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English Teacher – Educators' Approaches and Practices: A Case Study in Three Different Contexts

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ABSTRACT

The present article drew on a larger interpretivist case study research on the knowledge, beliefs, approaches and practices of the language teacher educator in three different contexts. It was constructed with the participation of seven educators of teachers of English as a foreign language. Four of them worked in two different Mexican universities which were in distinct parts of the country, and three educators worked for a Spanish university; all of them taught theoretical and practical courses of an English language teaching program. The purpose of this article is to raise awareness of the similarities and differences in the approaches and practices developed by the language teacher–educators. Questionnaires, observations, interviews and video recordings were the methods used for the collection of the data. The case study shows that, according to the participants' opinions, the teacher -educators tend to a learning centred approach in Mexico whereas the teacher educators in Spain combine teaching strategies of both approaches: Content centred approach and learning centred approach. Nevertheless, the teaching practices of all the case study teacher educators are similar despite the differences of contexts, and they are mainly representative of the Learning-focused approach to teaching.

Key Words: Teaching approaches, beliefs and teaching practices

1. Introduction

There is the general assumption that educational contexts make teaching practices differ. However, it appears to be that differences in geographical contexts do not make teaching practices vary significantly if they share the educational level as a university state context, and the general main purpose of the program, such as the education of teachers of English as a foreign language. This article is based on information offered by a case study on the knowledge, beliefs, approaches and teaching practices of the language teacher educator in three different contexts. One of the universities where the research was conducted was in a city in the centre of Mexico; city that has a strong Asian automobile industry with Japanese and Korean companies. A German car company was also installed there two years ago. The second Mexican university is in the northwest of Mexico with a large border with the United States of America. The third context of the study was a Spanish university in a high touristic city in the Andalusian region. The results show that there are some differences in the

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approach the participant educators follow. However, they share most of their teaching practices. The article aims to raise awareness on these aspects.

2. English language teaching (ELT) in Mexico

In Mexico, English is usually taught by Mexican teachers with different teacher education. A study by Tatto and Velez (1997) found that the teaching of English in public secondary schools was usually conducted by teachers that studied the teaching of English in secondary teacher preparation schools (Normal Superior). The curriculum of Normal Superior for preparing EFL teachers is principally composed of subjects on general pedagogical aspects for language teaching that are most of the times taught in Spanish. The teachers in charge of these subjects could be considered experts in pedagogy; however, they do not possess a high proficiency in English. It is especially difficult for teachers who have not studied in Normal Superior to work in this school level because of teacher union policies. The situation of the teachers that work for public preparatory schools is different since, according to the Council of Evaluation of Preparatory schools (COPEEMS), they are professionals with different academic backgrounds, who are commonly proficient English speakers. Most of them studied English in private institutions or lived in the USA. Nevertheless, they tend to lack of pedagogical training for the teaching of English since a specific school for preparatory school teacher preparation does not exist in Mexico (COPEEMS, 2013).

Regarding university level, before the mid-80s, the language centres of higher education institutions and schools as the Anglo-Mexican Cultural Institute and the Mexican-North American Cultural Relations Institute (IMNRC) were mainly in charge of the training of English language teachers; for example, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) through its language centre offered the first course for language teachers in 1978 (Da Silva et.al., 2008). There were only three Bachelor's degrees in English Language Teaching program (BA in ELT) in Mexico in the 1980s. However, the British Council encouraged, in the 1990s, a process of professionalization of in-service university English language teachers through the British Universities in Mexico program. It offered Mexican teachers of English who were working at state universities the opportunity of doing diplomas and BA studies in seven British universities. It intended to cover the professionalization of language teachers of most of the state universities in Mexico since most of them did not hold credentials on EFL teaching. Additionally, in 1996, PROMEP[2], a national program that supported the academic development of university teachers was created to provide teachers with the possibility of doing master and doctorate studies in Mexican and foreign universities to upgrade their academic level. All of this contributed to increase the number of ELT programs that took place in the last two decades and that were designed, in general, by teachers that studied in British universities. The BA in ELT programs increased from three in 1984 to more than thirty BA programs and thirteen MA programs in 2016 (ANUIES, 2017).

2.1 The Case Study BA in ELT Programs

The present study is developed in two public state universities in Mexico. State universities are autonomous institutions that appoint their own authorities and are free to administer their patrimony and establish their own budgets. Nevertheless, the federal and state governments provide these state

[2]Spanish acronym of a program for teachers' qualification improvement

universities with financial support that is their main economical resour[3]ce. It is mainly assigned according to the number of students and programs that universities have (SEP 1999).

