Chapter 5
Linguistics Teachers' Implementation and Assessment of Out-of-Class Teamwork

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Abstract

Teamwork is of extreme importance for the learning process. However, studies still evidence difficulties in its implementation and assessment. This qualitative study investigated university teachers' implementation and assessment practices of out-of-class teamwork. The participants were teachers from seven different states in Mexico and belonged to the area of linguistics. Semi-structured interviews were analyzed using MAXQDA software in which six themes and 16 subthemes emerged. Important findings are that teachers integrate socio-constructivist approaches with traditional methodologies, ensure the balance of students' participation inside the teams and, design rubrics and qualitative assessments. The participants also mentioned challenges. The study concludes with a proposal to guide effective out-of-class teamwork implementation.

Keywords: *collaborative practices, linguistics teachers, out-of-class teamwork, teamwork assessment, teamwork implementation.*

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Resumen

El trabajo en equipo es de extrema importancia para el proceso de aprendizaje. Sin embargo, estudios aún evidencian dificultades en su implementación y evaluación. Este estudio cualitativo investigó la implementación y evaluación de los profesores universitarios acerca del trabajo en equipo fuera del aula (TEFA). Los participantes fueron profesores de siete estados diferentes de México pertenecientes al área de lingüística. Entrevistas semi-estructuradas fueron analizadas usando el software MAXQDA del cual emergieron seis temas y 16 subtemas. Importantes hallazgos son que los docentes integran enfoques socio-constructivistas con metodologías tradicionales, aseguran el balance de participación de estudiantes dentro de los equipos, diseñan rúbricas y evaluaciones cualitativas. Los participantes también mencionan retos. El estudio concluye con una propuesta para guiar la implementación de un TEFA eficiente.

Palabras Clave: *prácticas colaborativas, profesores de lingüística, trabajo en equipo fuera del aula, evaluación del trabajo en equipo, implementación del trabajo en equipo.*

Introduction

Modern methods in education based on socio-constructivist learning approaches place great emphasis on collaboration and interaction among students to promote significant learning (Blatchford *et al.,* 2003). Following modern pedagogy, teachers design tasks to be carried out by students in teams inside and outside the classroom. In these teams, students need to share new information, debate, and evaluate different points of view, restructure their thoughts, and come to new conclusions to meet the assignment. Finally, this product is to be graded by their teacher.

Although the collaborative learning process can be supervised inside the classroom, teachers cannot oversee the work students carry out in teams outside the classroom. As the research literature suggests, several

problems are commonly found in the implementation of teamwork and its grading process. However, not many of these studies have investigated out-of-class teamwork. Adding to these difficulties, the international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that the "teaching, learning and assessment still take place in a somewhat 'traditional setting' in Mexico" (Santiago *et al.,* 2012, p. 4). Borg (2006) points out the challenge that implementing teamwork represents in higher education where students' learning modes have not included previous experiences of this type. In the case of Mexico, if students have been exposed to traditional learning modes, it would be difficult to engage them in modern methods of education in which teamwork is a common practice. The students need the knowledge and skills to carry out collaborative tasks and projects by themselves particularly in an out-of-class situation.

Therefore, because of the problems and challenges that have been stated, it becomes essential to investigate the Mexican higher education context in relation to out-of-class teamwork. This study aims at exploring the implementation and assessment practices of college linguistics teachers concerning out-of-class teamwork in seven different states in Mexico.

Theoretical Framework

Definition of Teamwork

Based on a large body of research, the terms group work and teamwork are widely used across disciplines but their difference in terms of meaning is not easy to grasp. Schmutz *et al.,* (2019) agree with this statement referring to teamwork while Chiriac (2014) is also in accordance but referring to group work. In addition, Blatchford *et al.,* (2003, p. 2) state that "By group work, we mean pupils working together as a group or team". In this statement, it seems there is not a difference between the terms group work and teamwork. An interesting contribution made by Chiriac (2014) is the differentiation between two types of group work: working in a group and working as a group. She explains that the first type is accomplished by individuals working alone in separate parts of the assignment, while the sec-

ond one means working all together, using their skills to achieve the common task. In technology enhanced language learning, Shibani *et al.,* (2017) use the term teamwork to investigate language learners' online dialogues. Therefore, as there is not a clear distinction between the terms of group work and teamwork, the term teamwork will be used in this paper.

