

8 Examining Teacher Perspectives on Language Policy in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina

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Globalization and Language Teaching

Globalization can be described as ‘the ongoing process of the increasing and intensifying interconnectedness of communications, events, activities and relationships taking place at the local, national or international level’ (Block, 2008: 31). In fact, in *The Globalization Reader*, Lechner and Boli (2015: 2) indicate that globalization implies the world becoming a ‘single place’ with ‘an emerging world culture and consciousness’. Nevertheless, critics view globalization as ‘the work of the West’ (Lechner & Boli, 2015: 3) in which Western fast food, movies and music, as well as the language in which they are transported, English, are forced upon the rest of the world.

This view of globalization may involve cultural and linguistic homogenization (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), in which consumerism is transported from the United States to other countries via a process of McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1983) or Westernization (Kagawa, 1978), and seeks to impose uniform standards throughout the world. However, several scholars (Robertson, 1995; Sharifian, 2009; Swales, 2004) maintain that globalization is not reduced to the global forcing its way upon the local, but rather consists of a complex interaction among the two, called ‘glocalization’. This concept, defined as ‘the co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies’ (Robertson, 1995: 25), is particularly relevant to the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL), in which a global language (English) intersects with local realities around the world.

That said, the field of applied linguistics has been affected by the forces of globalization (and those of glocalization) in a variety of ways. As Block (2008) points out, the marketing of foreign language (FL) teaching methods

and materials flows from the West (typically the United States and/or the United Kingdom) to the rest of the world. Furthermore, he describes the shift from a focus on the communicative function of language to an emphasis on its exchange value in which English is a consumer good to be standardized and sold globally. Consequently, the language is branded in a way that connects it to particular worldviews, behaviors and lifestyles to which the world's inhabitants can aspire. This branding of English has led to its marketing, which in turn contributes to its status as the most widely taught language in the world (Crystal, 2003).

This is evident in South America, where recent educational policies emphasize the importance of teaching and learning FLs, principally English, in order to facilitate economic and technological exchange at a global level. Although these policies seem to represent a positive development with respect to FL education, observations regarding the implementation of various English teaching programs in the region reveal tensions among the global and the local (see chapter by Diaz Maggioli, this volume). This can be seen in the limited autonomy that teachers have regarding their professional development in diverse contexts and the influence of external forces (publishers, the British Council, the US embassy) that prefer general program and materials design over tailoring to particular needs in local communities (see chapter by Banfi, this volume).

Similar challenges have been documented in Argentina, particularly with respect to a policy known as the *Acuerdo-Marco para la Enseñanza de Lenguas* [Agreement-Framework for the Teaching of Foreign Languages] (Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación, 1998), passed in 1998, which required the teaching of English in Argentina and made the teaching of other FLs optional. In his article outlining the role of English in Argentina, Nielsen (2003) predicted that this law¹ would lead to a greater number of users of English from a variety of socioeconomic classes. However, as Zappa-Hollman (2007) found in her study regarding the effects of policy changes on EFL instruction in Argentina, this law did not necessarily lead to high-quality English instruction, in large part due to the lack of teacher preparation for the unique challenges that educators face in diverse contexts.

Considering this, linguistic policies that aim to provide equal access to global forces do not always successfully include local populations in globalizing processes or grant them equal treatment across socioeconomic lines. That said, this chapter aims to address the globalized space in which the global and the local collide to explore how access to English (Gee, 2003) contributes to a class-based divide in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina. It seeks to do this by means of a situated approach to offset the top-down view of policy research that focuses exclusively on language policy documents in order to concentrate on how teachers engage with language policies on the ground (Hornberger, 2002; McCarty, 2011; Ramanathan, 2005).

