that would expand their opportunities to build a financially secure future for themselves—a belief linked to the fact that English is the predominant language of instruction in the program. Many participants indicated that even if they decide not to work as teachers or translators, the mere prospect of improving their English may be an insurance against unemployment. In this sense, the participants perceive that Lengua Inglesa will provide them with much better and more stable economic prospects than could other majors at NSU where Spanish is the language of instruction.

At the same time, the findings of the study suggest that the participants also perceive English as a language of possibility, a resource that may facilitate access to a better way of life. The post-colonial view of English reminds us that we must examine the spread of English “both critically—in terms of new forms of power, control and destruction—and in its complexity—in terms of new forms of resistance, change, appropriation and identity” (Pennycook, 2003, p. 254). Previous studies on the impact of English along the U.S.-Mexico border have been framed in terms of determining whether individuals on the Mexican side hold positive or negative attitudes towards English (Hidalgo, 1986). The imagined communities framework I have employed in this study suggests that such a dichotomous distinction may be overly simplistic. The student-participants in this study portrayed their relationship to English in ways that seem to go beyond “positive” or “negative.” More often than not, they framed this relationship in function of their envisioned futures: English as a tool for reaching, for attaining, for becoming. The findings of this study suggest that English might play a different and much more powerful role in the construction of imagined communities for those who
have access to it—an intriguing line of inquiry beyond the scope of this study. Future work on the spread of English in Mexico could benefit from applying post-colonial methodological and theoretical approaches to explore this line of inquiry.
CHAPTER VI: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LENGUA INGLESA PROGRAM
AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In designing the present study, I had two main objectives in mind. The first was that the findings of the study could serve as a decision-making tool regarding student recruitment and curricular offerings at Lengua Inglesa. The Lengua Inglesa professors are in the midst of a sweeping structural and curricular reform of the program, and it is my hope that the following recommendations can be of use in this undertaking. My second objective was that the study could serve as a springboard in helping us to better understand Lengua Inglesa programs in Mexico and their influence on students. The project was designed as an exploratory study of one Lengua Inglesa program in Mexico. As such, it would be unrealistic to contemplate sweeping policy reforms based on it. However, the findings of the study do point to lines of inquiry that may be of relevance for national and international educational research.

Recommendations for the Lengua Inglesa Professors

The findings of the study suggest a possible discrepancy between the reasons for which some students may drop out Lengua Inglesa (the program does not match their expectations), and what the professors believe those reasons to be (the students do not know what the program really is about). To avoid this, the professors must ensure that applicants to the program have a clear understanding of what the program entails before admitting them to the program. One possible course of action would be to host “open house” days during which high school students and other prospective applicants could visit the Lengua Inglesa installations, attend a class to get an idea of what they would be
expected to do, and talk to members of the Lengua Inglesa community. This would give prospective students an opportunity to decide whether the program in fact matches their plans and/or expectations.

Furthermore, the professors should ensure that current Lengua Inglesa students—particularly those in the first and second years of the program—are aware of the rationale behind the sequence of courses in the program. The courses during the first two years are intended to prepare students for the more specialized courses in translation and language teaching methodology that students will take in the last two years of the major. However, as Carmen [4yr] indicated, this arrangement may conflict with some of the students' expectations that the program will begin providing them a professional training from the start. The professors might consider offering a "counterpoint" of practical application in the first- and second-year courses. Examples of this might include introducing students to basic principles of language teaching methodology that they could apply to their class presentations, or to have students carry out short translation assignments in the literature and text interpretation courses that are offered throughout the program. The latter measure could serve a double purpose: to introduce students to basic translation principles and to use translation into English or Spanish as a strategy for unpacking meanings that may not be visible at first in the original text.

Along with Ismael [SSI], I believe that it is also necessary that Lengua Inglesa "turns towards the labour market and assess the outcomes that a major like this can produce in terms of generating employment, revenue, and in terms of contributing to society and to social functions that may be required of us." In this respect, conducting a study that tracks the professional paths of Lengua Inglesa graduates might prove useful.
Such a study could inform the Lengua Inglesa faculty of the strengths, difficulties, and needs for training that Lengua Inglesa students face beyond their time in the program. A related study could also track the trajectories of graduates of the program who have pursued work or study opportunities outside of Mexico. What characteristics do these students have? Where are they? How many of them have returned to Mexico (or plan to), how many plan to remain abroad, and for what reasons? What types of professional activities have they engaged in while abroad? What led them to leave Mexico in the first place? The answers to these questions might provide important information regarding the drive to transnational mobility that seems to pervade among members of the Lengua Inglesa community.

