

Voices from the Classroom: Unveiling Teachers' Perspectives on Implementing the 2017 'Aprendizajes Clave Inglés' in Telesecundarias*

Voces desde el aula: perspectivas de los docentes acerca de la implementación del plan de estudios 'Aprendizajes Clave Inglés 2017' en el nivel de telesecundaria.

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ABSTRACT

English teaching and learning have become a fundamental need. However, many Mexican schools lack the necessary tools to carry them out. To know how teachers implement the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave', this research identified teachers' difficulties, as well as the techniques they use to fulfil their labour as 'telesecundaria' teachers of the English language. In that same line of thought, the opinions of nine teachers of the rural communities of the municipality of San Rafael, Veracruz, Mexico, were explored. To collect the appropriate information, it was necessary to survey and interview the participants, who revealed the little importance given to the teaching of English, the lack of interest of the students and the lack of preparation of the teachers. Finally, it was concluded that English learning is paramount for the context of this inquiry and for that reason, it is necessary to create an adequate syllabus according to the students' level, as well as training and providing teachers with the knowledge and suitable material necessary to offer students quality learning.

Keywords: *Aprendizajes Clave, English, rural communities, syllabus, telesecundaria teachers.*

RESUMEN

La enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés se han convertido en una necesidad fundamental. Sin embargo, muchas de las escuelas mexicanas carecen de las herramientas necesarias para llevarlas a cabo. Con el fin de conocer cómo los docentes implementan el programa educativo de inglés, Aprendizajes Clave, esta investigación identificó las dificultades que enfrentan los docentes, así como las técnicas que utilizan para cumplir con su labor como docentes de telesecundaria de inglés. Para ello, se consideró la opinión de nueve docentes de telesecundarias de algunas comunidades rurales del municipio de San Rafael, Veracruz, México. Para recolectar la información adecuada, fue necesario realizar encuestas y entrevistas que revelaron, entre otras cosas, la poca importancia que se le da a la enseñanza del inglés, la falta de interés de los alumnos y también la falta de preparación de los profesores. Finalmente, se concluyó que el aprendizaje del inglés es fundamental y por ello es necesario crear planes de estudio adecuados al nivel de los estudiantes, además de capacitar y dotar a los docentes de los conocimientos y materiales necesarios para ofrecer a los estudiantes un aprendizaje de calidad.

Palabras Clave: *Aprendizajes Clave, comunidades rurales, docentes de telesecundarias, inglés, programa educativo.*

THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE ENGLISH teaching is increasingly recognised as crucial in this day and age. Nonetheless, many schools in Mexico lack the necessary resources to teach English appropriately and effectively, this is particularly true in rural educational settings (Izquierdo et al., 2021; Sánchez, 2023).

In fact, in the Mexican agenda, different proposals for teaching English as a foreign language have been developed. This study focuses on exploring one of those proposals, the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave', which emerged in 2017, by exploring the voices of the teachers who implement it. This English syllabus demands the teacher to be a competent user of English, be related to his linguistic analysis, must understand the child's development, the necessities, interests and abilities, as well as the difficulties that students could face in the process of learning a new language (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2019). It also establishes that students must already be familiarized with the language and have previous knowledge that allows them to acquire the new topics and increase their English level during telesecundaria education. With the implementation of this English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave', it is expected that

...students develop skills, knowledge, attitudes and learning strategies to participate and interact in social practices of the language, oral and written, typical of different communicative and routine cultural contexts, habitual and known, with native and non-native speakers. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017, p.173)

The Syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave' establishes expected learning outcomes that need to be reached by students at the end of the telesecundaria level, which determine that they have to be able to read, to write, to improvise, to interpret, to describe and to communicate on a variety of topics of personal, cultural,

and everyday interest. Also, based on the reference framework created by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the students are expected to reach the B1 level in which they can “participate in social practices of the language that demand communicative interaction in various social contexts, develop tasks or actions that promote, among other things, the real use of English” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017 p.173).

However, the teaching of English goes beyond having a well-organized syllabus and good expectations, since external situations that affect the teaching and learning of English may arise. As it was mentioned above, the responsibility in students’ learning process is divided into students, parents, and teachers, but also the educational authorities and government play an important role to ensure the syllabus is being well implemented.

This qualitative inquiry attempts to explore teachers’ perspectives from rural or non-urban telesecundaria schools realities, in the municipality of San Rafael, Veracruz, Mexico, where the 2017 English syllabus ‘Aprendizajes Clave’ is implemented. The study particularly aims to identify the use of techniques to implement the syllabus effectively to understand the potential constraints that the participants face. To achieve the objective, the research set the following questions to be responded: *what are teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the syllabus? How do they implement it?*

According to Olleta (2013, pp. 28), “Rural schools are considered inferior to schools located in urban areas, due to their location and the supposed economic and social backwardness they suffer compared to big cities”. This fact is transcendent to be inquired from the voices of rural high school teachers’ point of view. It is also expected to have a voice about their reality — teachers’ academic profile, techniques, the materials they use to

teach and the difficulties they have faced when implementing the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave' —. English learning is vital for this setting and further alike, and it needs the development of an appropriate syllabus aligned with students' proficiency level and providing teachers with adequate training to ensure high quality education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is needed to clarify the main concepts to understand the telesecundaria teachers' current situation and some previous studies on the implementation of a syllabus to compare the different realities that have been faced at the telesecundaria level in the Southeast of Mexico.