Teamwork Challenges

Although difficulties in the implementation of teamwork are not new and research has suggested many solutions, challenges continue. Alfares (2017) explains that motivation may decrease specifically in mixed ability teams since high achievers prefer to work individually and not "waste their time" with low achievers. Medrano and Delgado (2013) in their study found out that in some self-selected teams, stronger students did all the work due to friendship and felt relieved when the teams were teacher selected. One longtime common problem explained by Davies (2009) is the existence of free riders or uncommitted members who do not work causing "the sucker effect" that is, more free raiders. These members can also cause social loafing which is a reduction in effort from the other members of the team (McGraw & Tidwell, 2001). Therefore, motivation and group formation are still problematic.

Another problem detected in recent research is the division of the task into equal parts by the team members who complete their part individually. Then, they just add their pieces to complete the assignment without discussing the work or synthesizing the information (Wilson *et al.,* 2018). In this case, the benefits of modern approaches to learning such as developing higher-order cognitive abilities, social and critical skills, collaboration, integration, promoting the construction of knowledge through negotiation and the building of consensus are not met.

Another obstacle is the difficulty to find time to carry out out-of-class activities as a team. A common fact is that there is a population of students who have to work and, thus, it is difficult to find time to meet or a place close enough of their home or work sites to get together. Although, there is a debate on whether employment is detrimental to academic performance

in students who prioritize work or school, Baert *et al.,* (2018, p. 1) investigated this issue and found out "only a negative association between hours of student work and the percentages of courses passed" by students who prioritize work. However, they do recommend to discourage students who prioritize their job over their studies.

Finally, a last problem refers to the grading of teamwork since a mark is given to the team product. Therefore, all the team members get the same grade including uncommitted members. Although, suggestions are given in the literature to make students peer assess several aspects of group member's performance inside the groups, students refuse to peer assess, pinpoint the free riders or social loafers because it causes relationship conflicts. Scager *et al.,* (2016) found out that team members showed empathy towards social loafers as students stated that the work was beyond the capabilities of peers who contributed less.

Advantages of Promoting Teamwork

There are several benefits for assessing teamwork. The first one is that assessment guides students into using certain learning strategies depending on the type of task that they will have to accomplish. A teamwork task will guide team members to develop the use of high-order cognitive abilities. Levine (2009, p. 537) states that these abilities are "concept acquisition, systematic decision making, evaluative thinking, brainstorming (including creativity), and rule usage", among the range of sophisticated thinking skills. Therefore, teamwork assignments are important for developing what Volkov and Volkov (2015) calls "a deep approach to learning" and "a deep approach to studying".

A second advantage is that teamwork also provides the practice of social skills needed for the labor market and are part of the ones mentioned by Rotherham and Willingham (2010). These 21st century skills are communication, collaboration, and flexibility. The authors call for policy makers to address these 21st century skills in the curricula. Modern approaches to education require a more participative student role in instruction and assessment in which peer and self-assessment practices are promoted

(Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Marking alternative assessment tasks also require the development of other means of assessing as observations, the development of rubrics (Coombe *et al.,* 2007), checklists, report sheets, etc. Therefore, teamwork needs knowledgeable teachers who can implement these methods of assessment and guide the students into performing alternative and collaborative tasks successfully (Volkov & Volkov, 2015). In relation to rubrics, a third advantage refers to the comprehension of the work expectations by the students when a rubric is explained before or while the assignment is given.