Educational Policy in Argentina: FL Instruction

Prior to examining teacher perspectives, I will begin with a brief review of policy information that is most relevant to the teaching of FLs in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Since Argentina's return to democracy in 1983, several educational policy reforms that affect the teaching of languages in the City of Buenos Aires have been enacted at both the national and the city level. As previously mentioned, in 1998 with the *Acuerdo-Marco para la Enseñanza de Lenguas* [Agreement-Framework for the Teaching of Foreign Languages] (Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación, 1998), the teaching of English became compulsory across the country starting in fourth grade, negatively affecting the teaching of other FLs, which became optional. Nearly a decade later, another national policy known as *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* [Intercultural Bilingual Education], passed as part of the *Ley Nacional de Educación No 26.206* [National Education Law No. 26.206] (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de la Nación Argentina, 2006), called for the inclusion of the home languages of indigenous students in their public education. It aimed for an emphasis on respect and understanding of indigenous groups in all schools in the country with the goal of teaching students to appreciate cultural diversity and recognize it as a positive characteristic of Argentine society.

Regarding educational policies of the City of Buenos Aires, the *Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras* [Curricular Design for the Teaching of Foreign Languages] (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2001), developed in 2001, outlines the goals for the teaching of FLs. It focuses on promoting tolerance and acceptance of different languages and cultures and emphasizes the importance of equal access to global forces by means of language learning. While this *Diseño Curricular* [Curricular Design for the Teaching of Foreign Languages] (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2001) shows no favor toward the teaching of one language over another, the importance of English is emphasized in a citywide policy that began in 2009 known as *Incorporación de Idiomas en Primer Ciclo* [Incorporation of Language Teaching in the First Three Years of Elementary School] (Dirección Operativa de Lenguas Extranjeras, n.d.). According to this policy, the teaching of FLs (limited to English in most schools) is introduced in primary schools across the City of Buenos Aires starting in first grade. Nevertheless, considering that this policy is limited to the city's jurisdiction, the presence of English is much broader there than in provinces throughout the country, where it is not introduced until fourth grade.

An additional city policy, *Plan Sarmiento Buenos Aires* (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2011), though not a linguistic policy, emerged as particularly relevant to this study during interviews with teachers (see chapters by Banfi; Veciño, this volume).

It provides all teachers and students with computers and internet access. Furthermore, it promises technological training for teachers, students and community members through the dissemination of reference documents and the administration of a variety of meetings and workshops. In this way, at least in theory, it attempts to promote quality education through equal technological opportunities for all.

Thus, policies at the national and city level emphasize equality, be it through the promotion of ethnic and linguistic diversity in all schools in Argentina or the guarantee of equal access to FL education and technology for all students in the City of Buenos Aires. However, as Canagarajah (1999: 211) points out, the micro-social level of the classroom is not necessarily 'at the mercy of power dictated unilaterally from above' but rather there may be 'alternative discourses and power equations within its own walls' where 'teachers and students enjoy some agency to question, negotiate, and resist power'. With this idea in mind, I turn now to the methods used to explore how local educators interpret and engage with policies according to their specific contexts.

Methods

Sites and participants

I began this project with a desire to find out what EFL teachers thought about language policies and how policies were implemented in public schools in different parts of the City of Buenos Aires. As a native speaker of English from the United States, my curiosity regarding the teaching of EFL in Argentina began when I first lived and worked there as an EFL teacher in 2009. During that time, I visited EFL classes in public schools in several areas of Buenos Aires, where I observed differences in EFL instruction according to the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood. Through these experiences, my attention was called to the divides carved in society based on access to and knowledge of English. That said, this study was designed to address the following question: What are EFL teacher and EFL teacher trainer perceptions of educational language policies and their implementation in public elementary schools in socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina?

With this in mind, I visited three public elementary schools (Table 8.1): (a) School 613 in a shanty town quite far south of downtown Buenos Aires, which I refer to as Edgeville, where I interviewed three EFL teachers: Anita, Laura and Rafaela²; (b) School 804 in a poor western neighborhood next to the main highway separating the city from the province of Buenos Aires, which I refer to as Speedway, where I interviewed one EFL teacher: Bianca; and (c) School 521 in a wealthy north central neighborhood, which I refer to as Elite Town, where I interviewed two EFL teachers: Sofia and Alberto. My

Table 8.1 Institutional sites and participants

<i>School number</i>	<i>Neighborhood location</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Participants</i>
School 613	Shanty town in southern neighborhood	Edgeville	EFL teachers: Anita, Laura, Rafaela
School 804	Poor western neighborhood near highway	Speedway	EFL teacher: Bianca
School 521	Wealthy north-central neighborhood	Elite Town	EFL teachers: Sofía, Alberto EFL teacher trainer: Josefina

analysis also includes insights from an interview with Josefina, an EFL teacher trainer at a local university, whom I encountered at school 521 in Elite Town.