Of equal importance is the need to encourage both faculty members and students to reflect critically on the “clash” between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors within the School of Humanities. Such a reflection should begin by addressing the perception that the students in these other majors lack the same kind of opportunities as Lengua Inglesa students. How much truth is there behind this assumption? Are there underlying issues regarding the role of English in Mexican society that might contribute to this assumption? What are those issues? Students could be encouraged to ask similar questions about themselves. Do Lengua Inglesa students really enjoy a wider range of opportunities than their peers in other majors? If so, what are the linguistic, social, and economic issues behind this? Addressing these questions might be helpful in moving from a triumphalist perception of the spread of English to one in which students and professors alike are empowered to negotiate their relationship to English in critical ways that benefit both the Lengua Inglesa community and the larger community.
Canagarajah’s notion of “local knowledge” (2002) might prove of great use to this purpose. As stated in the review of the literature, engaging with local knowledge requires that we begin by “deconstructing dominant or established knowledge to understand its local shaping” and reconstructing it for local needs and interests. At the same time, it requires that we try to respond to emerging social and geopolitical questions parting from our own historical and social experience. In the Lengua Inglesa context, one way of helping students engage with local knowledge would be to encourage them to carry out brief research projects on the local impact of English in Chihuahua and its possible implications for the Lengua Inglesa community and neighbouring learning communities. Another way would be to implement an outreach program through which students worked towards the well-being of the larger community, while also reflecting on the impact of English in the latter. For example, the major could run an English program aimed at workers in the maquila industry. The students would be asked to keep journals reflecting on their praxis, to be then discussed and unpacked in class. Final projects could focus on ways of improving the outreach program.

The joint processes of deconstruction and reconstruction could be carried out in these projects. Students would have an opportunity to reflect on the larger social, economic and political issues involved in the global spread of English, while at the same time explore its local repercussions. Ideally, students would then be able to reconstitute their relationship to English “in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms” (Canagarajah, 1999b, p. 2), and this could in turn inform their practice as teachers of English and other professional activities. Furthermore, a focus in local knowledge could open up many other possibilities for the Lengua Inglesa community. Canagarajah (2002)
indicates that “local knowledge can motivate conversations between different localities, answering questions that transcend one’s own borders.” He stresses that “the assumption that one’s knowledge is of sole universal relevance does not encourage conversation,” and instead encourages ELT practitioners to “envision building networks of multiple centers that develop diversity as a universal project and encourage an actively negotiated epistemological tradition” (p. 257). For the Lengua Inglesa major this could mean exploring the local role of English in its immediate communities. This would place the program in a position from which an academic dialogue could ensue with similar programs in Mexico and other parts of the world. What is the experience of Lengua Inglesa students in other parts of Mexico? How do students in similar programs in other parts of the world engage with English? This dialogue could be mutually enriching for Lengua Inglesa and other academic communities.

Recommendations for Lengua Inglesa Students

The Lengua Inglesa faculty are currently undertaking a major curricular reform. This provides a timely opportunity to listen to the concerns of students and to take into serious consideration the expectations that students have of the major. To facilitate such a process, the students could act as researchers of the learning community. In this role, they could organize focus groups with students at different stages of the major, to discuss their interests, needs, and concerns about the education that the major offers them. The students could then hold a formal meeting with professors to discuss these issues, and to try to find together ways in which their learning and preparation for the future might be enhanced.
Recommendations for the School of Humanities

In keeping with the recommendations for Lengua Inglesa professors, I suggest that the School of Humanities conducts research regarding the professional paths of the students in the four majors that the institution hosts. This research should examine the work and career opportunities available to students of the Philosophy, Spanish Literature, and Information Sciences programs in relation to those available to Lengua Inglesa students. Depending on the results of such a study, the School of Humanities could then determine whether these students may in fact face a poor range of possible futures based on their education within the institutions. What are the futures envisioned by these students? Do their respective majors prepare them for such futures? What measures can the School implement to help students improve their prospective futures?

Suggestions for Further Research

The student-participants’ hopes of transnational mobility raise a matter of importance not only to the Lengua Inglesa program, but to the larger institutional and educational context. According to Barrera Herrera, one of the discourses heralded by NAFTA proponents urged Mexicans to see themselves “not only as national citizens but as citizens of the world, who must commerce in the global market of capital and commodities without trespassing the borders of national labor markets” (Barrera Herrera, 1993, p. 14; emphasis mine). The envisioned futures of most of the student-participants in this study seem to defy the latter part of this statement. Their accounts suggest the possibility that other young Mexicans—especially those who have had access to certain types of cultural capital, like English—may be in fact looking outward, to be competitive in the global market beyond national borders. They envision the market as
serving their purposes, and at the same time they present themselves as marketable commodities—as transnational workers and students.

