



Mexican Secondary School Teachers' Linguistic Expression of Attitude towards the National English Program in Basic Education

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Abstract

Teachers' attitudes play an important role in the implementation of educational reforms and innovations (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Rogers, 2003; Waters, 2009; Wedell, 2009). Desired changes can successfully go through only if teachers respond positively to putting into effect those changes. Mexico is at present facing the challenge of an educational reform in basic education that involves adopting a new English as a second language program. Information about teachers' attitudes towards the change is crucial to anticipate possible ways in which the process could unfold. This study explores the use of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) to examine the linguistic expressions of attitude toward the Mexican National English Program for Basic Education. Data came from 12 focus group discussions conducted as part of a state-wide project with 86 secondary school teachers and supervisors in the northeastern corner of the country. Findings indicate that teachers' negative attitudes towards the program were associated to their negative evaluation of the procedures to disseminate information about the program, and the quantity and quality of teacher training. Findings also shed light on the conventions related to the roles that teachers and administrators play in the reform implementation process. Implications of the findings are briefly discussed.

Keywords: appraisal theory, attitude, systemic functional linguistics, English as a second language, language teachers

1. Introduction

For a long time, the study on attitudes has been a shared endeavor in the social sciences with especially important contributions from the fields of social psychology (Bandura, 1971; Crano & Prislin, 2011), sociology (Chaiklin, 2011; Schuman & Johnson, 1976), communications (Lauring & Selmer, 2012), political science (Ksiazkiewicz & Hedrick, 2013; Putnam, 1966), and marketing (Liao & Cheung, 2001). Recently, linguistic approaches are increasingly addressing the question of how attitudes are expressed in language. A salient theoretical and analytical tool to examine the language of attitude is Appraisal Theory (Eggins & Slade, 1997; Iedema, 2000; Macken-Horarik & Martin, 2003; Martin, 2003; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2004).

In the context of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Appraisal is a theory that describes the types of language used in communicating emotion and opinion. Emotional reactions, judgments of behavior, and evaluation of things, are types of attitude (Martin and White, 2005). Appraisal theory suggests ways in which individuals use language to communicate their attitudes. Research using the theory as framework focuses on understanding variations in evaluative linguistic resources depending on purpose and context, and attempts to examine underlying ideological assumptions (Kaplan, 2004).

The Appraisal Theory framework has been used to examine students' academic writing (Brooke, 2014; Derewianka, 2007; Folkeryd, 2006; Hood, 2010; Liu, 2013; Xinghua & Thompson, 2009), and newspaper articles (Beckett, 2009; González & González, 2012; González Rodríguez, 2011; Olivieri Pacheco, 2013). Other studies that use the Appraisal Theory have examined movie reviews (Whitelaw, Garg, & Argamon, 2005), and e-mail interactions of students working telecollaboratively (Belz, 2003). One study was found that focused on the conversations of teachers in Australia (Arkoudis, 2006).

The study by Arkoudis (2006) examined the interactions of a teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) and a science teacher, as they planned a class. Issues of how they negotiated their pedagogy and reached understandings were explored with the use of Positioning Theory (Harré, 1999) and Appraisal Theory (Martin, 2000). Policy aimed at

integrating ESL and mainstream teachers to work collaboratively in planning the curriculum. However, ESL teachers were often isolated in a low status position within the school and were not trained in presenting their subject knowledge to other teachers. The policy directives had offered the teachers very little conceptualization of how collaborative planning could be done effectively. Results of the linguistic analysis indicated that the ESL teacher felt uneasy about working with the mainstream teacher; their professional relationship was full of misunderstandings and misconceptions. The subject specialist had the power to accept or reject suggestions and the ESL teacher felt increasingly frustrated. Policy directives had wrongly assumed that ESL and mainstream teachers could engage in cross-disciplinary planning.

The current study continues the use of the Appraisal Theory framework (Martin & White, 2005) with ESL teachers and examines the expressions of attitude in a selection of comments made by Mexican secondary teachers during focus group discussions. The following section presents the background of the study. Section three explains the theoretical framework and section four describes the corpus, data analysis procedures and results. Section five is used to interpret the findings and the last section discusses recommendations to teacher preparation opportunities.