The Mexican Educational System

It is a set of principles, institutions, resources and technologies which attempts to provide educational services to the Mexican population. It is governed by the national legal framework related to education, reflected on the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States in its articles 3° and 4°; and in the Ley General de Educación (Ley General de Educación, 1993; Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917, arts. 3-4). It has been established by the Mexican Constitution of 1917 and since that time has undergone several changes.

As reported by Pacheco et al. (2018), the Mexican Educational System is composed of pupils, teachers, educational authorities, educational plans, programmes, methods, and materials, as well as State educational institutions, of its decentralized agencies and those private institutions authorized to conduct studies. It is also divided into different stages of education: basic, upper telesecundaria education, and higher education. Basic education covers school education for children from three to fifteen

years of age and is provided in 12 grades. The education levels that conform to the basic education are: pre-school, primary, and telesecundaria which are taught over a period of 3 years for preschool, 6 years for primary school, and 3 years for telesecundaria school. This inquiry focuses on telesecundaria education.

In Mexico, telesecundaria education has been compulsory since 1993 and it is generally aimed for those among the ages from 12 to 15. As reported by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (2017, pp. 9-10) the main purpose of the telesecundaria school is to contribute to the development of students' capabilities after primary school since, the contents are based on the knowledge, skills and values that allow students to continue their learning with a high degree of independence, inside or outside the school.

To meet demand and expand coverage in localities particularly in small, usually rural and marginalized populations, some specific modalities have been established. As a result, telesecundaria, indigenous telesecundaria school, telesecundaria for working people, the community and community indigenous, the indigenous telesecundaria, among others, subsist (Ducoing, 2018). The telesecundaria modality was created to new audiovisual techniques for high school and thus, bringing useful knowledge, dosed and pedagogically systematized, to all Mexican homes. In addition, it was thought to give workers and housewives the opportunity to follow the courses from home, among others. Thus, with the firm hope of forging better prospects for the young generations, the state of Tlaxcala negotiated with the Mexican government the creation of the first national telesecundaria (Jimenez et al., 2010).

Rural education in Mexico

The rural schools are far from cities allowing access to education for the children who live in communities where agricultural activities are carried out. The types of service with the greatest

presence in areas of high and very high marginalization are indigenous and community, but the difference lies in the fact that these types of schools are the ones with the lowest number of students on average (Inafed, 2017).

Gameren and Hinojosa (n. d.) mention, “Individuals in rural areas have less access to professional education, and in general benefit less from the education, despite the efforts that are made through different institutions” (Gameren & Hinojosa, n. d., p. 13). The teacher must develop the intellectual capacities of their students so that they can participate socially in their community, region or country (UNESCO, 2021), but although teachers strive to perform their teaching tasks daily with quality, these are limited.

To unify the country culturally, José Vasconcelos, Mexico’s Secretary of Education in the 1920’s, planned and structured educational policies in Mexico in an attempt to promote national unity and cultural identity through education. He believed that by providing educational opportunities to rural communities, a broader national culture could be integrated. However, just as the schools of the big cities adapted to programs, methodology, school activities, and even to the professional training of teachers, rural schools had to adapt to the characteristics of the place where they were established (Inafed, 2017). That is why the syllabus of a rural school and an urban school should not be the same, since the students come from different backgrounds. Despite the fact that almost 7 million students from all states of the country attend schools located in rural areas, the SEP has created only one syllabus for both kinds of schools (Juárez, 2016).

Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave para la Educación Integral

In July 2016, the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Public Education Office) in Mexico presented a proposal to update the

Educational Model consisting of three documents. La Carta sobre los Fines de la Educación in the 21st Century, in which it details the kind of Mexican men and women are seeking to train with the Educational Model. The 2016 Educational Model explains the way in which it is proposed to articulate the components of the system to reach the maximum learning achievement of all girls, boys and young people. And finally, the Propuesta Curricular para la Educación Obligatoria 2016 contains a curricular approach for basic and upper telesecundaria education and covers both educational content and pedagogical principles.

The recommendations made in the consultation served as the basis for the preparation of the final version of *The plan and the study programs for basic education*.

The determination of the Plan y programas de estudio para la educación básica corresponds to the Ministry of Public Education, as established by the LGE in its articles 120, section I, and 48. Its character is obligatory and of national application. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017, p. 15)

On the other hand, the State must guarantee access to school for all children and young people and ensure that the education they receive provides them with meaningful, relevant and useful learning and knowledge for life, regardless of their socioeconomic background, ethnic origin or gender.

It is expected that upon graduation from compulsory education, the student can effectively develop language and communication, mathematical thinking, exploration and understanding of the natural and social world, critical thinking and problem solving, socio-emotional skills and project of life, collaboration and teamwork, coexistence and citizenship, appreciation and artistic expression, attention to the body and health, care of the environment as well as digital skills (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

For this inquiry, a qualitative approach was selected due to the fact that the focus of this study was to discover the teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave'. In other words, this study attempted to analyze the participants' voices and report detailed points of view in a natural setting. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a developing model that occurs in a natural environment. By means of this approach, it was expected to know their reality experienced in a rural telesecundaria school when implementing the Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave, English.

An exploratory case study tradition was adopted (Yin, 2009) because the case study approach meets the characteristics and the objective of this inquiry. Creswell defines a case study as a problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a "case" or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, as cited in VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007, p. 81).

Firstly, teachers represent the group involved in a case. Secondly, the case is represented by the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave'. Focusing on the syllabus implementation, teachers' perceptions and opinions and the difficulties observed in a situation as well as how they react and solve the problems it represents. Finally, the specific context is the rural public telesecundaria schools where the problem is developed.