It is possible that this is a phenomenon intensified in Lengua Inglesa by the fact that English is the language and content of instruction of the program. These characteristics might simply make Lengua Inglesa more likely to attract students who already possess a previous knowledge and/or interest in English, and who have the kind of background that makes it more likely to imagine themselves living or sojourning abroad. However, given the growing institutionalization of English in Mexico, and the pervasiveness of English in so many aspects of everyday life in Chihuahua, it is only reasonable to wonder if students in other majors at NSU may also envision English as a tool to transcend national boundaries. If this were the case, it would be crucial to determine the role of higher education in Mexico in the education of students whose imagined communities lie beyond national borders. More attention needs to be paid to English as a language of possibility in Mexico to understand more clearly its role in the creation of transnational imaginaries. As I suggested in the preceding chapter, the theoretical and methodological tools of post-colonial view of the spread of English might prove useful for research on this topic. For example, Pennycook’s (2003b) notion of the “worldliness” of English could shed light into the ways young Mexicans resist, change, adopt and reformulate the ways in which they engage with English. The findings of this study suggest that it might prove worthwhile to examine the role that popular culture plays in the formation of images of English in Mexico, and the ways in which these images may influence policies, educational curricula, research agendas, et cetera.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the participants’ vision of transnational
mobility is that, although potentially multilateral, the mobility that the participants imagine does not seem to encompass the entire globe, but a well-defined portion of it: Europe and North America. The kind of mobility imagined by the participants brings to mind what Garcia Canclini (1999, p. 12, my translation) calls “tangential globalization.” Garcia Canclini argues that it is only a handful of politicians, financial analysts and academics who imagine a “circular globalization;” that is, a globalization that actually encompasses the entire globe. The rest of us, he writes, are more likely to imagine a globalization that may encompass vast areas or regions of the world, yet is nonetheless limited by our frames of reference:

For the manager of a transnational company, ‘globalization’ encompasses mainly the countries where his [sic] company acts... for Latin American heads of state that concentrate their commercial exchanges with the United States, globalization is almost a synonym for “Americanization;” in the discourse of MERCOSUR, the word includes as well European nations and is sometimes identified with novel interactions between countries of the south. For a Mexican or Colombian family with various relatives working in the United States, globalization alludes to the events that take place near the area in that country where their relatives live....

Garcia Canclini’s insights suggest an interesting line of inquiry into the personal and sociocultural processes through which Lengua Inglesa students may come to imagine themselves as inhabiting or sojourning to certain parts of the globe, but not to others. In a broader context, this line of inquiry could also shed light on the “brain drain” of Mexican students.


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Consent Form for Student-participants in English

Student Identity in a Mexican Public University Program where English is the Language of Teaching and Learning

Principal Investigator:
Amy S. Metcalfe
Assistant Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia

Co-Investigator:
Blanca M. Torres-Olave
Graduate Student
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia

Purpose and Procedure:
My name is Blanca Minerva Torres-Olave. I am an MA student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am currently conducting research for my Master's thesis entitled “Student Identity in a Mexican Public University Program where English is the Language of Learning and Teaching,” supervised by Dr. Amy Metcalfe.

As part of the thesis, I am conducting interviews with students in the English Department (Lengua Inglesa) at Northern State University. I would like to interview you about your experience as a student in this program, with special emphasis on your plans and expectations for the future and whether Lengua Inglesa may serve as a bridge to reaching your goals; the process through which you adapted to program; and how you see yourself as a member of the Lengua Inglesa community.

There will be two interview sessions taking place between February 20th and March 25th 2006. Each session will take approximately 1-2 hour(s), and you will be invited to choose the language (Spanish, English, or both) in which the interview will take place. With your permission, I would like to audio-record and take notes during each session.

Your participation will also entail keeping in touch with me by e-mail from March 30th through approximately June 30th, during which time I will be in Vancouver analyzing the data from these interviews. No confidential information will be collected via e-mail. E-mail contact will allow me to send you a preliminary draft of the analysis of the interviews for you to check that I have not misinterpreted or misrepresented your experiences, views or comments. Any changes that you believe are necessary in this respect will be honoured and correspondingly amended in the analysis.