Finally, a fourth benefit is that performance and authentic tasks cater more to students' needs and therefore increase the validity of the assignment. Puppin (2007) adds that valid assignments have a clear demonstrable link to the skills that are being assessed and that they provide a positive washback effect.

Recent research demonstrates that out-of-class teamwork still represents challenges in its implementation and assessment. It is crucial for teachers in higher education to become aware of what is really happening inside the groups particularly where students do not come with the skills needed for this type of work if they want to meet the benefits of modern approaches to education.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, the authors sought to understand a group of Mexican university teachers' implementation and assessment practices of the teamwork that they ask their students to do outside their teaching and learning contexts. Following the purpose of examining their implementation and assessment practices, we decided to adopt a qualitative research approach. This approach enabled us to understand the participants' "words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 2). In line with this, Dörnyei (2007) contends that "[q]ualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the partici-

pants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 38). This in turn allowed us the researchers to study the participants' views and experiences concerning teamwork as their carry it out in their natural settings with the purpose of "making sense of or interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 2). To do this, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that a wide variety of data-collection tools can be used to "describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives" (p. 2). In this study, we conducted interviews (see below) with the participants in their contexts. Overall, a qualitative paradigm was necessary because it helped us undercover the views and experiences of the participants for the purpose of the present study and the context where the phenomenon was taking place.

Context

The study was conducted in seven Mexican university contexts located in different parts of the country with the purpose of getting a wider Mexican perspective instead of a local one. The universities are located in central, southern and northern areas of Mexico and are all public which means that are government funded. They all offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs of different disciplines, from high school to PhD. Specifically, the study took place in the linguistics areas or departments following our objective of making sense of the participants' implementation and assessment practices concerning their students' teamwork outside the classroom. In all of these contexts, teamwork has been used as a strategy to promote student autonomy, responsibility, and collaborative practices. However, there have been few attempts to implement this kind of student work in these contexts and there is no formal evidence that shows how linguistics teachers view and experience these peer collaborative practices.

Participants

Following the objective of understanding the implementation and assessment practices of Mexican university teachers concerning teamwork, we advertised our research project in seven Mexican universities, specifically, in the linguistics departments. Seven teachers expressed their desire to participate in the study.

All of the participants were informed of the purposes of the study, their expected participation, the use of their data, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. To protect them from identification, the participants' names and identities were carefully anonymized. Instead, Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2) and so on are used. Also, to avoid identifying the teacher's gender, the pronoun he will be used.

Data Collection and Analysis

To collect the data, interviews were collected and transcripts were made. It is widely known that interviews are useful for obtaining significant information about perceptions and experiences of participants who are immersed in teaching and learning contexts. Interviews are claimed to provide an understanding of how informants make sense of interactions in relation to the context which they inhabit (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The final version of the interview guide that was used in this study contained 11 items (see Appendix). The eleven items were open-ended questions. All the questions asked for the participants' experiences and practices regarding teamwork in their contexts. It is worth mentioning that the interview was piloted by a group of researchers and modifications to clarify or shorten some of the questions were conducted.

After the data were collected, it was analyzed following a meaning categorization which facilitates the identification of patterns, themes, and meaning (Berg, 2009). To do this, coding was helpful for identifying and retrieving data relevant for the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Fernandez, 2006). The MAXQDA software for analyzing qualitative data was used and as a result of this process, six broad themes and sixteen subthemes

emerged. To ensure reliability of these data analysis, the theme categorization was validated by three researchers with knowledge of English teaching and applied linguistics. The emerging themes and sub-themes, which are detailed in table 1, provided the framework for interpreting the data.

Table 1. *Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
1. Reasons for assigning teamwork	a) Competencies and, b) collaborative abilities.
2. Assignment types	a) Projects, b) tasks and presentations.
3. Teacher strategies	a) Preparation, b)follow- up sessions and, f) assessment.
4. Evaluation criteria	a) Rubrics, b) definition of rubrics, c) product or content based, d) Individual or global mark and, e) evaluation agents.
5. Challenges	a) Student commitment and, b) training related.
6. Washback effects	a) Positive and, b) negative.