The methods involved in the data collection process included semi-structured interviews and a survey. To collect relevant and appropriate information and achieve the general objective of this research, it was necessary to choose rural teachers who implemented the Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave. Thus, for the present investigation, the participants are nine (referred to as T1 to T9 in the findings) teachers of the institutions located in

Cementeras, El pital, Tepetates, Tres Encinos, and El Guayabal, San Rafael, Veracruz, Mexico.

Participants: nine cases

Teacher number one is 52 years old. She is from Maria de la Torre, a town in the municipality of Martinez de la Torre near San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 30 years, she works in the telesecundaria Miguel Aleman Valdes in the town of Cementeras. Teacher number two is 43 years old. She is from Potrero Nuevo, San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 18 years, she also works in the telesecundaria Miguel Aleman Valdes in the town of Cementeras. Teacher number three is 43 years old. He is from Martínez de la Torre the municipality next to San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 20 years, he works in the telesecundaria Ernesto Toral Lombard in the town of Tres Encinos. Teacher number four is 41 years old. She is from Jicaltepec, Nautla. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 17 years, she works in the telesecundaria Ignacio de la llave in the town of El Guayabal. Teacher number five is 39 years old. She is from Ignacio Zaragoza (La Poza), San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 16 years, she also works in the telesecundaria Ignacio de la llave in the town of El Guayabal. Teacher number six is 42 years old. She is from Paso Largo, San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 20 years, she works in the telesecundaria Justo Sierra in the town of El Pital. Teacher number seven is 45 years old. He has a telesecundaria teaching experience of 22 years, and he works in the telesecundaria Justo Sierra in the town of El Pital. Teacher number eight is 50 years old. She is from Martínez de la Torre. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 15 years, she works in the telesecundaria Profr. Artemio Diaz Reyes in the town of Tepetates. Teacher number nine is 48 years old. He is from

the municipality of Misantla, Veracruz. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 20 years, he works in the telesecundaria Profr. Artemio Diaz Reyes in the town of Tepetates.

Procedure for data collection

The process of data collection began in May 2023. I was authorized to apply the necessary investigation instruments by the City Hall of San Rafael with a letter of introduction. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and polls administered to a group of 9 telesecundaria teachers.

The data were analyzed by employing the thematic analysis method in order to find out the participants' views, opinions, experiences, or values from a set of qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that it is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set. This method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.

For conducting this kind of analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide: familiarization with the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. For this inquiry when all the data was concentrated, similarities and differences in the teachers' answers were identified. The patterns in the answers were analyzed and thus organized into five categories which allowed the researcher to describe and examine the data.

FINDINGS

The importance of English language in the classroom

This first category shows the missimportance that is given to the English language inside these telesecundaria schools. On the

one hand, most participants mention that just two hours and a half per week are destined to teach English. Any language is acquired and perfected through practice. Bruner (1960) asserts that what determines the level of intellectual development is the degree to which the child has received adequate instruction along with practice or experience. However, in rural areas there seems not to be sufficient practice as some interviewees mentioned.

...pero como nada más aprenden lo que ven aquí en la escuela... Los chicos no lo hablan, en el pueblo no hablan inglés. Es normal, ¿no? Porque no lo practican en casa... (T8)

Vygotsky (as cited in Cameron, 2001, p. 38) argued that “when we interact, we use words to try to capture our own and other people's sense, our own particular contextual understanding and connotations for events and ideas”. In this case, it could be understood that lack of practice outside the classroom could stop language development. For this reason, the purpose of the curriculum cannot be carried out in these rural telesecundarias since in these rural areas students do not put into practice what they have learned in school.

On the other hand, the Educational Model in Mexico intends that basic and upper telesecundaria education contribute to train people who have the motivation and ability to achieve their personal, work and family development (UNAM, 2016). Additionally, according to Ortiz (as cited in Fernández, n. d.), knowledge of English is a mandatory requirement to work in international institutions, even in national ones. This means that the English subject plays an important role in education.

However, according to the data obtained from the survey, 78% of the participants agree that the subject of English does not receive the same importance as the other subjects. One of

the participants mentioned that it is essential that this subject receives the importance it deserves.

El inglés no ha sido una de las prioridades... considero que se debe de tratar de subsanar para que el inglés no sea una materia de relleno, sino que se le dé la importancia que realmente tiene y el chico pueda salir con los aprendizajes esperados que se están estableciendo... (T7)

This reveals that is not prior in these telesecundarias however, if the English subject received the adequate importance, if it was taught and practiced at home correctly, the students could achieve the results that the syllabus expects.

English teaching experience

With this information it was possible to know rural telesecundaria teachers' realities. To better clarify and present the most relevant information collected, the data were divided into three subcategories.

Teachers' knowledge of the English language

Some interviewees commented they have an essential English level to transmit the knowledge to their students and despite not having an advanced level, they think their basic level is adequate to teach their students. They expressed that even if they do not know any topic, it is their duty to be prepared. One of the participants said that taking English courses had allowed him to feel prepared for this challenge.

Siempre me ha gustado el inglés. No me siento con un nivel medio, o avanzado, pero lo básico e indispensable, sí. (T2)

...yo siento que mi nivel de inglés, si es apto para poder enseñar a los niños. ...Aparte del inglés que llevé en mis escuelas particulares, los complementé con cursos de Harmon Hall. (T4)

...Si el maestro no sabe debe buscar la manera de aprender para poder transmitir a los alumnos, si no, no tendría caso. Es nuestra labor. (T8)

These participants think telesecundaria teachers have to be capable of guiding their students to acquire the necessary knowledge, even with a basic level of English. Teachers have to be professional mediators and construct environments that help to achieve the expected learnings in the students (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Those points of view are not shared by all teachers. Due to the fact that telesecundaria teachers are not specialized in every area they teach, some participants think they do not have the necessary skills to develop an adequate English class. Even so, they try to develop their classes as well as they can.