2.1.1 The BA in ELT Program of the State University of the Centre of Mexico

The population of one of the Mexican universities where the case study is undertaken is about 15 000 students; it offers over 50 BA programs and about 30 postgraduate programs. In this university, a Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching program (BA in ELT) was first offered in August 1993 and has been reformed in 1995, 2003 and in 2012. The program was created to fulfil an increasing need for professionals in the teaching of English in the centre of Mexico, and it has been modified to respond to changes in contextual needs. The current program lasts eight semesters and consists of six strands of 44 courses and two areas of specialization as the following table shows. Its main objective is to prepare academically and professionally teachers that have the knowledge and skills to contribute to the solution of educational and research problems in the teaching of English field. The graduates of this program work in public primary schools, public universities, and in private institutions from the primary school level to the university level, as well as in international companies.

Strand	Number of subjects	No. of credits
The Development of English Skills Strand	9	59
The Applied Linguistics Strand	10	71
The ELT Methods Strand	13	91
The Practicum Strand	8	79
Professional Elective Courses: three subjects each area)	English for Specific Purposes English for Elementary Education	24
Integrative	1	15
Total		349

Table 1: BA in ELT 2012

2.1.2 The BA in ELT Program of the State University of the North of Mexico

The second Mexican university where the case study is developed is in the north of the country. The student population is over 40 000 students, and it offers 48 BA programs and 40 postgraduate programs. In this university, a Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching program (BA in ELT) was first offered in 1995 and was reformed in 2004. The current program is organized in eight semesters, and it consists of five strands of 39 courses and four areas of specializations covering 370 credits (Table 2). The program stresses the academic preparation in linguistic, pedagogy, English culture and research. Its main objective is to prepare academically and professionally teachers of the English language who will not only have high levels of English competence but who are also prepared to plan, design, assess and implement English language courses. The BA program has helped to professionalize the area of teachers of English in the region since over the 90% of the graduates of this program works in the educational sector in public and private institutions.

The first ELT curriculum was implemented in the university 1995, but it was revised in 2004 following the institutional regulations organized in five strands for all the new BA programs in the university.

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Strand	Number of subjects	No. of credits
Common	4	16
Basic	17	159
Professional	13	103
Integrative	1 seminar,3 research workshops	52
Specialization (four subjects each area)	Bilingual education English for specific purposes Technology for ELT	40
Total		370

Table 2: BA in ELT 2004

2.1.3 The BA in Teaching at Elementary School Level Program of the Spaniard University

In Spain, in the Andalusian region, bilingual education is offered at the different academic levels from elementary school to university in an important amount of school centers. From 1998 to 2004, French and German were the languages offered. However, with the approval of the Plurilingual Program of Andalucía in 2005, English has become the first vehicular language in the public bilingual education system (Ramos, 2007). This is to say, that English is the means to study different subjects; such as, Natural Science, Social Sciences and Artistic Education. The Bilingual Education program stipulates to teach, at least, a fourth of the weekly schedule in English (Vola, et. al. 2013). Therefore, the need of English language teachers has increased substantially.

In the Spaniard university, the program where the study was developed was focused on preparing teachers to teach at elementary school level, and the teaching of English as a foreign language was one of the elective specializations offered by the program. This program was created in 1993, and it was reformed in 2010 to respond to contextual changes also influenced by the European Union. The general objectives of the program are: To reach a solid personal formation of the students; to train students to work as teachers at elementary school level within its different areas, performing the distinguishing tasks of this profession; to encourage the analytical and critical spirit needed to apply the obtained knowledge to different professional areas and contexts, and to encourage the respect to human rights and equal opportunities for men and women according to the principles of equal opportunities and universal access for handicap people and to the values of a democratic culture.

The Teaching at Elementary School Level program lasts eight semesters and is made up of four strands of a total of 32 subjects. The degree covers 240 credits: 60 credits on basic formation, 100 credits on compulsory core subjects, 30 credits on elective professional courses, 44 credits on external practices and six credits on a final work. The following table summarises this information.

Strand	Number of subjects	No. of credits
Basic	10	60
Disciplinary and Didactic Formation	12	100
Elective Specialization	5	30
Practicum	4	50
Total	29	240

Table 3: BA in elementary school teaching 2010

3. Approaches in Language Teacher Education

Teaching in higher education has followed two main approaches, content centred and learning centred approaches, according to research conducted by Kember & Kwan (2000), Postareff et al. (2008), Trigwell and Prosser (2004), Norton et. al. (2005) and Devlin (2006), among others. The content centred category can be divided in imparting information and transmitting structured knowledge, while the learning oriented category can be classified in facilitating understanding and conceptual change / intellectual development (Kember, 1997 in Devlin, 2006). These approaches show distinct characteristics in areas such as (1) teaching process; (2) learning environment; and (3) conception of learning which are contrasted in the following table:

Learning-focused approach to teaching	Content-focused approach to teaching
1. **Teaching process**	
1.1 Teaching practices	Teacher transmits the knowledge to the students
Knowledge is constructed together with the students	Teaching concentrates more on facts and details which are pointed out by the teacher
Teaching concentrates on large entities	Teaching method is selected based on what is most comfortable for the teacher
Teacher is aware of students' diverse ways of learning and uses varying, activating teaching methods to enhance students' learning	
2. Learning environment	
2.1. Teachers' role	Teacher points out the important contents
Teacher encourages students to be critical and active	Teacher has a more distant relationship with the students
Teacher is a facilitator and has an equal and casual relationship with the students	Students learn from the teacher, teacher is the expert
Students learn from the teacher and vice versa	
2.2 Students' role	
Teacher sees students as active participants	Teacher sees students as less active recipients and listeners
Students are capable of finding answers by themselves and process the knowledge	Little can be expected from students
Students are responsible for their own learning in that they	Teacher sees students as a large crowd of people
must find the answers by themselves	Teacher is responsible for students' learning
2.3. Interaction	
Interaction between teacher and students and among students improves students' learning outcomes	Interaction does not enhance students learning
Knowledge is constructed through interaction	Teachers cannot or are afraid of using activating methods
Interactive elements are used with all group sizes to enhance students' learning	Interactive elements are not used with large groups
3. Conception of learning	
Learning is about insights, application of knowledge, developing views, critical thinking, deep understanding	Learning is more about memorizing facts or remembering the course contents
Learning is a process in which the students construct their own views of the phenomena	Learning is about remembering the right answers or solutions Right answers can be found through reading the course literature

Table 4: Learning centred and Content centred approaches differences (Postareff, 2008, p.113).

In addition, research developed by Trigwell, Prosser and Taylor (1994) and Trigwell and Posser (2004) identified that the teachers' strategies and their intentions behind those strategies composed their approach to teaching. They identified five approaches detailed as follows:

Approach A	Teacher-focused strategy with the intention of transmitting information to students The focus of the transmission in this approach is on facts and skills. The prior knowledge of students is not considered to be important and it is assumed that students do not need to be active in the teaching process; they will learn by receiving the transmitted material
Approach B	Teacher-focused strategy with the intention that students acquire the concepts of the discipline
Approach C	A teacher/student interaction strategy with the intention that students acquire the concepts of the discipline
Approach D	A student-focused strategy aimed at students developing their conceptions
Approach E	A student-focused strategy aimed at students changing their conceptions

Table 5: Five categories of knowledge to teaching teachers (Trigwell and Posser, 2004)

The teachers' intentions behind their approaches varied from aiming to transmit the content of the subject to the students to intending to help students change their conceptions of the content. Considering the strategies that teachers applied, approaches A and B were regarded as teacher-focused while approaches D and E were considered student-focused. It could be said that teacher-focused approaches are focused on content and student-focused approaches are focused on learning according to Postareff (2008) classification of teaching approaches. The teachers' intentions reflect the beliefs teachers hold about education.

4. Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs about teaching and subject matter seem to have a significant role in the actual implementation of their teaching practices (Dunkin, 2002; Hativa, 2002). Moreover, the selection and application of teaching techniques would depend on teachers' assumptions and beliefs about how students learn and on the kind of methodology that they believe best supports this learning process (Richards and Lockhart, 1996; Johnstone and Goettsch, 2000). The beliefs teachers have about the teaching content and process and their understanding of the context where they work, are part of their beliefs systems (Richards and Lockhart, 1996). Beliefs about teaching, which incorporate thoughts about what it takes to be a teacher and how students should behave, are developed during the school years and already set before entering university (Pajares, 1992). Nevertheless, they can change because of varied reasons, such as teaching experience and knowledge development (Richards and Lockhart, 1996). For example, beliefs influence teaching practices and teaching practices can also lead to changes in beliefs (Phipps and Borg, 2007).

Teachers' beliefs have diverse sources (Borg, 2003; Senior, 2006). One of these sources is Educationally based or research-based principles. For example, Johnson (1992, cited in Richards and Lockhart, 1996), by researching thirty ESL teachers, found that they teach according to their theoretical beliefs, and that different beliefs seem to be the source of different instruction practices. Teachers support their understanding with the knowledge they have obtained from other areas, such as psychology, sociolinguistics and education (Richards and Lockhart, 1996), understanding that can be the source of theoretical beliefs. For instance, teachers may be interested in incorporating collaborative work into their practice because they have become familiar with Sociocultural theory, which is an influential theory nowadays. Moreover, principles derived from approaches or methods are also found to be the origin of teachers' beliefs. Teachers may be convinced that a specific approach or teaching method is the most effective (Borg, 2003; Senior, 2006). This type of beliefs is considered peripheral beliefs; beliefs that are theoretically embraced (Phipps and Borg, 2009). Additionally, teachers' experience of what works best is also a source of beliefs since teachers tend to trust in the strategies that work well