Findings and Discussion

Reasons for Assigning Teamwork: Development of Competencies

Among the reasons for assigning teamwork, teachers mentioned the development of competencies in students, a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. T3 expresses "they [students] should be able to put the theory into practice". In this statement, T3 is talking about a deeper understanding of theory and combining skills and knowledge related to Competency-based education. T4 and T7 explain "they should find out their strengths and weaknesses while T7 adds "if they are artistic or more creative". These two teachers are discussing the development of the self, which starts by raising awareness. T1 and T5 emphasize the importance of developing responsibility in students. T5 states "I explain that they are responsible for the grade their classmates get". And T2 states that students in their workplace are not going to be working alone. This statement suggests that T2 is preparing the students for the future. The relationship between employment and education is present, another characteristic of Competency-based education.

Reasons for Assigning Teamwork: Collaborative Abilities

There were several reasons that specifically dealt with the development of collaborative abilities. T2 expresses that students need "to learn to work in a collaborative way" so that "they can explain their classmate part and rescue their classmate" and "that they also say if their partner worked". This is an interesting example of the development of attitudes and values through teamwork since it suggests the teacher is promoting "rescuing" the partner, possibly in a group presentation and at the same time honesty, possibly for the grading stage. Another example of developing attitudes and values is stated by T4 "students should be aware of their strengths and weaknesses to help the team". T5 adds that students should "learn how to arrive [approach the group] and, how to interact with the team members". In accordance with T4 and T5, T7 says "they learn negotiation, to take roles such as leadership and in agreement with their strengths take charge of a part of the work, help and learn from each other". Therefore, T5 and T7 are talking about the development of social skills while T5 refers to Socio-constructivism.

Therefore, in relation to theme one of Reasons for assigning teamwork, the teachers know about modern methods of education since they are referring to Socio-constructivism, Competency-based learning and Collaborative learning benefits. Therefore, they assign out-of class teamwork to develop whole learning combining, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, in a collaborative way. One of the most complex tasks for linguistic teachers is assessing teamwork skills fairly because students might not find the usefulness and purpose of working together, or they prefer to work individually. Rogier (2014) asserts that "teachers must consider what the purpose of a particular assessment is and whether this purpose is congruent with the students they are testing and the course they are teaching" (p. 3). Also, the findings in this theme suggest that teachers are "knowledgeable" since they are implementing what Volkov and Volkov (2015) calls "a deep approach to learning". This finding also contradicts the OECD report that the "teaching, learning and assessment still take place in a somewhat 'traditional setting' in Mexico" (Santiago *et al.,* 2012, p. 4).

Assignment Types: Projects

Teachers assign a variety of class projects. T1 states "I give them [students] projects dealing with class topics to research" as T3, who assigns "research projects which imply gathering information and applying theory seen in class". T5 asks students to carry out "field work and observations in real contexts". In addition, T7 expresses "My class is based on mini projects [as a preparation] students do individual work and then they get together and form the teams". Only T6 states "I usually do not leave out-of-class teamwork, I prefer to do it as part of classroom activities". The reason for this is "I want to make sure all of the students really work". Finally, as can be observed, most of the projects ask students to carry out some type of research work.

Assignment Types: Tasks and Presentations

Although many of the teachers asked the students to present the projects, two teachers mention other tasks and presentations. For example, T2 assigns the students to carry out class observations "in teamwork students help and observe teachers and write a report". T2 adds that he asks for "Power-Point presentations and class practices" while T4 mentions "presentations of synthesis about course contents".