...no es nuestra especialidad, entonces el nivel no es tan adecuado, tú tienes que dominar una materia para poderla dar, y nosotros la llevamos, pero no la dominamos. (T9)

En telesecundarias tú sabes que damos todas las materias, por ejemplo, yo, mi especialidad es en ciencias sociales, o sea, nada que ver. Entonces doy a lo que Dios me da a entender... (T1)

In the eighth fraction of the article 8 of the Ley general del servicio profesional docente (2018), it is attributed to the Local Educational Authorities to “offer free, suitable, relevant, and consistent programs and courses with the levels of performance that are desired to be achieved, for continuous training. Updating of knowledge and professional development of Teaching Staff and Personnel with Management or Supervision Functions who are in service”.

One of the participants mentioned that unfortunately telesecundaria teachers do not receive the necessary English training: “...al maestro de telesecundaria le falta mayor preparación. Le

faltan opciones reales de formación en este idioma para crecer de manera más eficaz y práctica esta materia” (T7).

Finally, to achieve the English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave's purpose, the teacher must understand the needs, interests, abilities and difficulties the student may present. In addition, s/he must master the language so that s/he can show students, among other things, the strategies that a native speaker uses in social practice (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). Analyzing all these previous teacher's comments and the syllabus Aprendizajes Clave it could be understood that telesecundaria teachers just have a basic English level and although they try to fulfill their role, it is necessary for them to acquire more preparation to master this language as it is required in the syllabus.

Reasons to teach the English language

Most of the participants agree that their purpose to teach English is that their students acquire the expected knowledge or at least the basic knowledge to be ready for the high school, since telesecundaria is the last stage of basic education. Even when they do not have the adequate material and for them the basic English knowledge is essential for passing to the next grade or level.

Yo misma no me siento motivada porque no tengo libro.

Pero, que lleven un conocimiento básico, que aprendan lo básico para que pasen al siguiente grado. (T1)

Que los chicos aprendan porque deben estar preparados para el siguiente nivel... la preparatoria, su universidad. (T8)

Teachers expect their students to finish telesecundaria with an English level (basic) that allows them to improve and increase it in high school. It means providing students with the basic English knowledge to be ready for the English level that is taught in high school: “...que por lo menos los alumnos

lleguen a la preparatoria con un 20, 30, 40 por ciento manejando el inglés” (T₃).

Another participant mentioned that it is essential for students to have strong language bases to be able to develop and increase their English knowledge. For that reason, her principal objective is to lay those groundworks in her students. She exemplified what the basics means for them.

Mi objetivo principal es que sepan lo básico, los pronombres, los adjetivos posesivos, números, el abecedario... lo basiquito de inglés, que estén sentadas esas bases en ellos que es la parte esencial para que ellos continúen desarrollando esos aprendizajes pero ya teniendo como base lo básico. (T₄)

“The purpose of the second cycle (3rd and 4th grade of primary school) is for students to interact in immediate and familiar communication situations, through expressions used in habitual contexts” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017, p. 167). Taking into account the previous mentioned as well as teachers’ opinions, it could be understood that teachers pretend to teach their students at a different level than the syllabus marks telesecundaria students must have. Since teachers start from a basic knowledge as if they were in primary school, according to the syllabus, telesecundaria students must be able to converse in various situations with a neutral register. That is, they should be able to describe experiences, events, desires, and aspirations, as well as briefly justify their opinions or explain their plans (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Design of English classes

It is important that teachers previously plan their classes to transmit the correct knowledge to their students. Moreover, the students can notice when a teacher prepares a class and when s/

he does not: “Si yo me preparo logro transmitir en mis alumnos el interés. Sí, lo reconozco” (T1).

To elaborate a didactic plan involves analyzing and organizing the educational contents, determining the objectives, intentions, and educational purposes to be achieved; in addition to establishing the sequence of activities in time and space (Ascencio, 2016).

Criteria for the didactic planning design

According to the English syllabus Aprendizajes Clave, the teacher must plan tasks or activities that preserve the social functions of language practices and enable the distribution, sequencing, and articulation of program content, as well as multiple opportunities to participate in them (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

One of the criteria that a teacher must take into account before planning a class is the students' previous knowledge. Tanner and Tanner (as cited in Keyes, 1997) mention that the function of the teacher was to impart knowledge by utilizing previous learning, and to accomplish this it was necessary for the teacher to come to know the student's previous knowledge or learning and experiences.

Some teachers answered that the criteria they consider to plan their English classes are the previous knowledge their students have.

Conocimiento previo de los alumnos. (T9)

Los conocimientos previos que tengan los alumnos... (T3)

Los aprendizajes básicos de mis alumnos porque no puedo hacer una clase si ellos no conocen lo básico, y de ahí parto. (T6)

The didactic plans respond to the different needs of the students, the pedagogical styles of the teachers and the particularities of the educational organization. Other relevant criteria

mentioned by the participants were the expected learnings, the purposes, the objectives and the evaluation.

El tema que se va a ver, los aprendizajes esperados, el propósito, las acciones, las estrategias con las que las va a abordar, la evaluación... (T4)

Propósitos, objetivos, el enfoque del programa, los recursos con los que uno... tiene a la mano, y los aspectos que se van a evaluar... (T7)

According to the Secretaría de Educación Pública (2017), the expected learning by the syllabus is that telesecundaria students can identify and understand the general meaning and main ideas of various oral and written texts that are simple, brief, clear, and in standard language when they deal with familiar issues (study, work, free time, etc.). On the other hand, the evaluation should consider among other things, the performance of the student during the development of the activities, the evidence of learning achievement, and also the levels of mastery and proficiency.