In my examination of teacher perceptions on language policy, I draw on ethnographic language policy research (Cassels Johnson, 2009; Hornberger & Cassels Johnson, 2007; McCarty, 2011; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007), which calls for data collection that addresses how agents in local contexts interpret and appropriate policies (Cassels Johnson, 2009). With this in mind, I conducted interviews with EFL teachers and I observed their classes. I also recorded and later transcribed these interviews and I took detailed field notes during class observations. Then, I used inductive coding and comparative analysis strategies to determine recurring themes across participants and data sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Recorded interviews lasted at least 30 minutes each with the EFL teachers and the EFL teacher trainer mentioned above. They were conducted in English and/or Spanish, depending on the preference of the interviewee. Additionally, I observed at least one 40-minute EFL class at each school, where I spent at least one school day, which lasted between four and eight hours. Each school, regardless of its schedule, offered five hours of EFL instruction per week. Although I aimed to be an inconspicuous observer, most of the teachers introduced me to their classes and allowed students to ask me questions in order to practice their English, thus making me an observer participant. Field notes were taken during class observations and informal conversations with teachers during school visits.

Findings

An analysis of the aforementioned qualitative data shows how inequities are reproduced across social classes and how and why EFL teachers in diverse local contexts attempt to bridge the gap between the challenges they face and top-down policies. In the following sections, EFL teachers' voices will reveal how globalization is meant to reach all students in all neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, Argentina, by means of access to EFL instruction and

technology, but the application of well-formulated linguistic policies in diverse neighborhoods demonstrates that such globalizing influences reach these different parts of the city in distinct ways.

Inequities across schools

Upon examination of the data collected for this project, a number of common themes were determined regarding the complexities involved in the implementation of language policies in focal schools in different neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. First, it became clear that access to EFL instruction in these schools differs according to local context due to differences in class size. Additionally, EFL teachers described a number of gaps between policy and practice with respect to training, pedagogical materials and curricular goals. Finally, these teachers described the ways in which they exercise agency as they engage with language policies in their classrooms.

Differences in class size

As previously mentioned, city policies including the *Diseño Curricular* [Curricular Design for the Teaching of Foreign Languages] (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2001) and the *Incorporación de idiomas* [Incorporation of Language Teaching] (Dirección Operativa de Lenguas Extranjeras, n.d.) stress the importance of equal access to FLs. Moreover, the latter specifies that said access should apply to students from all socioeconomic backgrounds in all neighborhoods. Nevertheless, interviews with the participating EFL teachers in this study reveal stark differences in the number of students in each class. In Edgeville, one of Anita's classes had 52 students (Field notes, August 28, 2012). In Speedway, Bianca's classes had an average of 25 students (Field notes, September 5, 2012). In Elite Town, there were as few as 11 students in one of the classes I observed (Field notes, September 14, 2012). That said, the number of students in the largest class in Edgeville was nearly five times that of the smallest class in Elite Town. Considering that class size affects not only the amount of practice time provided to students but also the number of hours of target language interaction they engage in over the course of the school year, such variation in class size across schools has a great effect on access to English.

Gaps between policy and practice

In addition to variation regarding the number of students in a class, interviews with and observations of EFL teachers revealed gaps between policies and the everyday realities of participating schools. This sentiment can be summed up well using Anita's (Edgeville) words: 'The law is up

way high and we are here on the ground, so we need something to cover the distance'³ (Interview, August 28, 2012). As outlined in the following sections, teachers expressed their feelings toward irrelevant or insufficient training with respect to diversity, technology and pedagogy. Furthermore, they indicated that unreasonable expectations exist with respect to the curriculum and the materials provided for classroom use. In response to these expectations, teachers resisted policies (Canagarajah, 1999; Ramanathan, 2005) and chose to proceed in ways they deemed most appropriate for their local contexts.