for them (Richards and Lockhart, 1996; Senior, 2006). These strategies, later, become core beliefs; beliefs that are grounded in experience (Phipps and Borg, 2009). Some studies illustrate that teachers hold contradictory beliefs and that some inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices exists (Senior, 2006). For instance, Phipps and Borg (2009), researching teachers' beliefs and their practices in teaching grammar, found that the differences between teachers' professed beliefs about language learning and the practices observed had their origin in the different peripheral and core beliefs they hold. Teachers' practices appeared to reflect teachers' core beliefs illustrating, in this manner that core beliefs, experientially established, and peripheral beliefs, theoretically embraced, were not held with the same level of conviction (Phipps and Borg, 2009).

Overall, understanding of teachers' beliefs appears to be essential because the beliefs teachers embrace affect their judgment, shaping their classroom behaviour (Pajares, 1992). Nevertheless, awareness of the fact that teachers' beliefs must be generally inferred from what teachers say and do, is necessary in research since they cannot be directly observed or measured (Pajares, 1992; Andon, 2009).

5. Methodology

The present article drew on an interpretative case study of the knowledge, beliefs, approaches and practices of the language teacher educator that was constructed with the participation of four educators working in two different Mexican universities and three educators from a Spanish University. It was developed through different research methods as questionnaires, observations, interviews and video-recordings to obtain rich information with the purpose of strengthening the research. The participant teacher educators' knowledge, beliefs, approaches and practices were investigated through a within-case analysis of each case and a cross case analysis of the seven cases. Therefore, the study could be considered a multiple-case study according to Yin's (2003) classification.

5.1 Participants in the study

The participants in the study were seven teacher educators: two teachers of a state university in the centre of Mexico, two of a state university in the north of the country, and three of a university in Andalusia, Spain. Their names for this case study were Laura, Sam, Joe, Pam, John, Samuel and Darrel. The seven participants taught theoretical and practical subjects in an ELT program to undergraduate students and had a minimum of two years of experience as teacher educators. They were selected to be part of a purposeful sampling; a sampling composed of participants that, according to the researchers' criterion, could help to understand the central issues of the study (Merriam, 1998; Jupp, 2006; Creswell, 2007 and 2009).

5.2 Data collection process

The data collection process for the construction of the case study was developed as follows: First, questionnaires were applied to the staff teachers of the BA in ELT programs. Then, an individual interview with the participant educators was conducted. After that, each teacher was observed from three to six hours, and they were interviewed after the observations. Then, a participant teacher educators' class was video recorded; recordings that were discussed with them later. It is relevant to state that any of the classes observed in the Spanish university was recorded because of technical problems. However, stimulated recall interviews were conducted based on the researcher's field

notes. As the last step, a final face to face interview with the teacher educators to clarify aspects that came up during the data collection process was conducted. The following table summarises the data collection activities:

Data Collection Activities	Frequency
Questionnaires to the language teaching staff	Once
Initial interview with each teacher educator	Once
Observations of each teacher	From 3 hrs to 5 hrs
Post observation interview with each teacher	Once
Video-recording of a class of some teacher educators	Once
Interview on the video-recorded class or on key aspects of the class with each teacher	Once in the middle of the data collection process
Final interview with each teacher	Once

Table 6: Data collection activities

The dates for the interviews, video recording and the schedule of observations were chosen by the participant educators and set in advance; actions that permitted the full participation of the teachers and avoid interfering with their daily responsibilities.

5.3 Data analysis

Case study is "in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon, utilizing a variety of sources of data" (Jupp, 2006, p. 20). The use of various data sources permits to obtain rich data as well as to triangulate the information to strengthen the reliability of the results. The analysis of case studies consists in "organizing the data by specific cases for in-depth study and comparison" (Patton, 2002p. 447). Therefore, seven cases were constructed conducting a within-case analysis and cross-case analysis that initiated with the collection of the data in the development of a case study on English language teacher education. The following table shows the main steps of a cyclical process of data analysis:

Activities
Questionnaires were analysed through the SPSS program
Teachers' observed classes were recorded through field notes
Interviews were recorded and transcribed
Field notes and transcriptions were codified
The codified data was categorised
Each participant's data was constantly analysed (within-case analysis)
Cross-case analysis was continually developed
A case study of each participant was constructed