In regards to the second theme of Assignment tasks, the participants assign different types of out-of-class projects, most of them deal with research work. Teachers also ask for presentations. Just one participant pointed out that he did not assess out-of-class teamwork because he believed that sometimes one member of a team might have worked more than others. This finding reflects the common challenges of the existence of free riders (Davies, 2009) and social loafing (McGraw & Tidwell, 2001) explained earlier in this paper.

Teacher Strategies: Preparation

Teachers plan what is going to be achieved and developed, as discussed in their reasons for assigning out-of-class teamwork and they also prepare the students for the task, as can be noted in the next statements. T5 states that she prepares students for the projects "I delegate tasks since the beginning of the activity, plan everything that they are going to do" and adds "so that all of them [team members] commit". In addition, T2 expresses that "I emphasize to students that they need to allocate the time since they need to research information and add things" while T1 says "I give them guidelines about what means to work in teams".

Teacher Strategies: Follow-up Sessions

After the teachers assign the projects or tasks, they carry out follow-up sessions, as can be observed in the following statements. T2 states "I give tutorial sessions in class". T3 says "there are always feedback and tutorial sessions" A strategy that T4 uses is to "leave the last 20 minutes of class for feedback sessions to clarify doubts or answer students' questions". T5 mentions that it is "through observation of what they are doing in the integrative projects and revising advances in class". T7 gives time at the beginning of the class "always the first 15 or 20 minutes, I revise how they are doing, if there are doubts" and adds that he checks "if they are researching and verifying valid sources or if they don't know where to look". Even, T6 adds that he would "ask students to turn in advances every week" in the case, he assigns out-of-class teamwork. Therefore, the strategies for follow-up sessions the teachers mentioned are tutorials, progress revisions and feedback on work.

Teacher Strategies: Assessment

Two different strategies T1 comments deal with analysis and assessment of the task. T1 explains that students as an activity "analyze the work done

and tell me exactly how they did it and there are suggestions [feedback from the teacher]" to improve the way they work and the task. T1 adds "another strategy that I have is an individual reading comprehension test about the topic to see if they are involved in the task". Therefore, T1 makes sure that the students are participating equally and know the required information that will enable them to discuss this information or the work among the team members. T1 is preventing what Wilson *et al.,* (2018, p. 4) state that students "just add their pieces to complete the assignment without discussing the work or synthesizing the information" and also, he is enabling them to take Volkov and Volkov's (2015) "deep approach to learning".

In regards to the third theme of Teacher strategies, the participants offer a variety of strategies that they use that can be summarized as follows: *a)* student preparation, *b)* follow-up sessions of various kinds, and *c)* analysis or assessment of the work. Offering tutoring and providing feedback have been effective strategies already known, but the addition of student preparation or training before teamwork and the analysis strategy during teamwork seem to complement the follow-up sessions and would ensure a high quality work by team members.

Evaluation Criteria: Use of Rubrics

The participants' evaluation criteria for grading projects and presentations are the following. T1 uses a checklist "to know what activities they have already done and how they did them and if they considered the guidelines of teamwork skills" while T2 uses rubrics and report sheets. T2 bases the grade on the rubric elements such as "content, how it is presented, topic domain, means of presentation, amount of text on the visuals and questions for the audience". T4's rubric elements are based on "whether the content is precise, complete and logical, whether it [the product] is understandable, presents charts or illustrations to make the document [or presentation] attractive". T5 also uses rubrics and checklists while T7 states "I always give them rubrics, they can be used for self-assessment, and it includes competencies to develop and measure if they achieve them". There-

fore, the teachers use qualitative instruments to grade the out-of-class tasks and projects and these are checklists, rubrics and report sheets. This finding agrees with Coombe *et al.,* (2007) statement explained above that marking alternative assessment tasks also require the development of other means of assessing as observations, the development of rubrics, checklists, report sheets, etcétera.