1.1 Background of the Study

Countries around the world are engaged in school reform efforts, most of them involving the inclusion of English in all educational levels (Tocalli-Beller, 2007; Vera, 2008; Nunan, 1999). In Mexico English has been taught in secondary education as a compulsory subject since 1993, and although a number of changes in terms of curriculum hours and methods had been made, results have always been far from satisfactory. To raise the level of expected proficiency, a National English Program for Basic Education (NEPBE) was launched in 2009 for pre and elementary school, and in 2011 for secondary school. The program requires a total of 1,060 class hours, and is intended to serve approximately 6.7 million students in 28,000 schools. At completion of K-12 education, students are expected to attain a B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference.

According to the program:

The articulation of the teaching of English in all three levels of basic education has the aim to guarantee that, by the time students complete their secondary education, they will have developed the necessary multilingual and multicultural competencies to face the communicative challenges of a globalized world successfully, to build a broader vision of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world, and thus, to respect their own and other cultures. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011, p. 55).

In spite of being a national curriculum, every state in the country is responsible for operating the program and achieving its goals. This has placed a major demand on state educational authorities, mainly because of the urgency to qualify a large number of ESL teachers to provide total coverage by the year 2018. This study is part of a larger effort on one state in the northeast part of the country, to explore the conditions and social climate for the development of a teacher preparation strategy. Data were gathered by means of a survey, focus group discussions and class observations in the north, center and south regions of the state). The current analysis was made on data that came from the focus group discussions only. The purpose of the focus groups was to explore the participants' opinions about the NEPBE. Thus, five cards, which contained extracts taken from the program, were prepared to initiate discussions. In each session, a volunteer was asked to read the information in the card and the participants were invited to express their opinions and ideas freely. Each card triggered discussions that lasted 20 to 25 minutes. Sessions lasted 2 hours, on average. To facilitate communication during the focus group discussions, the native language of the participants (Spanish) was used. The sessions were recorded with their consent and then transcribed. The extracts selected for analysis were translated into English. Translation was reviewed by both researchers and a bilingual university professor, external to the study.

The participants seemed uncomfortable when commenting about the NEPBE. They constantly referred to the adverse conditions for the implementation of the NEPBE and appeared resistant to putting the program into practice. The researchers sensed tensions among the teachers and negative attitudes towards the NEPBE. This situation awakened our interest in examining the way they talked about the program and in focusing on the negative feelings associated to it. There seems to be consensus on the opinion that teachers' attitudes play an important role in the adoption of an educational reform or innovation (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Rogers, 2003; Waters, 2009; Wedell, 2009). Therefore, the focus of the study was on the attitude of ESL secondary education teachers towards the NEPBE, using Appraisal Theory as a framework.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Appraisal Theory was first proposed by Martin and White in 2005 and their work was extensively influenced by prior work within the field of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Broadly speaking, Appraisal Theory provides a framework and a model to analyze sentiment in texts. Authors claim that there are traces of a people's attitudes in the linguistic representations which can be identified by analyzing their written or spoken language.

Appraisal Theory has three main components: (1) engagement, (2) attitude, and (3) graduation. This study focuses exclusively on attitude. Martin and White (2005) contend that the ATTITUDE component has three regions: (1) AFFECT, (2) JUDGMENT, and (3) APPRECIATION. AFFECT deals with linguistic resources for construing emotional reactions. JUDGMENT is concerned with the linguistic resources used to assess the behavior of others. The APPRECIATION region has to do with the lexical resources used to construe the value of things. AFFECT is the region related to feelings. AFFECT groups emotions into three mayor categories. The first group of emotions includes feelings related to happiness and sadness. Noun words (e.g.: misery, antipathy) and adjectives (e.g.: miserable, sad) relate to the un/happiness group. The second group involves those emotions related to peace and anxiety. Lexical items such as

restless, confident, and anxious involve feelings of the in/security group. The third group of emotions is linked to achievements and frustrations. Angry, pleased, and satisfied are examples of lexical items related to the dis/satisfaction group of emotions.

JUDGEMENT is the region that evaluates the behaviors of others. Appreciations are made on the basis of what is socially accepted or valued. JUDGEMENT can evaluate aspects of normality (e.g.: stable), capability (e.g.: experienced), tenacity (e.g.: patient), truthfulness (e.g.: credible), and ethics (e.g.: fair) on other individuals.