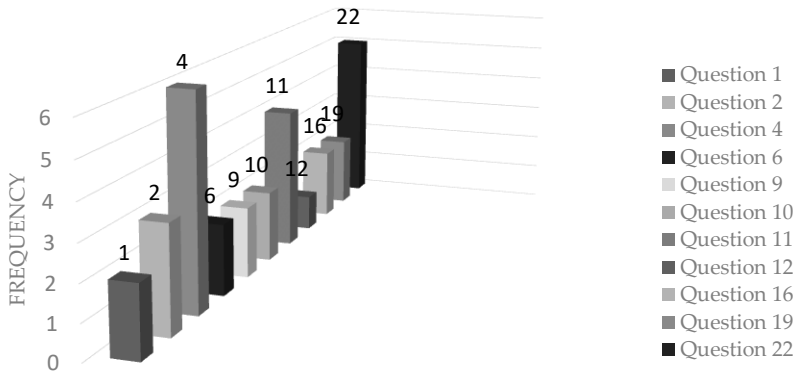
Table 7: Data analysis activities

6. Results and Discussion

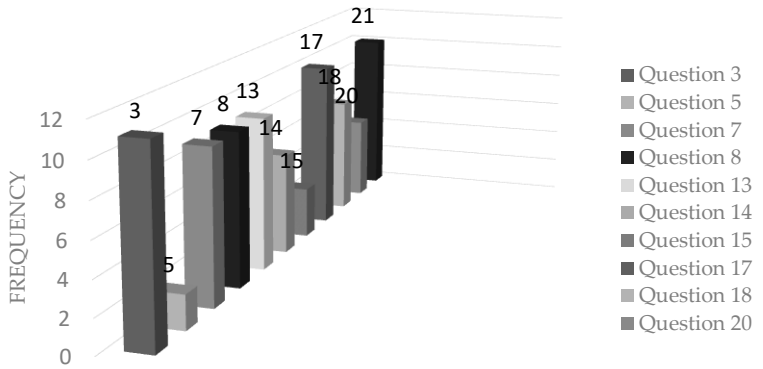
6.1 Approaches

The teacher-educators' approach was identified through their answers to a questionnaire adapted from Trigwell and Prosser (2004). The questionnaire, composed of 22 items, classify educators'

strategies and beliefs into two types: Approach type A that aims to transmit the content of the subject to the students and approach type E that intends to encourage students learning according to Postareff (2008) characteristics of teaching approaches. The information obtained through questionnaires is illustrated with graphs. The graphs show the educators' answers of each context: University of the centre of Mexico, university of the north of Mexico and university of Spain. In the university of the centre of Mexico, 12 out of 15 educators that composed the staff of the BA in ELT answered the questionnaires.



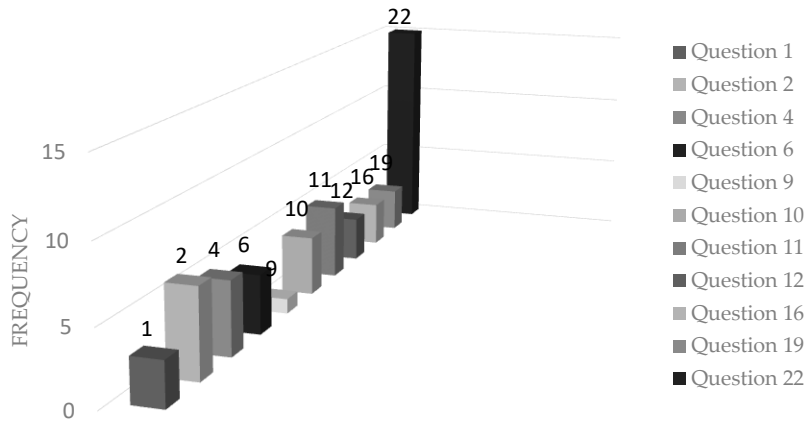
Graph 1: University of centre of Mexico' s type A results



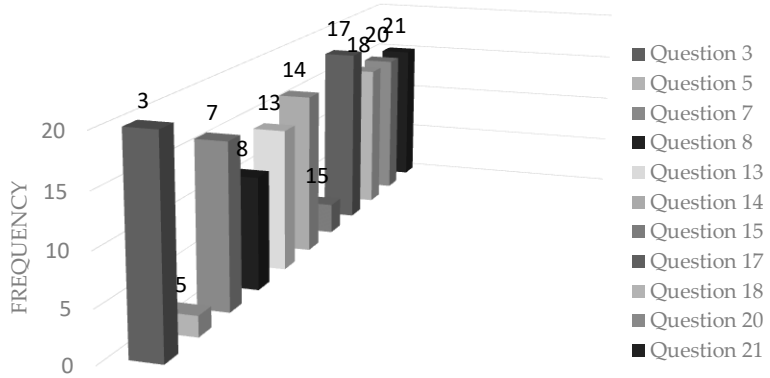
Graph 2: University of centre of Mexico's type E results