I will include the resulting analysis in my master’s thesis and then present it in my master’s thesis defense. The thesis will be submitted to the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. A report summarizing the results of the study will be submitted to the Lengua Inglesa program. There is also the possibility that parts of the thesis be eventually presented at conferences and/or published in article form in one or more scholarly journals.

Your participation in this research will help me understand more about the identity of Lengua Inglesa students as they progress in the program, and as they move across linguistic and cultural communities. The information that you share will also help to set up a discussion of the effects that the Lengua Inglesa major has on students' identities; this discussion may in turn inform the structural and curricular reforms currently taking place in the program.

Your participation in the study may also entail certain benefits for you. Participating in this study may be an opportunity to reflect on your identity as a Lengua Inglesa student and as speaker of English, which could in turn be an asset in your professional life. Participation may help you gain insight into the process of becoming an English speaker in terms of the students' investment in the language, perceived needs, and background. It may also help you gain a greater understanding of your own attitudes towards the language and how those attitudes might come into play in your development as a language professional.

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Consent Form for Faculty-participants in Spanish

Identidad estudiantil en una universidad pública mexicana que ofrece un programa de licenciatura donde el inglés es el idioma de aprendizaje y enseñanza

Investigadora principal:
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Profesora asistente
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Co-Investigadora:
Blanca Minerva Torres-Olave
Estudiante de postgrado
Departamento de Estudios Educacionales
Universidad de Columbia Británica

Propósito y procedimiento:
Mi nombre es Blanca Minerva Torres Olave. Soy una estudiante de maestría en el departamento de Estudios Educacionales en la Universidad de Columbia Británica. Estoy llevando a cabo un proyecto de investigación de tesis llamado “Identidad estudiantil en una universidad pública mexicana que ofrece un programa de licenciatura donde el inglés es el idioma de aprendizaje y enseñanza” bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Amy Metcalfe.

Como parte de este proyecto llevaré a cabo entrevistas con profesores de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa en la Northern State University. Me gustaría entrevistarlo(a) a usted, con respecto al papel que se percibe y/o se espera que Lengua Inglesa juegue en la vida de los estudiantes, la identidad de los estudiantes, y sus propia experiencia como profesor(a) en este programa.

Se llevarán a cabo dos sesiones de entrevistas entre el 20 de febrero y el 25 de marzo del 2006. Cada sesión durará entre una a dos horas aproximadamente, y ud. tendrá la oportunidad de elegir el idioma (español, inglés, o ambos) en el cual se llevará a cabo la entrevista. Me gustaría obtener su permiso para grabar la entrevista y tomar notas durante cada sesión.

Su participación en el proyecto también incluiría mantenerse en contacto conmigo por correo electrónico entre el 30 de marzo y el 30 de junio del 2006, dado que durante este periodo estaré en Vancouver analizando la información recabada en las entrevistas. No se recopilará información confidencial a través del correo electrónico. Este contacto me permitirá enviarle un borrador preliminar del análisis de las entrevistas para que pueda asegurarse de que no he interpretado o presentado sus experiencias, puntos de vista o comentarios de manera errónea. Cualquier cambio que le parezca necesario en este respecto será respetado y alterado de manera correspondiente en el análisis.

El análisis final será incluido en mi tesis de maestría y presentado en mi defensa de tesis. Asimismo, se le entregará a la carrera en Lengua Inglesa un reporte resumiendo los resultados del estudio. Existe también la posibilidad de que partes de la tesis sean presentadas en conferencias y/o publicadas como artículos en revistas académicas.

Su participación me ayudará a entender más a fondo la identidad de los estudiantes de Lengua Inglesa a medida que avanzan en el programa y a medida que se mueven entre varias comunidades lingüísticas y culturales. La información que decida compartir también servirá para iniciar una conversación acerca de los efectos que la carrera pueda tener en la identidad de los estudiantes. Dicha conversación podría además informar las reformas estructurales y curriculares que se están llevando a cabo en la carrera.

Su participación en esta investigación también podría beneficiarle personalmente, ya que representa una oportunidad para entender mejor la identidad de los estudiantes y sus necesidades. También podría ayudarle a desarrollar un mejor entendimiento de las actitudes de los estudiantes hacia el inglés y del papel que éstas pueden jugar en su desarrollo como profesionales del lenguaje. Este conocimiento podría serle de utilidad en su práctica cotidiana. Asimismo, participar en el proyecto puede representar una oportunidad para reflexionar acerca de su propia identidad como profesor de Lengua Inglesa y como angloparlante.
Protocol for Interviewing Student-Participants (1st Interview)

- How did you learn English?
- What language(s) do you speak at home?
- Besides school, are there other places where you can interact with other speakers of English?
- In what language do you find it easier to express your thoughts and opinions?