Resources for teaching

Materials or teaching resources are means or instruments that favor the teaching and learning process. Nerici (as cited in Madrid, 2001) mentions that the didactic material replaces reality and represents it in a way that facilitates its objectification. On the one hand, these participants mentioned the resources they have to teach English are mostly technological resources.

varias opciones, tenemos un televisor como parte del sistema telesecundaria, manejamos algunos videos que la propia modalidad nos da. Tenemos proyectores para trabajar con audio y video, diapositivas, aplicaciones que también se le sugiere al alumno, que pueden descargar y tenerlas en su móvil. Trabajamos con cuadernillos, trabajamos con libros digitales. (T7)

This means that telesecundaria teachers in San Rafael, Veracruz are updating their teachings and making use of technology. Despite the rural area in which they are teaching and the lack of internet in some of these schools, they try to facilitate in their students the learning process. It is important to remember that since 1968, the Mexican government has used television to bring telesecundaria education to hard-to-reach rural areas. Now, technological development has allowed the diversification of teaching.

Hoy, con el desarrollo de todas estas herramientas digitales que se han utilizado con fines educativos, también nos han permitido variar o diversificar, las estrategias y formas de trabajo, entre ellas pues trabajar con libros digitales. (T7)

“The effective use of digital learning tools in classrooms can increase student engagement, help teachers improve their lesson plans, and facilitate personalized learning” (American University, 2020). Other participants mentioned that apart from the book that the SEP gives them and the use of technology, they look for or prepare extra material that allows them to complement the topics and reinforce their students' knowledge.

Vamos elaborando con los alumnos algunas láminas, y las tenemos a la vista, mandamos a hacer unas lonas con algunas palabras básicas, por ejemplo, las question words, los pronombres... (T1)

Yo uso videos, libros, material didáctico que yo personalmente hago o compro... (T6)

Usamos el libro, juegos interactivos, material que adquirimos de manera extra nosotros, cuadernillos... (T9)

These are some realities that the participants share with each other. Telesecundaria teachers in San Rafael are interested in their students acquiring basic knowledge of English. That is why

they not only use the resources offered by the SEP, but also rely on technology to offer their students the information they need to learn. In addition, they personally prepare support materials that facilitate learning in their students.

Activities within the classroom

The English syllabus Aprendizajes Clave expects that telesecundaria students will be able to read classic tales, literary essays, and comics, paraphrase information, participate in conversations, and write instructions, to name a few (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). However, in San Rafael, the telesecundaria teachers' reality is a little bit different practicing these four skills: "En la escucha les pongo el video y a veces van ellos repitiendo. La lectura no se da en mi salón de clases porque si no la sé pronunciar yo, ¿Para qué se las enseño?" (T1).

This participant mentioned that due to her lack of oral and reading skills, she cannot practice reading in her classroom. This is really important "because reading offers a productive approach to improving language-vocabulary and word power" (Manaj, 2015, p. 30).

There are also other teachers who try to practice reading and writing skills.

Utilizo el diccionario para la traducción y la escritura, tratamos de hacer las actividades prácticas, para que se desarrolle lo oral, lo básico nada más, interactuar con ellos. Los diálogos que vienen ahí en el libro, primero lo leo yo, y después ellos lo practican. Al finalizar la sección viene un apartado donde ellos tienen que escribir un texto similar al ejercicio uno que en ocasiones es un diálogo o un texto... entonces ellos tienen que crear uno propio teniendo como base el primero. (T4)

Normalmente el plan trae un escrito, una historia y ellos la van traduciendo, la vamos traduciendo juntos, palabra que no sepamos ya la buscamos en el diccionario, o la bajamos de

internet y ahí checamos la pronunciación correcta... Hacen textos describiendo lugares, se describen a ellos. (T₃)

Most teachers use translation as a learning strategy. For them it is necessary to translate the text since the students still cannot understand texts in English. According to what the participants mentioned, it can be deduced that it is not possible for them to carry out all the activities indicated in the syllabus.

Students' motivation

It is important to highlight that the learning process of any language depends on different factors, one of them is the motivation for learning. It means that every learner may have a clear goal. According to what teachers say, the students who like English make a greater effort in understanding the contents within the classroom. It can be said they are motivated to learn, because English represents a challenge for them, it is a new language, so they want to face this challenge and also acquire the necessary skills that this subject demands.

A ellos les gusta, les llama la atención aprender otro idioma, creo que la respuesta ha sido positiva y esperamos que así continúe. (T₇)

La mayoría están interesados. El grupo que tengo es muy bueno, es muy listo en todo. Para ellos todos los retos los motivan. (T₂)

Si les gusta mucho, a veces platicamos con los maestros que les gusta más el inglés que el español porque es algo nuevo. (T₈)

However, other teachers said that some students think English is boring and a difficult subject and show interest just because it is part of the curriculum and they may need it to graduate from telesecundaria school. Consequently, the learning process is more difficult for them because they do not have the desire to learn English.

Hay apatía por parte de algunos alumnos, porque hay alumnos que, si les gusta, y se les da fácil, pero al alumno que se le complica, dice que no le gusta, por lo mismo de que se le complica. (T₂)

También hay a quien si le gusta y si se esmera en poner atención y hay quien de plano dice no, a mí no me gusta. (T₅)

It is argued by Dörnyei & Honggang (as cited in Fithri, 2018) that motivation gives the essential impetus to initiate learning a second or foreign language and later to sustain the long learning process. That means constructing students' motivation in English classes is an important aspect because it helps students to persist with the learning process. Contrary to those students who are not interested in learning English because they think it is a difficult subject, the learning process will be more difficult. When they make these assumptions, their learning process is affected because they do not have a reason that encourages them to continue learning English.