The graphs show that the teacher educators' approach tends to be type E, learning-centred approach, since most of the items that represent this approach got the highest score as the cases of items number 3, *In my interactions with students, I try to develop a conversation with them about the topics we are studying;* 17, *I see teaching as helping students develop new ways of thinking in this subject,* and 21, *Teaching in this subject should include helping students find their own learning resources,* that were chosen by nine to eleven educators, who state to apply this strategy and/or have these perspectives almost always on their classes. Items number 4 and 22 of the type A approach focused on content obtained higher scores than the rest of the items, but they only represent the teaching strategy and/or perspective of five educators.

In the case of the university of the north of Mexico, 22 out of 24 teacher educators that composed the personnel of the BA in ELT program answered the questionnaires.



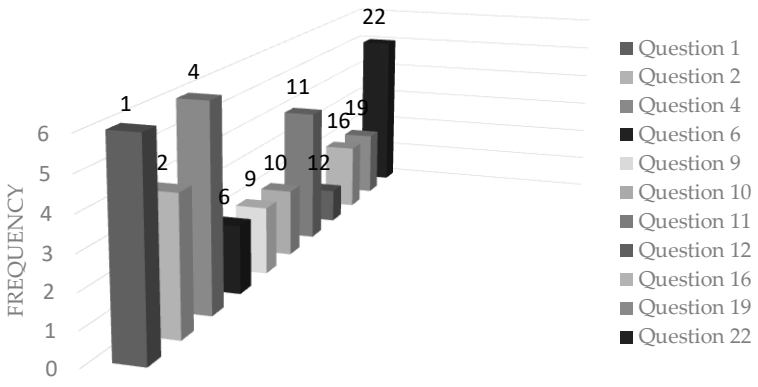
Graph 3: University of the north of Mexico's type A results



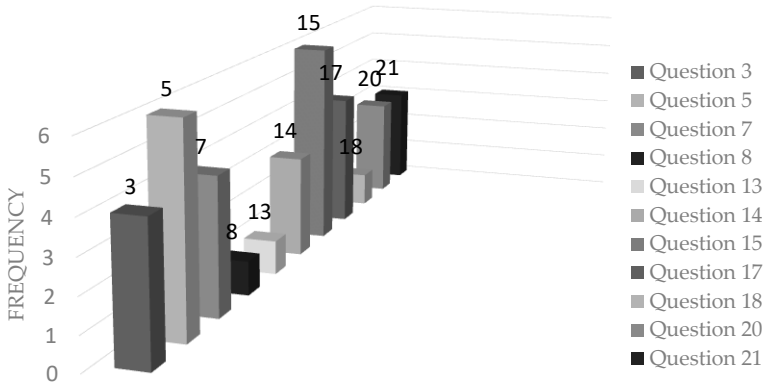
Graph 4: University of the north of Mexico' s type E results

The graphs illustrate a strong tendency to type E, learning-centred approach, from the teacher educators of this university. Fifteen to nineteen educators state to apply these strategies and/or have these perspectives on their classes. Item 3, *In my interactions with students, I try to develop a conversation with them about the topics we are studying;* as in the case of the other Mexican university, got the highest score. Only item number 22, *I present material to enable students to build up an information base in this subject,* of the type A approach focused on content was chosen by an important number of educators of the university of the north of Mexico.

In the case of the Spanish university, the staff of the specialization on the teaching of English of the BA in elementary school teaching program was composed by eight educators; six of them answered the questionnaire.



Graph 5: Spanish university's type A results



Graph 6: Spanish university's type E results

The graphs show a combination of teaching strategies of both approaches from the teacher educators in the Spanish university. Five items of each approach were selected by four to six of the teacher educators. Item 1, *I design my teaching with the assumption that most of the students have very little useful knowledge of the topics to be covered,* and item 4, *I felt it is important to present a lot of facts to students so that they know what they have to learn for this subjec*t, were selected by the six educators as a strategy they almost always use. The item number 22, *I present material to enable students to build up an information base in this subject* of the content-focused approach also got a very high score, as in the cases of the Mexican universities. The items number 5, *I set aside some teaching time so that the students can discuss, among themselves, the difficulties that they encounter studying this subject,* and number 15, *I feel a lot of teaching time in this subject should be used to question students' ideas,* of the learning- focused approach were also chosen by the six educators questioned of the Spanish university while only two to three educators from the Mexican universities state to follow this strategy and/or hold this belief.