- Where did you study before entering university?
- Why did you decide to study in Lengua Inglesa?
- What was your first day in Lengua Inglesa like?
- In what language do you and your classmates usually communicate inside and outside the classroom?
- What has been the most challenging thing about studying in Lengua Inglesa?
- What are some of the best and the worst things about studying in Lengua Inglesa?

- How would you describe the interaction among students in your classroom?
- How would you describe the interaction between students and professors in Lengua Inglesa?
- Is studying in Lengua Inglesa similar to studying in other schools?
- How do students from other majors see Lengua Inglesa students?
- How do Lengua Inglesa students view students from other majors?
- When someone who is not familiar with Lengua Inglesa asks you what the program is about, what do you say?

- What would be your ideal job?
- How do you imagine yourself ten years from now?
- If you could choose any place where you would like to live, what place would that be?
- What role do you think English will play in your future plans?
- Do you think having a degree in Lengua Inglesa might help you achieve these plans? Please explain.
Protocol for Interviewing Faculty-Participants (1st Interview)

- How did you learn English?
- What language(s) do you speak at home?
- In what language do you find it easier to express your thoughts and emotions?
- Where did you do your undergraduate studies?
- Why did you decide to study in Lengua Inglesa?
- What was your first day in Lengua Inglesa like?
- In what language did you and your classmates usually communicate inside and outside the classroom?
- What was the most challenging thing about studying in Lengua Inglesa?

- How long have you been teaching in Lengua Inglesa?
- Could you tell me a little about how and why you started working in Lengua Inglesa?
- What are some of the challenges and rewards that you face as a Lengua Inglesa teacher?
- Are some of these challenges particular to Lengua Inglesa or are they common to most majors at UACH?

- Why do students seek a degree in Lengua Inglesa?
- What are the major challenges faced by students when first entering the major?
- Are the challenges faced by L1 students different than those faced by students in other majors at UACH?
- What seems to be the students' attitude towards the program?
- What is the short-term impact of the program on students' lives?
- What is the long-term impact of the program on students' lives?
- How may studying in Lengua Inglesa help students achieve their future goals?

- Do you think students change from the first year of studies to the time they graduate?
- How would you describe the interaction among students as they progress in the major?
- How would you describe the interaction between Lengua Inglesa students and students from other majors?
- How would you describe the interaction between Lengua Inglesa students and professors?
- How do people from outside the major view Lengua Inglesa students?
- How do people from other majors view Lengua Inglesa?
Protocolo para Entrevistas con Profesores (Primera entrevista)

- Como aprendió inglés?
- Que idioma(s) habla con su familia?
- En que idioma(s) se le facilita mas expresar sus pensamientos y emociones?
- Donde hizo sus estudios de licenciatura?

- Por que decidió estudiar en Lengua Inglesa?
- Podría describir su primer día en Lengua Inglesa?
- En que idioma se comunican normalmente ud. y sus compañeros fuera y dentro del salón de clases?
- Cual fue su mayor reto como estudiante de Lengua Inglesa?
- Cuales son algunos de los retos y recompensas de ser un maestro de Lengua Inglesa?
- Son algunos de estos retos comunes a otras carreras de la UACH?
- Podría contarme un poco de cómo y por que empezó a trabajar aquí?

- Por que razones desean los alumnos una licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa?
- Cuales son los mayores retos que enfrentan los alumnos al iniciar la carrera?
- Son estos retos distintos a los que enfrentan los alumnos de otras carreras en la UACH?
- Cual parece ser la actitud de los alumnos hacia el programa?
- Cual es el impacto a corto plazo de la carrera en la vida de los estudiantes?
- Cual es el impacto a largo plazo de la carrera en la vida de los estudiantes?
- De que manera les ayudara a alcanzar sus metas el estudiar en Lengua Inglesa?

- Cree que los estudiantes cambian del primer semestre para cuando se gradúan?
- Como describiría la interacción entre estudiantes a medida que avanzan en la carrera?
- Como describiría la interacción entre alumnos y estudiantes a medida que estos avanzan en la carrera?
- Como describiría la interacción entre alumnos de LI y los de otras carreras?
- Como ven las personas ajenas a la carrera a los alumnos de Lengua Inglesa?
- Como ven los alumnos de otras carreras a los estudiantes de Lengua Inglesa?