APPRECIATION relates to the evaluations of things and natural phenomena. APPRECIATION is divided into three categories with corresponding lexical items: (1) reaction, (2) composition, and (3) valuation. Reaction includes lexical items that inform about the extent to which something catches our attention or pleases us (e.g.: fascinating, remarkable). Composition includes two subcategories: balanced (e.g.: uneven, distorted) and complex (e.g.: detailed, precise). The value category is linked to the evaluations of things in terms of the extent to which something is worth or not (e.g.: ineffective, useless).

Although the three regions of ATTITUDE are interconnected, AFFECT is central to ATTITUDES. AFFECT is influenced by the individuals' JUDGEMENTS and APPRECIATION. The evaluation of behaviors and the evaluation of things rework feelings. Thus, the way individuals may feel towards something is triggered by their own perceptions and evaluations of that something.

There are three considerations in relation to the system of ATTITUDE that need to be taken into account. First, the system of ATTITUDE takes lexical units as indicators of attitudes, but it is not limited to the word level. Other constructions may invoke these regions. For example, the construction tears were falling down relates to the feeling of unhappiness without making use of AFFECT-related lexical items (e.g., sadness, grief). This realization is called INVOKED and it differs from explicit or INSCRIBED realizations (Martin & White, 2005). Thus, attitudes may be externalized indirectly.

Second, the interpretation of an attitude depends on the context of language use. Interpretations are only validated within the context in which the pieces of language were produced and within the socially construed conventions which frame the pieces of realizations. For example, even if the word good, relates to a positive APPRECIATION, the whole construction in which this word is placed may indicate something entirely opposite to a positive APPRECIATION. For example, the word good in the expression: "mmm, I don't know... this is a good book but it lacks a catchy plot", is preceded by a negative evaluation of the quality of the book. Therefore, even if the word good relates to a positive APPRECIATION, the specific example invokes a negative APPRECIATION of book by the expression lacks a catchy plot.

Third, the three regions of ATTITUDE may overlap. In the construction he proved to be a fascinating player, it is possible to identify a positive INSCRIBED JUDGEMENT of player (fascinating) and, at the same time, a positive INVOKED APPRECIATION (perhaps the player scored a fascinating goal). Thus, one construction may inform about a persons' negative and positive evaluations of behaviors or things, in tandem.

Appraisal theory can provide a highly complex and well-grounded model for exploring attitudes of language in use. The following section describes the corpus, data analysis procedures and results of the analysis.

2. Corpus, Data Analysis, and Results

The researchers examined transcriptions containing a total of 85,097 words produced by 86 secondary English language teachers and supervisors during 12 focus groups. After data reduction, seven transcript extracts resulted for interpretation.

The linguistic analysis was made in three stages: data reduction, identification of AFFECT, and identification of JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION. Analysis required moving back and forth from coding segments of text, to moving to a different stage, or consulting the theory. Thus, data analysis was a recursive rather than a linear process.

To ensure the quality and reliability of the analysis, the researchers coded independently and then met to discuss findings, calibrate criteria, and reach agreements.

2.1 Data Reduction

The first stage of the analysis was data reduction. To minimize as much as possible our subjectivity during the data reduction process, a systematic procedure with a pre-established set of criteria was designed. The criteria were the following:

- a) Extracts contained at least one lexical item that denoted a marked negative attitude.
- b) Extracts that contained lexical items that denoted negative attitude but did not make reference to the NEPBE, were discarded.
- c) Several extracts of an individual participant with lexical items that denoted negative attitude and made reference to the NEPBE, but made no further contribution, were discarded.

The data reduction process resulted in seven extracts. Lexical items that denoted negative attitude towards the NEPBE and determined the inclusion of extracts in the analysis were: dissatisfaction, anger, displeased, displeasure, insubordination and chaos. The extracts were selected from the focus group comments of four female and three male participants. Four were teachers and three were supervisors from schools in five cities of the north and south of the

state. Information on the selected extracts and participants is shown on Table 1.

Table 1. Selected extracts and participants' characteristics

Extract	Lexical item	Gender	Position	City	School	Region
MTMoG1	Dissatisfaction	Male	Teacher	Mo	G1	South
MSMeG1	Anger	Male	Supervisor	Me	G1	South
FTToG1	Displeased	Female	Teacher	To	G1	South
FSMoT3	Displeasure	Female	Supervisor	Mo	T3	South
MTMoT3	Displeasure	Female	Teacher	Mo	T3	South
FTMsT4	Insubordination	Female	Teacher	Ms	T4	North
MSMnG9	Chaos	Male	Supervisor	Mn	G9	North

2.2 Identification of AFFECT

Once data were reduced to a manageable number of extracts, and since AFFECT (feelings) is central to ATTITUDE, the next stage consisted in identifying the participants' feelings (either INSCRIBED or INVOKED). This stage included two phases. The first was to identify the feelings associated to the lexical items. The second phase was to make a closer examination to identify other emotions in each one of the extracts.