Playful classes

Making playful classes is a good strategy to capture the student's attention, mainly those for whom learning a foreign language represents a challenge. Teachers realized that preparing dynamic classes and meaningful activities contributes to a lighter and more effective learning environment. They said that the use of videos, audio, and music is a useful tool to attract the attention of students and thus keep their interest in the classroom, as well as keep them motivated to learn English.

...diseñando actividades dinámicas, usando estrategias diversas, contextualizadas y de interés del muchacho. Y aquí hablemos también de que aprovechamos el interés genuino del alumno por ejemplo en poner música en inglés es un recurso que también utilizamos, y por ahí tratamos de motivarlos

escuchando una canción interpretada en inglés, que a ellos les agrade y partir de eso para promover la motivación. (T7)

... iniciamos con una actividad para llamar la atención pues no falla una canción, la música es un lenguaje universal... Pues todos los alumnos quieren saber. Normalmente yo ocupo música en inglés, porque eso llama la atención del alumno. También te tienes que valer de otros recursos, videos, música o lo mejor una película. Y así vas abordando poco a poco. (T3)

The opinions of the previous teacher coincide with what Ritsumeikan (2011, as cited in Ningsih, 2019, p. 3) states that songs and music play an important role in the development of children who learn a second language. The use of music within the classroom increases the motivation of the students because it is an activity that they enjoy. This method brings some benefits to the learning process as increasing students' motivation and also their imagination, creativity, and eagerness to learn and succeed.

Also, the use of videos and interactive activities have been useful strategies in the teaching process. The use of other sources of information as the Youtube platform to share with students different videos in English and other more up-to-date materials to attract the attention of students.

Cuando ponemos videos y estamos trabajando de manera interactiva... haciendo actividades, es interesante para ellos, pero cuando les pongo analizar un texto con palabras complejas, se aburren. Es lógico, entonces si me tengo que ir más como si fueran en kínder, relacionar imágenes, relacionar palabras para que ellos vayan socializando todo eso. También uso otros tipos de videos, ya no nada más los que me marca la SEP sino que uso videos en Youtube, en plataformas que son más atractivos para los chicos. Y el material que implemento como tarjetas, loterías... echa uno a volar la imaginación. (T6)

In the learning process, teachers should be aware of the significance of motivation in learners' language learning, and through some changes, they can help learners increase their motivation (Alizadeh, 2016). The participants mentioned that they try to facilitate the learning process for students who do not like English, using the appropriate methodologies. The use of music, videos, and didactic materials to make the class entertaining increases the students' motivation as well as the interest in the acquisition of this knowledge.

Also, the English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave establishes that teachers have to choose or develop printed and multimedia resources that guarantee permanent contact with different models and styles of the use of English (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary that teachers adapt the contents and use the necessary methods to help students, who do not like English, to become more interested and motivated to learn it.

Student future in the rural area

According to what teachers said some of the students feel unmotivated because the possibilities of access to professional education are very low in rural areas. Therefore, some of the students are not interested in learning English because they consider that learning a second language may not be essential in their academic training or in their work life; and the probabilities of working in the agricultural activities of the community are higher than concluding a college degree: "Hay niños que dicen -¿Y a mí para que me va a servir el inglés, si me voy a terminar yendo a cortar plátano? Qué es lo que se da por ejemplo en la región de aquí" (T6).

Other students show disinterest in learning English because of the poor opportunities for development in rural areas: "Si, algunas veces muestran desinterés, dicen '¿Yo para que lo necesito?'

Tienen todavía la idea de que al estar en una zona rural no van a necesitar el idioma” (T9).

The English language is a means of linguistic communication that is widely used in a global context; becoming an indispensable tool for human talent in terms of the economic, technological, and scientific development of a nation (Harmer, 2007, as cited in Gil, 2021, p.17).

However, rural areas in Mexico are excluded by society. They often face several difficulties, as the inadequate delivery of public services, poor infrastructure and housing conditions, and fewer economic and educational opportunities (Gertler et al., 2022). Therefore, these problems cause some students in the rural communities of San Rafael, to lose the interest and motivation in the acquisition of a second language since in a rural community it is commonly considered that people, especially young people who, for family or work reasons are directly linked to the agricultural world so English language learning is not considered to provide a benefit in the countryside or in the agricultural work (Caputo, as cited in Márquez, 2014, p.3).

In this sense, the role of the teacher is very important because having close contact with students should raise awareness and encourage them to learn a second language to have better opportunities for development in the future and not only to pass the telesecundaria education. Gutiérrez & Criollo (cited in Gil, 2021, p.17) state that learning a second language represents many advantages, including mental flexibility, the development of cognitive functions and strategies for problem solving, communicative skills, and openness to the vision of new cultures.

Rural context and educational program

This category is divided into two subcategories where teachers' realities, in the implementation of the Syllabus in this rural context, are present in detail.

This first section shows the teachers' disagreement with the textbook proposed by the Syllabus 2017. They said, the content level of textbooks is not consistent with the realities of the students. They commented that most students had never had English classes before high school. Therefore, students have a basic level or any knowledge of the language, which makes the process of teaching English difficult as teachers cannot begin with what is stipulated in the textbook, but they should start from a basic level by implementing their own materials or adapting the contents of the textbook.