Lack of diversity training

There were students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in all the schools I visited, regardless of the neighborhood; however, there were significantly more in Edgeville than in other areas. The population of the Edgeville school was primarily from Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru; the Speedway school had some students from Bolivia and China; the Elite Town school had a few students from Bolivia and a couple from Korea. In addition to Spanish, students who attended these schools spoke languages including Guaraní, Aymara, Quechua, Mandarin and Korean. Still, most of the teachers I spoke with had never heard of *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* [Intercultural Bilingual Education] (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de la Nación Argentina, 2006), which claims to define common curricular content that promotes respect for multiculturalism and knowledge of native cultures in all of the country's schools, allowing students to value and understand cultural diversity as a positive attribute of society (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de la Nación Argentina, 2006, Artículo 54). When I asked the teacher trainer, Josefina, whether EFL teachers receive any training regarding this policy, she responded:

Absolutamente cero...no veo que haya ninguna materia o ninguna instancia en ningún momento ni transversalmente ni longitudinalmente donde se incluya algo relacionado con pueblos originarios o con Educación Intercultural Bilingüe. No en el profesorado de inglés.

(Absolutely zero... I don't see that there is any class or any instance at any time either transversally or longitudinally in which information is addressed regarding indigenous communities or Intercultural Bilingual Education. Not in the English Teacher Training School.) (Interview, September 13, 2012)

Josefina's comment is curious, considering that the goals of the *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* [Intercultural Bilingual Education] (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de la Nación Argentina, 2006) policy are not only meant to reach all the country's schools but they are also relevant

to the goals of FL instruction outlined in the *Diseño Curricular* [Curricular Design for the Teaching of Foreign Languages] (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2001), which emphasize the promotion of tolerance and acceptance of differences. Nevertheless, Josefina's statement was corroborated by Alberto, one of the teachers in Elite Town, who described the lack of diversity training and the need for addressing the issue in his wealthy, north central school. He put it this way:

No class in the *profesorado* [teacher training school]... teaches you how to deal with students with disabilities, students from diverse backgrounds, etcetera... we're taught that we live in a very homogeneous society. So... it's needless. We don't have to learn about diversity. But the thing is... even at this school, I witnessed... racist comments between Argentines. I had to call... his mom... [and] tell him, 'don't say "negro de mierda" [*fucking black*] to another classmate'. (Interview, September 14, 2012)

As seen here, even in Elite Town, students and teachers encounter issues related to diversity, including the use of racial slurs among students, yet they do not receive the necessary training to learn how to effectively address it.

The task of embracing cultural and linguistic diversity in the Argentinean classroom is not an easy one. As Lucas (2008) reports, indigenous languages (e.g. Guaraní, Aymara and Quechua) are not given prestige in Argentinean society, which leads to students from bilingual families devaluing and denying their home languages and cultures. This was evident in my observation of Anita's fourth-grade classroom in which she asked each student to go up to the blackboard in front of the class, tell me where he or she was from, point to the place on the map and tell me the other languages he or she spoke. Roughly 90% of those students were from bordering countries and spoke indigenous languages at home; however, the majority of those students claimed they were Argentinean and denied that they spoke other languages (Field notes, August 28, 2012). This behavior in which students deny their cultural and linguistic heritage (Edgeville) and insult each other's diverse appearances (Elite Town) reveals a great need for diversity training for students and teachers alike in educational settings across socioeconomic lines.

Absence of technological training

With respect to technology, teachers at all three schools reported a lack of support regarding *Plan Sarmiento Buenos Aires* (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2011), which provides computers to teachers and students (see chapters by Banfi; Veciño, this volume). Regarding the challenges that accompany this policy in the

impoverished context of Edgeville, Anita mentioned that students do not bring their netbooks to school every day and that it can be difficult to connect to the internet when they do. Furthermore, she reported that many students have broken their computers and those who actually bring them to school tend to use them for entertainment instead of educational activities. In fact, she described a situation in which one student took his netbook home and his mother, with the best of intentions, washed it, hoping to ensure it was clean for her son to take to school the next day. In this way, due to the mother's limited contact with this technology and the lack of training provided regarding its use and care, the computer was destroyed in the water.