Analysis of the lexical items resulted in three types of emotions: dissatisfaction, anger and displeasure. Five of the participants used words that indicated a marked negative feeling (dissatisfaction, anger, displeased, displeasure) whereas the other two participants' feelings were invoked from the words insubordination –indicating a feeling of displeasure- and chaos –indicating a feeling of dissatisfaction-. Table 2 below shows these findings.

Table 2. Appraising lexical items and AFFECT identified in phase 1 of stage 2

Extract	Appraising lexical items	AFFECT
MTMoG1	Dissatisfaction	INSCRIBED: dissatisfied
MSMeG1	Anger	INSCRIBED: angry
FTToG1	Displeased	INSCRIBED: displeased
FSMoT3	Displeasure	INSCRIBED: displeased
MTMoT3	Displeasure	INSCRIBED: displeased
FTMsT4	Insubordination	INVOKED: displeased
MSMnG9	Chaos	INVOKED: dissatisfied

In the second phase of stage two, a closer examination of the extracts was made to identify other negative feelings in the extracts. The analysis revealed that within the seven selected extracts there were in total 16 different expressions related to the negative feelings. In addition to the first three negative emotions identified from the first analysis – dissatisfaction, anger and displeasure- three other negative feelings were added to the list. These negative feelings were: uneasy, uncertain and disregarded. Thus, a total of six different negative feelings were identified which were distributed as follows: displeased (6), dissatisfied (3), uncertain (3), angry (2), disregarded (2), and uneasy (1). These findings are shown on Table 3.

Table 3. Appraising items/constructions and AFFECT identified in phase 2 of stage 2

Extract	Appraising items/constructions	AFFECT
MTMoG1	[...] there is much uneasiness.	INSCRIBED: uneasy
	[...] dissatisfaction.	INSCRIBED: dissatisfied
	[...] there are always questions.	INVOKED: uncertain
	[...] situations of dissatisfaction.	INSCRIBED: : dissatisfied
MSMeG1	[...] anger.	INSCRIBED: angry
	[...] the abandonment.	INVOKED: disregarded
	[...] angrier [...]	INSCRIBED: angry
FTToG1	[...] displeased [...]	INSCRIBED: displeased
	We felt confident [...]	INVOKED: uncertain
FSMoT3	[...] displeasure.	INSCRIBED: displeased
	[...] we were not taken into account.	INVOKED: disregarded
MTMoT3	¿Why are we obliged to go?	INVOKED: displeased
	[...] displeasure.	INSCRIBED: displeased
FTMsT4	[...] we shouldn't only be ordered what to do.	INVOKED: displeased
	[...] insubordination.	INVOKED: displeased
MSMnG9	[...] we overwhelmed them with questions.	INVOKED: uncertain
	[...]chaos [...]	INVOKED: dissatisfied

2.3 Identification of JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION

The third stage of the analysis focused on the unfolding of the motifs that triggered the participants' feelings (Martin & White, 2005, p. 71). This stage included two phases. During the first phase the aim was to identify the lexicogrammar related to JUDGEMENT. The second phase was directed to the identification of the lexicogrammar related to APPRECIATION.

The identification of the JUDGEMENT-related lexicogrammar revealed 11 expressions that made negative judgments of behavior. The most salient finding is that most of those negative evaluations (8 out of 11) were made towards the educational authorities responsible for the implementation of the NEPBE. Only two of those evaluations were directed towards a sub-principal and one towards a group of teacher trainers. It was also found that the evaluations involved three categories: Normality (6), Capacity (2) and Propriety (3). A summary of these findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Unfolding motifs of JUDGEMENT