No me gusta para nada el libro, tiene un nivel muy avanzado para el nivel que tienen mis alumnos. (T1)

Vienen textos muy complejos, y pues tengo primero que interpretarlos bien yo para poderlos explicar, los temas si vienen más complejos, como si el niño ya dominará el inglés y no lo domina, el niño viene en ceros. (T6)

Nuestros alumnos no manejan el nivel que traen los libros que propuso este modelo educativo 2017. Aunque nos proponen un libro de texto, no lo podemos implementar y si alguien lo implementa, yo considero que sería de manera no aplicable, no consiguiendo resultados, o no adaptándose a las características y necesidades del grupo. Porque si nosotros aplicamos una evaluación diagnóstica en inglés, tenemos que recurrir forzosamente a clases básicas. (T7)

As mentioned above, teachers require different materials to develop optimal English classes. One of the main tools for teachers, and often the only one available, is the textbook provided

by the SEP. The implementation of the English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave requires the availability of quality, diverse and relevant educational materials. In general, this implies the timely and sufficient delivery of free and updated textbooks aligned with curricular purposes at all levels and modalities (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Unfortunately, the reality is different since textbooks used in public schools for teaching English do not meet the necessary requirements. Pamplon and Ramírez (2018), affirm that textbooks present multiple problems, as low quality, unequal distribution, the equation of characteristics and levels of children, and insufficient consistency with the formal curriculum or with the theoretical approach on which they should be based.

The telesecundaria school as a source to learn English

In this part, the telesecundaria teachers' said the local primary schools and preschools do not include English in the curriculum as the Aprendizajes Clave 2017 requires. The first contact with the English language of telesecundaria students is at this educational level and not in preschool. That is why their students have no clear knowledge of the English language nor the basics of the subject when they enter telesecundaria school. They expressed that, if the students see the basics of English from preschool, they would be able to achieve the objectives of the program.

En primaria, los alumnos tienen que tener el nivel básico de inglés, y entonces dan por hecho que los alumnos de secundaria ya vienen con ese nivel básico de inglés, y aquí nos están mandando un libro con un nivel de mucho avance para ellos. Audios en inglés, cuando el alumno apenas aquí en la secundaria comienza a conocer por primera vez el

inglés. Las primarias de aquí alrededor no enseñan ni lo básico, ni colores, ni números, nada. Ese es el detalle. (T3)

The Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave Inglés establishes that the English subject for the initial grades of basic education (preschool and primary school) has the purpose to promote students' familiarity and contact with English as a foreign language (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). In this way, when they enter telesecundaria school, they will know the basics of English, and during the course of telesecundaria education, they will only consolidate a basic English proficiency and thus be able to actively participate in communicative situations that require the conventional use of the language.

Teachers also said it is important to take into account their environment and be realistic with the situation they face in rural communities since if they do not have the right materials, and the students' knowledge is not adequate for the level, they will not be able to achieve the goals that the plans and programs establish.

Adaptation of teaching materials and strategies

In this part teachers shared how they face the inadequacy level of the textbook, and the lack of English knowledge of the students when they enter telesecundaria school. The participants said that they have to adapt the strategies, not at the level expected but at a lower level according to the students' English knowledge. Teachers said that the textbook is difficult to understand even for them. That is why they have had to use other teaching techniques and didactic materials to achieve a basic understanding of English in the student.

No puedo hacer una clase si ellos no conocen lo básico, y de ahí parto. Me cuesta trabajo, porque no voy con el libro,

tengo que ir adaptando. Empezar a trabajar desde cero por eso es que me cuesta trabajo tomar el libro 2017, entenderlo. Tengo que ir a lo que ya tengo atrasado para que puedan empezar a entender e irlo adaptando o acoplando. (T6)

Participant number seven and participant number nine commented that they have to adapt the activities within the classroom because they are not adequate for the English level of the students. Teachers also commented that they have to be prepared for the new plans that may be implemented in the future to continue adapting the materials and techniques and also help the students to learn the basics of English.

Tenemos que adaptar los libros a los nuevos planes y con los conocimientos que tiene el niño. Aquí el detalle es que para tener excelencia pues tenemos que tener todas las herramientas y si tú te vas a un plan y tus libros son de otro plan pues no va a haber excelencia. Tenemos que adecuarnos, como ahorita en la actualidad que vienen otros nuevos planes pero los libros van a seguir siendo los mismos, te tienes que adecuar. (T9)

In teaching English, teachers play a central role in the success of the language proficiency expected in the students. The participants, being telesecundaria teachers, showed a commitment to the students' learning. Even though the difficulties they have to face in the implementation of the Syllabus, they make an effort to find the necessary resources for students to learn.

According to the Syllabus, Aprendizajes Clave Inglés, teachers must consider the degree of complexity of language products based on the level of proficiency of their students, so that these products are both feasible and challenging

(SEP, 2017). In this case, teachers have been aware of the importance of complying with this statement. The fact they have to adapt the techniques and the material to achieve a better English understanding in the students and also by considering the realities of their teaching conditions and the impossibility of implementing the Syllabus in telesecundaria as is expected, participants are being competent professionals and are showing commitment with their labor.

Proposals to improve the English teaching in rural telesecundarias

According to the participating telesecundarias' teachers, it is important that the government is interested in the reality of the majority of telesecundarias. In other words, first, to improve the teaching of English in rural telesecundarias, a syllabus designed for the actual level of the students should be created. Second, the government must provide teachers with useful teaching materials for the development of interactive and attractive classes for students. And thirdly, teachers have to be trained with refresher courses available to them and adjusted to their schedules and possibilities.