Evaluation Criteria: Definition of Rubrics

The teachers give definitions for what a rubric is. These are their responses. T1 defines a rubric as a "series of guidelines or requirements to assign a mark and depends on what grading system it is used and it must achieve learning outcomes". T2 states "a rubric helps us [teachers] see the important aspects to consider" and "given before, it helps students not to forget what they need to include". T3 comments that a rubric "is a way to standardize the evaluation criteria for the students". T4 says that "A rubric is like a criterion that includes elements or descriptors to consider for grading and it also has its weights". T5 explains that a rubric "has its respective criteria but each criterion is graded to assign a certain percentage". T7 defines a rubric as a "table with the basic elements for that will be evaluated and a rating scale". By the participant's rubric descriptions, they are well aware of what a rubric is. It is noteworthy that T2 and T3 specifically refer to sharing the rubric with the students. This finding is in agreement with Brookhart (2018) who states the importance of giving the rubrics to the students to clarify the teacher expectations for a task.

Evaluation Criteria: Product or Content Based

The teachers expressed the following for whether they assess the process or the product. T2 states "I just grade the final product not the process of teamwork and I am not aware of their meetings, if they meet, work online or face to face". T3 adds "in general, I do not grade the process only the product" while T4 says "In the feedback sessions I revise the student's

progress, but for marking I focus on the content not on who did what". T5 comments "I check the student progress". However, T5 does not mention allocating a mark. And finally, T7 states the following:

> (Extract 1) Students are sending me their progress. For example, I ask for an individual note- taking activity and they send me their notes individually. Later they work as a team and send me the most important notes and photos until they get their first draft little by little. It depends on the project or if it is the final project, it will be complete, clean and organized, but it will also depend on the rubric because it will be focused on language and content rather than measuring process skills.

As can be observed by the teachers' statements, although teachers are constantly revising students' progress, they focus on the product and not on the process at the time of allocating a grade. Exceptions can be T5 and T7 who can evaluate the student progress with the evidence he asks student to send. However, at the end of Extract 1, T7 implies that the rubric does not contain elements for measuring the process. Therefore, at this point, it is not clear whether they are grading the process. This finding reflects what Ghaith (2002) expresses that there are assessment methods that can promote interpersonal skills since "cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that utilizes group work. It is based on interpersonal skills and group processing as means to achieving individual and group goals" (p. 2). Therefore, the teachers might not see a need for allocating marks for the process. However, in the analysis of the next subtheme, T7 clarifies the way she grades the process.

Evaluation Criteria: Individual or Global Mark

The participants' commented about whether they granted a global or individual mark as follows. T1 expresses "[I grade] both ways I give a grade for the whole team and later I give them an individual activity to see their comprehension about the topic, it can be reading comprehension". This statement suggests that T1 gives a global mark for the team and then tests

each of the students to obtain the individual grade. T2 says "when they present a task orally and one member is better than another one, I cannot assign the same mark, so I grade individually". In an oral presentation, the students present different parts so this statement suggests that T2 combines the individual and the team grade, which gives a different mark to each team member. T3, T4 and T5 state that they give a global mark for the team. T4 adds "Global, because it is easier to assign a mark to the teamwork". An interesting finding is T7 remark:

> (Extract 2) I give three percentages..one is for a self-assessment..a reflection on how they felt working in the team..then there is peer assessment so students can express and provide feedback to others anonymously and the [teacher's] rubric of the teamwork… So, I obtain the whole grade considering these three aspects.

In respect to the findings for the subtheme of Individual or global, three teachers give a global mark while other three grade individually. However, the ones that grade globally follow-up carefully the teamwork process, as seen in the analysis of the strategies the participants use. On the other hand, the teachers that grade individually reflect what Gibbs (1995) states that mixing teamwork and individual marks is called hybrid "in order to limit the possibility of unfairness or bias associated with any system and to assess a wider range of skills or competencies than any method alone could achieve" (p. 10).