It can be concluded that the teacher educators' answers from the Mexican universities show a tendency towards a learning-focused approach while teachers educators' answers from the Spanish university show a combination of teaching practices and beliefs of both approaches: a

learning/student-focused approach and an information transfer/teacher-focused approach. This shows the similarities in beliefs between teacher educators from Mexico and some differences from the teacher educators from Spain. Nevertheless, despite that these approaches have contrastive characteristics, it could be argued that the participant educators' actual practice is not black or white since it appears to follow these approaches with a variety of degree.

6.2 Teaching Practices

The teaching practices were selected because the teachers applied them in the classes observed and/or discussed them in the interviews intensively. Therefore, they could be considered characteristic practices of the classes of the teacher educators in the study. These teaching practices are presented in the following table:

SAM	LAURA	JOE	PAM	JOHN	SAMUEL	DARREL
U. of the centre of Mexico		U. of the north of Mexico		Spanish University		
Questioning /eliciting	Explaining / eliciting /use of articles	Presentations from students in teams (PPP)	Use of reading tasks	Questioning /eliciting	Presentations from students in teams (PPP)	Explaining
Presentations from the teacher with PPP and videos	Questioning /eliciting	Giving feedback	Questioning /eliciting	Debates	Questioning/ Eliciting	Having students to analyse teaching techniques
Team work: Study groups	Presentations from students in teams (PPP)	Presentations from the teacher (PPP)	Pair and team work	Presentations from students in teams	Peers and teacher feedback	Presentations from the teacher (PPP)
Mind maps	Brochures / Posters	Mind maps /Article summaries	Lesson planning			Presentations from students in teams

Table 8: Case study participants' practices

The table shows that presentations from the teacher are a teaching strategy used by most of the educators. The use of ICT using power point presentations, videos or even by the video-recording of the class is part of most of their classes. The table also shows that organising team work is a practice employed by all of them; whereas, debates are used by only one teacher. All of them encourage students to express their opinions and theoretical perspectives through teachers' questions, elicitation and /or by having students analyse a specific language or teaching aspect. Moreover, all seven educators have students manifest their learning through mind maps, article summaries, lesson planning, design of presentations and analysis of teaching aspects.

Similar teaching practices were observed in the three different contexts. For example, Sam, Laura, Pam, John and Samuel questioned and elicited from students intensively. These practices appear to be driven by the participants' shared beliefs, such as students should be active participants in their learning process, and the educators should be mediators and guides of this process. Nevertheless, these same practices could also be motivated by different beliefs that the educators hold; for example, Sam stated to believe in the need of making students think to reach their own conclusions; Laura in raising students' awareness of the use of teaching techniques; Pam in that students should know when, how, where and why each teaching strategy should be used; John in a dialogic way of

knowledge construction, and Samuel in helping students to become critical of their own and other's practices. Therefore, it could be argued that, considering the educators' intentions, they would mainly follow Approaches C (A teacher/student interaction strategy with the intention that students acquire the concepts of the discipline), D (A student-focused strategy aimed at students developing their conceptions) and E (A student-focused strategy aimed at students changing their conceptions) described by Trigwell and Posser (2004).

All seven participant teacher educators also use team work in their classes. Team work appears to be impelled by their reported beliefs that knowledge is constructed through interaction, and that students can learn from peers. Joe also said:

> I believe in collaborative work, in building learning… that´s the reason why I ask them to do a mind maps and share the information with others (CSS1-i2).

Additionally, Samuel and Darrell explained that they organised team work for students to provide each other feedback; Sam and Laura said to use this type of interaction for students to learn from peers because they considered that the teacher was not the only source of knowledge. Moreover, Pam stated to take advantage of team work not only because she believed that working with classmates made the workload lighter and easy but also because she wanted their students to think and do things by themselves. Therefore, a given teaching action appears to be driven by different beliefs at the same time. These beliefs represent characteristics of the Learning-focused approach to teaching.

All the participant educators stated to give their students input on the subject contents. For this purpose, they lecture, use presentations and/ or research articles on the different topics. For example, Sam, Joe, Samuel and Darrell used power point presentations, and Laura and Pam drew on research articles for this purpose. Sam said that she always gave some background information on the topic or had them read or search about it, and then they came up with a discussion on the topic. Sam designed power point presentations which also included videos of the linguistic aspects in use. Joe stated that he never asked students to do something that he had not taught or demonstrated, and that he sometimes took advantage of expert guests on the utilization of different teaching resources to explain and model them. Darrell clarified that they had theoretical and practical sessions; in the theoretical, he explained the topics of the course, and students mainly listened to his explanations without much interaction. Therefore, it could be argued that in these classes, Darrel follows a more content centred approach; whereas, in the practical sessions when students present their teaching projects on each topic, a more learning approach seems to be followed. Additionally, John, Samuel and Darrel said that they gave many tutorials to their students. For instance, Samuel explained:

> During my hours that I have assigned to tutorials, my office is always full; there's always somebody here. … if I have a group of 60 students in a class throughout one semester which lasts between February and June, I would see each of the students normally about three times, so that's about eighty interviews if we calculate them.

