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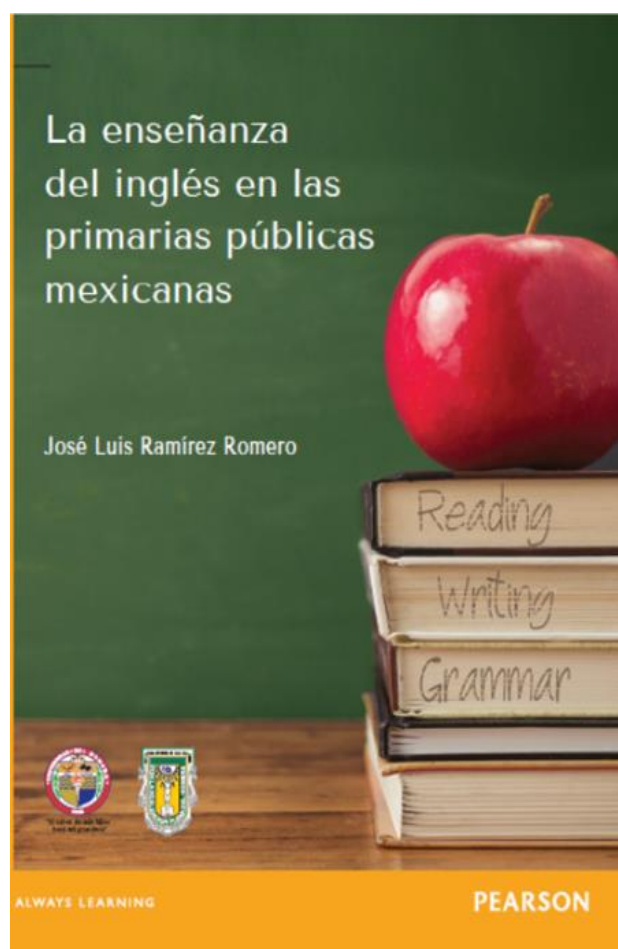
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La enseñanza del inglés en las primarias públicas mexicanas [The teaching of English in Mexican primary public schools] offers a descriptive overview—through the case studies of public elementary schools across Mexico—of the English language teaching process in the Mexican context. Editor José Luis Ramírez-Romero begins by presenting a clear account of methodological and conceptual aspects of the research design that informs each case study. In the chapters that follow, collaborators examine the English programs within eight Mexican states: Baja California, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Quintana Roo and Sonora.

Each collaborator used qualitative reports based on classroom observations as well as interviews with elementary school teachers, students, school principals and parents. The researchers also compared themes across the eight target states; therefore, the topics discussed in the book are particularly relevant to researchers who study second language acquisition or comparative international education. Moreover, the book will be of interest to English teachers in Mexico and to anyone searching for information about the current



situation of English teaching in Mexican public elementary schools.

Ramírez-Romero and his collaborators go well beyond describing the English programs that these eight states have implemented in public elementary schools in Mexico. The authors explain about language policy and English teaching in elementary schools, as well as include the historical background of the enactment and operation of the national English program (PNIEB). Importantly, they describe the unfavourable employment conditions of teachers who work for the national English program in elementary schools.

The book also presents a critical standpoint about the training offered to the English teachers, that is, how the English programs have delegated the training of their teachers to publishing companies, U.S. governmental corporations, the British Council and private Mexican universities. The authors also underscore the reasons why this practice is not recommendable and suggest the need to rely less on such external teacher training schemes, partly because of their insufficient theoretical support and also due to their contextual inadequacy. As an alternative, the authors recommend the implementation of training programs that enable teachers to understand the theory and practice of their daily work, and training which is designed based on Mexican students' needs.