In Elite Town, on the other hand, Alberto explained that he thought the netbooks were useful for teaching EFL. He felt that having students search the internet using their English skills to find more information about course topics was a good way to motivate them. Still, since he had not received any training regarding the use of computers in class, he hoped to find more ways to incorporate them effectively. That said, there is a great need for implementation of the technology training mentioned in the *Plan Sarmiento Buenos Aires* (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2011) policy not only for teachers but also for students and their families.

Resistance to irrelevant pedagogical training and curricular expectations

In regard to pedagogical training, Anita (Edgeville) explained that the city provides training workshops for teachers (see chapter by Banfi, this volume); however, the topics are determined without consulting individual schools and the same training sessions are implemented throughout the city. She said:

Ellos traen los temas. No nos preguntan a nosotras...por comunidades... porque también somos distintas. Lo arman para toda la ciudad y no es lo mismo acá [Edgeville] que ... [Elite Town]. Entonces nos vinieron a hablar acá de los Juegos Olímpicos... ¿Juegos Olímpicos? Estos chicos no tienen la cultura general como para saber qué es un juego olímpico. No me iba a meter en eso...in English. Entonces, eso sentimos. Por eso, es como que, hay un gap entre eso que debería ser y lo que nosotros sentimos que pasa.

(They bring the topics. They don't ask us... by communities... because we are different too. They make it [the training session] for the whole city and it's not the same here [Edgeville] as it is in... [Elite Town]. Then, they came here to talk to us about the Olympic Games... Olympic Games? These kids don't have the general culture to know what an olympic game is. I wasn't even going to go there... in English. So, that's what we feel. Because of that, it's like there's a gap between

what it [the training] should be and what we feel happens.) (Interview, August 28, 2012)

As seen here, Anita resists certain topics that policymakers expect her to cover in her classes based on the realities of her students.

Similarly, other teachers in Edgeville (Laura) and Speedway (Bianca) express how and why they resist the ambitious curricula set forth by policymakers. Laura said:

I try to adapt to my groups.... what I think they need... We have to make our plans and the Curricular Design is very strict and... I try to do as much as I can... as much as they can... I should have started with Happy Street 2 [the textbook; see Maidment & Roberts, 2009], let's say... three months ago, and I haven't started already. But, I put it in my plan. So, if someone comes into my classroom, I would say, 'oh, well, we are just reciting because we are going to start with...' (Interview, August 28, 2012)

Here, Laura (Edgeville) explains that the curriculum is not realistic for her students. For this reason, she adjusts her teaching based on their needs and abilities.

Bianca (Speedway) expressed similar concerns and makes comparable adjustments to the curriculum:

...todo lo que... imparte... del ministerio, del estado, yo lo tomo, lo recibo y después yo lo bajo a mi criterio. Es decir, yo digo, bueno, el Diseño Curricular dice que en séptimo grado yo tengo que dar 'could, should, and would'... Ahora, yo no tengo nivel para dar 'could, should y would', prefiero enseñar el present continuous... siempre estoy pensando en lo que es bueno para el chico... muchas veces la gente que hace los diseños curriculares o la gente que hace bajadas, grandes lineamentos pedagógicos... no tienen ni idea de lo que es estar acá adentro.... entonces, ahí tenés un bache muy grande...si nosotros somos docentes pragmáticos, y somos docentes que tenemos criterio y sentido común, tenés que decir, bueno, tengo este grupo con estas necesidades...