The participant educators' attitudes towards tutorial work seem to show a Learning-focused approach to teaching. However, in Darrel's observed tutorial session, most of the time was spent on explaining course content; aspect that characterized a Content-focused approach.

All seven teacher educators said to believe on the importance of linking theory with practice. They have students manifest their learning through design of presentations, mind maps, article summaries, lesson planning and analysis of teaching aspects. For instance, Sam said that she used authentic videos to give students good examples of what she explained to help them to relate something real to the theory. She added.

> Through videos, they can see that what they're learning it's not just theory, it's part of our real-life situations so that they connect theory with real life… to something meaningful, to something that really exists (CSA1-i1)

Joe explained that a component that he introduced five years ago, was to have students to conduct class observations in real contexts in which they were going to work so all the classes and teaching material that students design, considering the theoretical aspects studied in his course, were for a real group of students in a specific context. Samuel also explicated that every week his students gave a presentation where they did a teaching proposal for teaching either a primary group or a secondary group depending on the level that they were teaching based on the theory seen in his classes. Therefore, it can be argued that in the cases of Joe and Samuel, they do not only link theory to practice but also to practice considering specific contexts. Richards (2008) sustains that teacher learning is not a matter of translating theory into practice as the definition of language teacher education prescribes, but the idea of transforming the knowledge and practices into new theories for teaching and learning depending on the contexts candidates get involved in. Joe stated that one of his main objectives was that the student could not only produce new ways of thinking about the subject, but the idea to make them agents of change being able to transform the realities they were facing. For John and Samuel, encouraging students to be questioning is an important aspect of their classes because they think that they should help students to become critical thinkers. Samuel stated:

> I see this (teaching) as a great opportunity to help them become critical thinkers. I think that as educators in general, even before talking about language education, we need our students to become creative and critical thinkers … they need to be questioning (CSG2-i2)

Joe's, John's and Samuel's comments permit to argue that they try to follow Approach E, described by Trigwell and Posser (2004), as a student-focused strategy aimed at students changing their conceptions.

Overall, all the examples discussed above indicate that the educators' teaching practices are informed by their beliefs in a continuous way as research developed by Turner-Bisset (2001), Dunkim (2002), Andrews (2003) and Lemus (2014) have illustrated.

In general, the practices of the case study educators represent their beliefs; therefore, it could be said that the three higher education contexts facilitate the enactment of the educator's beliefs. Nevertheless, from observing the educators' teaching practices some discrepancies regarding their stated beliefs were identified. For instance, Darrel stated to believe that student should be active participants. However, he explained that, in theoretical sessions, when he lectured to the whole class, students were mainly listening to him. Another example of contradiction was identified between Joe's belief on students learning from peers and the fact that during students' presentations, he was the

only one that provided feedback to students without eliciting feedback from peers. A reason behind these contradictions could be the diverse types of beliefs that teachers hold. Peripheral beliefs are theoretically embraced whereas core beliefs are grounded in experience, aspect that makes the latter type of beliefs more influential (Phipps and Borg, 2009). Moreover, "peripheral beliefs are not necessarily implemented in practices" (Phipps and Borg, 2009, p. 388). Nevertheless, the study of the discrepancies between what educators do and their professed beliefs about teacher education would require longer research that entailed more time than the allocated for this research study to be clearly understood.

7. Conclusion

The present research identified that the teaching practices of the case study teacher educators were similar despite the differences of contexts, and they were mainly representative of the Learning-focused approach to teaching. Nevertheless, they showed that educators appeared to follow this approach with a variety of degree. It could be speculated that the similarity of educators' teaching practices in the three contexts could be caused by the influence of the British education experienced in Mexico through the program British Universities in Mexico that was developed in the 1990ies, and the Spanish Bilingual Education program that required that Spanish teachers spent a Summer in the United Kingdom in 2000s; aspect that required further investigation to be clarified.

Additionally, the case study illustrates that educators' teaching practices appear to be informed by their beliefs about the ends of language teacher education, their beliefs about what it means to be a language teacher, and their beliefs about how best to teach learners to become language teachers. These beliefs suggest, in general, a Learning-focused approach to teaching in the Mexican universities, and a combination of the Learning-focused approach and Content focused approach in the case of the educators of the Spanish university. Overall, it could be said that the teachers' beliefs inform every teaching practice they develop.

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