The book covers a number of underexplored themes and perspectives, including a chapter by Cota and Márquez-Palazuelos on English teachers' beliefs about English language teaching. An interesting finding noted by the authors was that English teachers sometimes did not entirely know the official English plan. As a result, in some cases teachers' beliefs about the English program contradicted the standards established by the national English program. This dilemma is in part related to that fact that the state English programs use two different approaches: a communicative approach and a sociocultural approach. A chapter by Pamplón Irigoyen and Villalobos González describes how the

implementation of one of the methods occurred before the national government implemented PNIEB, and the other method followed. In the program prior to PNIEB, the most common method in public elementary school was the communicative approach, while the later program used the sociocultural approach. However, the authors explained that teachers' daily practice in most cases did not match the approach that had been established by PNIEB. Teachers would commonly use repetition exercises such as drills that did not promote the values that the sociocultural approach pursued.

In other chapter, Cano Vara, Medrano Varela, Durán Howard and Mejía Rosales analysed the perspectives of the students, the principals, and the parents in relation to the English class. An important theme that emerged from the interviews was that school principals felt that they should play a more active role in the decision making of the English class, and that the English program should involve them more in the activities related to English teaching. However, the authors also argued that many school principals are not proficient enough in English to supervise the quality of English instruction that is taught to students in their schools.

Castro-Juárez offers an account of the teaching resources that English teachers use in public Mexican schools. She reported among her most important findings the lack of use of technology in the English class and the need to train teachers on how to use teaching resources.

A recurrent theme throughout the book is that the government in Mexico needs to provide a greater investment in the national English program, and to ensure a continuance of the established programs. Nowhere is this theme more clear than in Castro-Juárez's account of the teaching resources that English teachers use in public Mexican schools. Among her most important findings was her report of the lack of technology resources and usage in the English class and the need to train teachers on how to use teaching resources.

Additionally, the book argues that the federal Mexican government should first study the effectiveness of previous English programs to make informed decisions about future programs. The reality, however, is that new educational programs arise as a result of electoral processes, and this does not seem to lead the improvement of English teaching in public elementary schools.

Editor Ramírez-Romero concludes that even though the elementary school English programs in Mexico have become federal programs, a serious lack of homogeneity exists among the programs in relation to the hiring and training procedures, the classroom practices and the economic resources that each state provides to these programs. Another important issue, according to Ramírez-Romero, is the lack of trained teachers required to offer complete English teaching coverage to all Mexican public schools.

This book contributes to education scholarship by providing a thorough understanding of the current state of

English teaching in public schools in Mexico. But the book also is a call to action for the improvement of English programs in Mexican schools. The book offers a clear plan to the Mexican government: first, to continue to provide English classes in public elementary schools, but with a full understanding of the past, present and future state of affairs. Thus, the Mexican government needs to assess the success of the English teaching programs in elementary schools since their beginning (in 2004, and not from 2010 when PNIEB was first implemented), avoid starting educational programs based on electoral changes every six years, and encourage a continuation of successful programs that already exist. Ramírez-Romero reminds us that the fundamental purpose of teaching English in public Mexican schools should be to counter balance the current inequality between children who attend private schools and students who attend public schools. If these programs are not supported effectively, they will remain unable to serve this important purpose.

About the Book Editor

José Luis Ramírez Romero holds an Ed.D. in Education from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). He is currently a tenured professor at the Foreign Language Department of the University of Sonora and has worked as faculty developer, curriculum consultant, and guest professor or speaker in several universities in Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador and the United States. He has published more than 80 articles and book chapters, and has coordinated three books on foreign language research in Mexico and one on the Teaching of English in Public Elementary Schools in Mexico. He currently coordinates the national research project “The Teaching of English in Mexican Elementary Schools”.

About the Reviewer

José Luis Moreno Vega is studying a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. He holds a M.Ed. in Bilingual-Bicultural Education from the University of Arizona. His research focuses on the implicit-explicit interface, specifically investigating the relationship between explicit and implicit L2 knowledge and the short-term and long-term effects of different types of form-focused instruction in second language acquisition. He has taught English as a foreign language at Universidad de Sonora, and he has collaborated in the publication of articles in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, and *Language Learning*.




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