Evaluation Criteria: Evaluation Agents

Two teachers mention specifically the evaluation agents, T2 expresses "I give them feedback and they know their classmates' opinion which I average and give them a grade" T2 is talking about peer assessment since he averages the grades. T7 in extract 2 talks about combining self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher's assessment. These findings stated by T2 and T7 follows important suggestions in modern approaches to education. Moreover, modern literature states the need to develop these capaci-

ties in students. Jalil *et al.,* (2017) study revealed that both self-assessment and peer-assessment practices had a positive impact on the self-regulated learning of their 65 participants.

Challenge: Student Commitment

There are several teachers' comments that deal with student commitment. T3 expresses that a challenge is "not knowing whether the team members participated equally". T5 says that there were "a number of students that do not focus on the criteria or techniques that are used to assess their learning and they also protect each other even though they did not work". T2 states that a challenge is "students not working inside the groups" and told the following experience:

> (Extract 3) I had to disintegrate a team because only one student worked, and I placed her in another team. The rest of the students had the opportunity to work individually, but they decided not to work well and they failed the course.

As can be observed by the teacher's statements, they reflect the long-time common problem of uncommitted team members discussed by Davies (2009). In the case of T7, the problem is the sucker effect that is free riders causing more free riders because only one student worked. In regards to T3, he is not sure of the degree of student commitment thinking that some students could have worked more than other members of the team. Lastly, the findings of T5 suggest that the students worked, but turned in a weak product since they did not revise what they had to do and thus, took a superficial approach to learning. Therefore, the challenges T3 and T5 mention deal with degrees of involvement what McGraw and Tidwell call "social loafing" which is the reduction in effort from the other members of the team (McGraw & Tidwell, 2001).

Challenge: Training Related

Two teachers express other types of challenges. T1 says that it was a challenge "to make students understand what collaborative work entails and then they complain to the authorities that the teacher doesn't work". T7 adds the other challenge "at the beginning of the course, I do not know the students personal and teamwork skills, so I let them free until I start to know them, [and then] I can control some of the variables". Therefore, T1 statement suggests that the students come to the university not used to working in teams. This finding reflects the problem explained by Borg (2006) about difficulties in implementing teamwork in higher education when students have not been exposed before in previous levels of education. In case of T1, the finding supports the OECD report that the "teaching, learning and assessment still take place in a somewhat 'traditional setting' in Mexico" (Santiago *et al.,* 2012, p. 4). However, it will refer to lower levels of education. In the case of T7, the challenge refers to knowing the students' strengths and weaknesses in order to set the teams. An important issue is team setting whether it is teacher- or student-led. Team setting needs to vary for the students to experience different kinds of roles inside a team. This will give them the chance to develop different collaborative abilities. For example, working with others, being flexible, negotiating differently, not being always the leader, among others.

Washback Effects: Positive

The participant teachers commented several washback effects. T2, who previously expressed to average peer and teacher assessments, says "I like observing students being happy with their work, their classmates' opinions and my feedback". He adds "they [students] understand that they are not going to be working by themselves in the workplace". It can be noted that T2 is preparing his students to enter the workforce and has a positive washback effect because of the students' satisfaction with their work. T3 states that he is "generally satisfied with teamwork and its results, however, there are many things to improve". T7 explains "I've seen a positive impact

on the students, they are developing self-critique, self-analysis, self-reflection and they are not only developing learning strategies, but also life competencies". However, T7 also recognizes that "there are not specific guidelines to assess teamwork because we find many ways, and there is no training on how to do it". Therefore, T2, T3 and T7 after implementing and grading teamwork have a positive washback effect caused for several reasons. These reasons are observing a positive impact on the development of learning strategies, abilities and competencies as well as, preparing the students for their future life. However, they recognize the need for training and that there are aspects to improve.