(...everything that comes from the Ministry of Education, from the State, I take it, I receive it, and afterwards I use my best judgment. That is, I say, well, the Curricular Design says that in seventh grade I have to teach 'could, should, and would'... Now, I don't have the level to teach 'could, should, and would', I prefer to teach the present continuous... I am always thinking of what is best for the students... a lot of times the people that make curricular designs or the people that make top down, big pedagogical guidelines... don't have any idea what it's like to be in here... so, there you have a big breach... if we are pragmatic teachers,

and we are teachers that have good judgment and common sense, you have to say, ok, I have this group with these needs...) (Interview, September 5, 2012)

Bianca's (Speedway) explanation also reveals the unrealistic expectations set out by the *Diseño Curricular* [Curricular Design for the Teaching of Foreign Languages] (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2001) for the reality of her local context. She describes how she resists this policy, handling the situation according to the needs of her students. As seen here, teachers in diverse neighborhoods are not only provided with irrelevant pedagogical training, but they are unable to realistically adhere to the curriculum. With this in mind, teacher training sessions should be adapted for local contexts and curricular expectations should be realistic for the diverse realities that can be found in the City of Buenos Aires.

Irrelevant pedagogical materials

Turning now to classroom materials, in Block's (2008) article regarding globalization and language teaching, he describes how EFL teaching materials flow one way from the United Kingdom and/or the United States and market the English language as a standardized consumer good related to a set of world views, behaviors and lifestyles to which global populations can aspire. Anita recognizes this phenomenon, pointing out that the beginning textbooks used at her school (*Happy Street*; see Maidment & Roberts, 2009) are often inappropriate for the realities of a country like Argentina, and particularly for an impoverished community like Edgeville. For example, given that *Happy Street* (Maidment & Roberts, 2009) was made in the United Kingdom for middle-class learners, in the chapter about the parts of a house, students see pictures of a large house. However, in Argentina many students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds may not necessarily live in houses but rather in apartments and students from impoverished communities may live in particularly small, overcrowded conditions. Laura (Edgeville) explained it this way:

Let me show you something. My House. They [our students] live in a bedroom. Ten people in a bedroom. You see? They haven't got a house. They [pointing to children in the book] have a play room here in the attic [pointing to images in the book]. Hall. Garage. This is alien thing to them [our students]. They [our students] don't know what a hall is. (Interview, August 28, 2012)

Another problematic example from the book occurs in the family lesson, which includes both mothers and fathers as well as other familial support figures. However, many students in the Edgeville school come from broken families and some do not know their families.

As seen here, teaching materials created in the United Kingdom that are meant for mass production and distribution (see chapter by Banfi, this volume) are often irrelevant to the local contexts in which they are utilized, thus representing a gap between those who create and/or choose such materials and those who actually use them. While EFL textbooks adopted in Buenos Aires are chosen by a team of EFL teachers from the city, participants in this study indicated that those teachers do not always represent the diverse neighborhoods where textbooks are used. Therefore, it may be beneficial to incorporate more teachers from a wider variety of neighborhoods in the choice of materials. Even if this occurs, however, EFL teachers would benefit from having a greater variety of materials to choose from that are meant for more diverse audiences.

Philosophies of teaching

Upon explaining their reasons for teaching EFL, many of the teachers interviewed described motives related to social justice and telling beliefs regarding English and minority languages. Some of the themes that emerged in their philosophies of teaching included English to reinforce the home language, English for future careers, English for access to knowledge and other cultures, English to show another reality and English to equalize the playing field. Anita (Edgeville), for example, described how she uses English as a bridge to help students connect with their home languages and cultures:

I believe that these kids don't have the same opportunities that other kids because...they come from a very hard environment, socially speaking... I'm teaching English to teach something else through English. I'm using most of the time English to foster another thing... because if you teach language you are teaching a whole culture through the language. Yes? And you help them to learn their own culture through another one. It's like building bridges. At the beginning they will say, 'no, I'm not from Bolivia', 'no, I don't speak Guaraní', 'I don't speak Quechua' and if you tell them it's wonderful to speak another language like English, like Spanish... (Interview, August 28, 2012)

As seen here, Anita uses the teaching of English to instill a sense of pride in knowing another language in order to combat the negative messages that indigenous and immigrant students internalize from society about their heritage.