A syllabus according to the students' reality

Telesecundaria teachers care about their students' English knowledge. As mentioned, in these rural areas the students begin to become familiar with the English language for the first time in telesecundaria. Although this should not be the case, it is the reality in which these teachers live. For that reason, the teachers ask the government to recognize that these rural telesecundaria students are not prepared to receive the English level this syllabus 2017 requires. And also, they ask for a modified syllabus based on their rural context and in their students' English level.

Que la nueva propuesta que va a salir con este nuevo gobierno, se adapte a las características reales de los chicos, al nivel de aprendizaje que tienen del inglés... los materiales que surjan a partir de esta nueva propuesta realmente corresponda al nivel de los muchachos. (T7)

También sería modificar los planes y programas porque si nos damos cuenta todos vienen encaminados al nivel nacional, entonces en el medio rural modificarlos al contexto del medio rural. (T9)

Most teachers' opinions reflect that telesecundaria teachers in these rural areas have to implement a syllabus that allows teachers to teach the English level their students need. In the previous categories it was mentioned that English is not taught in the primary schools nor in kindergartens of these five communities. So, the teachers of these telesecundarias are forced to adapt their classes and their materials to the level of their students. This makes planning their classes a bit more complex. They must look for extra material and try to get their students basic knowledge of English. For that reason, teachers need a syllabus that recognizes the English level of the students and in this case that starts from basic knowledge of English.

Didactic materials that complement the learning of the students

These nine teachers manifest that they only received a book as a whole material. But they mentioned that it is not enough. Accordingly, another mentioned proposal to improve the English language in these rural areas was to equip the teachers with didactic materials that complement the English knowledge of the book.

Por último, dotarnos de herramientas didácticas que complementen al plan y programas para poder desarrollar nuestras clases. (T4)

...más material, no nada más un libro, creo que más material que nos ayude con los chicos. Material didáctico, ellos aprenden más manipulando las cosas. (T5)

This participant mentioned that students learn through manipulation. The use of materials allows students, among other things, to manipulate, observe and discover new knowledge. It could be understood that it is difficult learning English just with the theory or the activities in the book. So, the government should prepare, not just a book but complementary material that allow students to practice the theory: “Que la SEP nos otorgara buenos videos, material, eso es lo básico. Porque nosotros somos todólogos, tenemos que sacar adelante ese trabajo que tenemos a cargo” (T8).

Teachers ask for digital and didactic materials that allow them to develop fun English classes. Since they are not specialists in the field, they expect the government to provide them with materials that complement the topics of the English book. With these materials, teachers want their students to interact and practice the knowledge they have learned. This is expected to improve the teaching of English within these rural telesecundarias.

Teacher training

Nunan (1988) mentioned that “some teachers felt that syllabus development should be carried out by people with specific expertise, and believed that they were being asked to undertake tasks for which they were not adequately trained” (p.19). Although some years have passed, it can be verified

through the voices of these teachers that they think similar, they also feel inadequately trained.

...que nos mandaran un maestro, (capacitado o especializado en el idioma inglés) o tal vez que cada maestro se especializara más, tampoco me voy a hacer a un lado pero no nos da tiempo, nos piden tantas cosas. (T1)

However, as already mentioned, education in telesecundarias is taught by a teacher who teaches all the subjects of a course without being totally specialized in each one of them. Therefore, the participants believe that teacher training would help improve the teaching of English in these telesecundarias.

Se debería comenzar por la preparación docente. Porque hay maestros que yo se que no tienen conocimientos en esta asignatura y por lo consiguiente ni siquiera dan la materia. (T4)

Me gustaría más oportunidades para la actualización del magisterio. (T7)

A lo mejor, que nos dieran más capacitación a nosotros porque nosotros tenemos que pagar cursos para poder llevarlo. (T5)

It is not enough for teachers to have completed their university career, but they must be in constant training since knowledge increases and/or changes. According to Vázquez (2017), training “is beneficial for teachers and students, since it maintains a clear direction and allows them to acquire new tools to deal with emerging needs” (p.1).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore teachers' reality when they implement the 2017 English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave in rural telesecundarias schools in San

Rafael, Veracruz. For achieving the research objective, nine participants from five telesecundarias of this municipality gave voice to their perspectives. However, there is still need for doing further research in each of the telesecundarias in the municipality in order to get a more in-depth perspective of the reality of these five telesecundarias is the same throughout the municipality, or perhaps in all rural areas in the context of the hereby research.

All in all, with the information reported by these nine teachers of rural telesecundarias, generalisations cannot be reached not drawn, but the conditions that these five telesecundarias face during the implementation of the Syllabus 2017 Aprendizajes Clave Inglés can be deeply understood in the Mexican context and further alike.

First and foremost, it can be concluded that the English courses do not receive the necessary importance, and telesecundaria students do not have the adequate level the syllabus expects them to reach. What is more, telesecundaria teachers do not receive appropriate training to provide quality English classes. Although some teachers have a basic level of English, they do not follow the proper or suitable methodologies to enhance the students' language development, nor do they cover the need of students to construct the competences that the Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave stipulates.

Interestingly, teachers strongly believe it is necessary to change the way of teaching English in rural telesecundarias. They are asking for a new syllabus adapted to the English level of rural telesecundaria students, to be provided with didactic materials, and to be trained with courses in English teaching and learning.

What was found in this research may be relevant to continue in the search for solutions that could lead authorities

and the government to consider all the contexts and realities of the telesecundaria English teachers in Veracruz, Mexico, and provide syllabi according to their needs and the ones of students in rural communities alike.

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