Washback Effects: Negative

On the other hand, there were teachers who express negative feelings. T1 states "I am not quite satisfied because I believe that I need to look for more teaching tools for teamwork, maybe there are aspects I do not know". In the same vein, T4 expresses "I am more or less satisfied… and not satisfied because we find a diversity of ways and not specific guidelines to assess teamwork." T5 adds "I think I need to revise the teamwork assignments and monitor my students better". Lastly, T6 who does not assign teamwork said "I don't believe in teamwork" arguing that the grade is subjective since all of the students work and receive a same grade thus, asks for individual work. By these teacher statements, it is the teachers' claim for more and specific training on implementing and evaluating teamwork.

In regards to the theme of Washback effects in general, most of the teachers have mixed feelings and degrees of satisfaction. They are satisfied when they see the positive impact that teamwork has on the students' academic and personal development. An interesting result is that although they are doing a very good job, they feel insecure of what they are doing and thus, claim for more training on how to implement and evaluate teamwork.

Conclusions

The study set out to explore the implementation and assessment practices of college linguistics teachers concerning out-of-class teamwork in seven different states in Mexico. Results evidence that the participants are knowledgeable about modern methods of education and the benefits and challenges of teamwork. They are also experienced in the implementation and assessment practices with the exception of one teacher who prefers individual work. This finding contradicts the OECD report that the "teaching, learning and assessment still take place in a somewhat 'traditional setting' in Mexico" (Santiago *et al.,* 2012). Another result was that most of the teachers assign projects, tasks and presentations that include some research work. The participants use qualitative instruments such as rubrics checklists and report sheets in agreement with Coombe *et al.,* (2007) who claim that marking alternative assessment tasks also require the development of other means of assessing. An interesting result was that some teachers grade the product and others also the process using hybrid marking that is, combining peer assessment, teacher assessment and self-assessment. The challenges that teachers mentioned referred to different degrees of student commitment, team setting and the need for training in students and teachers in regards to teamwork. The need for more teacher training was verified when the participants expressed mixed feelings and degrees of satisfaction in implementing and assessing teamwork even though, they carry out good work.

Therefore, an implication drawn from this study is the need for teacher education programs to include specific guidelines for implementing and evaluating teamwork since teachers feel insecure about their work. Noteworthy findings are the strategies teachers use to make teamwork effective and balance students' active participation in their own team to promote deep learning. These strategies are student preparation, diverse follow-up sessions and analysis of teamwork strategies and work.

As a result of this study, a proposal is made to guide effective teamwork to help novice teachers or teachers who feel insecure. This proposal is to follow six steps. First, prepare student on what teamwork entails, ex-

plain the project or task and ensure understanding. Second, set teams varying team formation for each new assignment to develop the practice of different roles inside the teams. Third, conduct follow up strategies to ensure students involvement such as tutorials, handing in individual progress work or reports, progress revisions and feedback sessions. Forth, plan activities for analysis of task collaboration and content objective by the team members to reflect on further modifications of the work. Fifth, remind students to compare the work with the checklist or rubric before handing in the project or designing the presentation. Sixth, use hybrid marking for the assessment stage.

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Appendix

Question Guide for Interview

1. Independently of the subject that you teach, what kinds of out-of-the-class teamwork assignments do you ask your students to do?

2. What kinds of knowledge or competencies do you expect that your students develop in that assignment?

3. How do you promote your students' individual responsibility within teamwork activities?

4. What kinds of strategies do you normally use to follow up teamwork or to find out any potential problems [for example: mentoring, class time to provide feedback, etc.]?

5. What are the evaluation instruments and criteria you use for teamwork?

6. What do you consider a rubric?

7. How do you grade teamwork activities outside the classroom?

8. How do you evaluate teamwork activities? Do you evaluate globally or each student separately?

9. What are the challenges that you face when you evaluate teamwork and how have you addressed them?

10. Are you satisfied with the process of evaluating teamwork outside the classroom? Why?

11. Do you believe that the evaluation strategies you use obtain a positive effect on students? Why?