For Sofía (Elite Town), English is necessary for a successful career. Since many of the students at her school are interested in working or going to college, she defends the utility of English to them. She explained this, saying, '...especially here in Argentina, they are all asking for people who are bilingual in every kind of work' (Interview, September 14, 2012). Sofía

chose to study and teach English because of its utility and thus uses the same ideas to motivate her students. Similarly, for Alberto (Elite Town), English provides access to other world cultures. He described how he learned about different peoples of the world through English, not Spanish, which is something he desires for his students as well.

Bianca (Speedway) believes in teaching English to show students another reality. She explained that some students ask ‘*si yo nunca voy a salir de acá, ¿para qué quiero aprender inglés?*’ (if I’m never going to get out of here, why would I want learn English?) (Interview, September 5, 2012). In response, she shares her belief that everyone should be given the same opportunities and EFL teachers have the responsibility to show their students that there is another way of life beyond the one they see in their homes, their families and their neighborhoods.

Finally, Rafaela (Edgeville) described how she views English as an equalizer for differences among social classes:

Durante muchos años en la Argentina y en Buenos Aires en particular la enseñanza de inglés era vista como algo de clases altas... para las personas con muchísimo dinero y que podían pagarlo. Y para mí, que en una escuela como esta, estos chicos que... que para muchas personas no deberían tener las mismas oportunidades... tengan cinco horas de inglés... quiero que aprovechen esas horas, quiero que entiendan que finalmente pudieron conquistar un derecho, que pueden ser un poquito más iguales, aunque sean esas cinco horas, a otros chicos... entonces, para mí, la lengua, sin lugar a dudas, enseñar una lengua extranjera, es placentero en ese sentido, es sentir que uno, por lo que aprendió, como que lo retribuye a sectores que no podían, que no podrían de otra manera acercarse.

(For many years in Argentina and Buenos Aires particularly, the teaching of English was seen as something of the upper class... for people with lots of money and that could pay for it. And for me, in a school like this one, these kids that... for many people shouldn’t have the same opportunities... have five hours of English... I want them to take advantage of those hours, I want them to understand that they finally managed to obtain a right, that they can be a little more equal to other kids, even if only through these five hours... so, for me the language, without a doubt, teaching a foreign language is pleasing in this way, it’s feeling that one, because of what he or she learned, can share it with others that couldn’t, that wouldn’t be able to access it in any other way.) (Interview, August 28, 2012)

As shown in Rafaela’s philosophy of teaching, providing equal access to English through offering all students in public elementary schools five hours of EFL classes per week is viewed as a powerful way to level the playing field for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. It is

clear that Rafaela recognizes the importance of learning English in her country and her city and she believes that all students, including those in the shanty town, deserve equal access to EFL instruction.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study demonstrates English becoming a global force to reckon with as framed in the linguistic policies of Argentina and as revealed through interviews conducted with EFL teachers and a teacher trainer in the City of Buenos Aires. Despite the status of English as a FL in Argentina, the utility of the English language is highly regarded and has taken on compulsory status in the public school system. In this way, globalizing processes have made their mark on the city in terms of linguistic policy; however, the application of well-formulated policies in the impoverished areas of the city reveals that globalizing influences reach these diverse areas in different ways.

Overall, policies aim to value both the global and the local through offering universal access to English and guaranteeing immigrant rights and diversity education. In an effort to equalize the playing field with respect to access to English for students from different ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds in vastly dissimilar neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, uniform policies have been enacted throughout the city. One such policy guarantees equal access to the teaching of EFL in all of the city's schools starting in first grade. However, providing all students with the same access to English (five hours of EFL instruction per week in elementary schools citywide) leads to inequalities in the delivery of EFL instruction, considering that the number of students per class is considerably higher in schools in impoverished neighborhoods.

In this effort to extend equal opportunities to all, EFL teachers across the City of Buenos Aires are provided with technological resources, a curriculum, professional development and pedagogical materials. Nevertheless, no training or support regarding the use of technological resources is provided, leading to a lack of effective use and/or handling of these resources. Moreover, participating teachers in less affluent areas elect to abandon curricular goals that are not realistic for their contexts and choose instead to address topics appropriate for their students' needs and abilities. Finally, textbooks and teacher training workshops provided throughout the city have been developed for a middle-class audience; hence, they are often inappropriate for students from modest realities. Thus, despite inclusive wording in policies, teacher interviews revealed non-existent technological training, unrealistic curricular expectations and irrelevant pedagogical materials and professional development in low socioeconomic contexts, which leads to unequal implementation of policies across schools.

Furthermore, while policies aim to guarantee indigenous rights and diversity education, teacher interviews revealed that (1) most teachers

participating in this study, regardless of the number of indigenous or immigrant students enrolled in their respective schools, had never heard of *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* [Intercultural Bilingual Education] (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de la Nación Argentina, 2006); and (2) the teachers in the socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods represented in this chapter were not trained to address issues of diversity. Nevertheless, the use of racial slurs among students and instances of indigenous and immigrant children denying their heritage in front of their peers reveal a need for addressing such matters in schools.

Despite the presence of these challenges relating to diversity and the lack of formal teacher preparation for managing them, many EFL teachers who participated in this study included their beliefs about embracing diversity in their philosophies of teaching. Some teachers indicated that they view the teaching of EFL as a way to empower the cultural and linguistic heritage of indigenous and immigrant students, while others stated that providing these students with equal access to EFL instruction provides them with rights they have previously been denied.

In conclusion, making EFL classes compulsory or stating that indigenous languages and backgrounds should be respected in schools in linguistic policy does not necessarily lead to effective teaching or incorporation of such policy into instruction, especially when training and resources are not effectively provided for doing so. Therefore, EFL professional development in the City of Buenos Aires should focus, according to the participants in this study, on providing materials, resources and training sessions that are appropriate for the contexts in which EFL teachers work. Otherwise, equal access to English in the city's public schools is found only in policy rhetoric, not in reality (Zappa-Hollman, 2007).

Although this study was conducted in Buenos Aires, similar challenges related to the implementation of EFL policies have been reported throughout Argentina and South America. In Argentina, the teaching of EFL in public schools has been characterized by unrealistic goals and inadequate professional development, especially in economically disadvantaged areas (Zappa-Hollman, 2007). In South America, the implementation of various EFL teaching programs has been accompanied by the incorporation of projects, professional development and teaching materials designed to be used and replicated in a number of locations instead of prepared with local communities in mind (see chapter by Banfi, this volume). That said, the need to bridge the gap among policies and particular realities occurs not only in Buenos Aires, but also throughout the country and the region. Through reflecting on these glocalized spaces, particularly that of Buenos Aires addressed in this chapter, it becomes evident that local impoverished populations are left out of globalizing processes in surprising ways. Applied linguistics scholarship needs to address these omissions.

Questions for Reflection

- (1) In what ways does ‘glocalization’ take place where you live and/or work? What are the ramifications, both positive and negative, of this collision between the global and the local in your local context and beyond?
- (2) What are some of the policies you are expected to adhere to in your professional life? How do you comply with and/or resist policies based on the needs of your local context? How do you justify any deviations from adhering to these policies?

Notes

- (1) Although in Nielsen’s (2003) article, he refers exclusively to the *Ley Federal de Educación No. 24.195* [Federal Law of Education No. 24.195] and not to the *Acuerdo-Marco para la Enseñanza de Lenguas* [Agreement-Framework for the Teaching of Languages], I refer exclusively to the latter since it was the addition to the Federal Law of Education that addressed the teaching of English as a requirement starting in fourth grade, making the teaching of other FLs optional.
- (2) School numbers mentioned in this chapter are fictitious. School community names and participant names are pseudonyms. Community pseudonyms were designed to call attention to distinguishable characteristics of the communities that are uniquely tied to their resources and socioeconomic status. This was done to help the reader avoid confusing the schools and/or the neighborhoods throughout the chapter.
- (3) Interview quotations have been recorded verbatim and translated into English by the author when the answers were given in Spanish. Quotations provided in English have not been adjusted, maintaining original grammatical choices.

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