Extract	Items/constructions	JUDGEMENT	Agent appraised
MTMoG1	they do not send information. they are not well coordinated. [the information] comes all of a sudden.	INSCRIBED: Normality INSCRIBED: Capacity INVOKED: Normality	Agent appraised Passive voice used. Agents are not directly stated. In the context, it may be said that participants refer to educational authorities responsible for the reform.
MSMeG1	[...]the abandonment. Nobody has told us how to manage the program.	INVOKED: Normality INSCRIBED: Normality	
FTToG1	[...]in the 2006 program we had a lot of training.	INVOKED: Normality	
FSMoT3	[...] we were not taken into account.	INSCRIBED: Normality	
MTMoT3	[...] why are we obliged to go? [...] the sub-principal asks me: why don't you go?	INSCRIBED: Propriety INSCRIBED: Propriety	sub-principal
FTMsT4	[...] we shouldn't only be ordered what to do.	INSCRIBED: Propriety	Same as extracts MTMoG1-FSMoT3
MSMnG9	We made them [trainers] feel confused.	INVOKED: Capacity	Teacher trainers

The second phase of stage three was focused on identifying the lexicogrammar related to APPRECIATION. The analysis revealed three expressions indicating negative appreciation. Two of those expressions evaluated the information provided about the educational reform as difficult to understand (composition: complex). The other expression indicated that the teacher training courses were of no value as the participants already knew the contents of the course. These findings can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Unfolding motifs of APPRECIATION

Extract	Items/constructions	APPRECIATION	Object appraised
MTMoG1	[...] nothing concrete. [...] there is never concrete information.	INSCRIBED: Composition: complex INSCRIBED: Composition: complex	information Information
MTMoT3	In relation to the Friday courses we already know [the language], we master it since the age of 14- 15 and we have the certification.	INVOKED: Valuation	Course

3. Interpretation of Findings

The most relevant finding that emerged from the linguistic analysis is that the negative attitudes were not associated to the curriculum, but to the program administration and management. The participants used the lexical items *displeasure*, *uneasiness*, *dissatisfaction* and *anger*; and they appeared to feel uncertain and disregarded. Findings suggest that participants' feelings of uncertainty and of being disregarded connect mostly with their perceptions of the procedures and actions taken by administrators. In particular, participants evaluated negatively the procedures related to the dissemination of information about the reform, and the amount and quality of teacher training.

An aspect that triggered negative feelings, and consequently a negative attitude, was the fact that teachers' views were not taken into consideration for the development of the program. Linguistic analysis of extract FSMoT3, taken from the comments of a supervisor, suggests that feeling displeased resulted from feeling disregarded or ignored by the designers of the program¹. The comment was:

[...] Many colleagues expressed their *displeasure* (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: displeased) [...] because they say *we were not taken into account* (AFFECT: INVOKED: disregarded) (JUDGEMENT: INSCRIBED:

Normality) [...] in the development of the program. My intervention is at the level of directing schools [...] That is, we receive the program and we operate it but it comes from presidential agreements. [FSMoT3]

Extract MTMoG1 shows that the quality of the information about the program and the manner in which it was delivered was evaluated negatively by the participant. These negative evaluations were linked to feelings of dissatisfaction and uneasiness. Not being consulted when the program was developed and receiving scarce and unclear information contributed to the emergence of negative feelings and, as a consequence, a negative attitude towards the NEPBE on the part of the participants.

There is much uneasiness (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: uneasy) in relation to the program [...] *they do not send information* (JUDGEMENT: INSCRIBED: Normality), *nothing concrete* (APPRECIATION: Composition: complex). I mean, *they are not well coordinated* (JUDGEMENT: INSCRIBED: Capacity). Besides [...] sometimes it [*the information*] *comes all of a sudden* (JUDGEMENT: INVOKED: Normality) [...] and there is a lot of *dissatisfaction* (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: dissatisfied) because *there are always questions* (AFFECT: INVOKED: Uncertain) [...] *there is never concrete information* (APPRECIATION: Composition: complex) and it causes *situations of dissatisfaction* (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: dissatisfied) firstly, on the part of principals and then, teachers [...]. [MTMoG1]

Negative attitudes of the participants were also related to the need for teacher training. Analysis of extract MSMG1 suggests that the lack of appropriate teacher training led the participants to feel disregarded and angry.

What is our anger? (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: angry) *Abandonment!* (AFFECT: INVOKED: disregarded) (JUDGEMENT: INVOKED: Normality). Because we were used to have people coming with better methodologies to train us to improve our teaching practice [...] *Nobody has told us how to put the program into practice* (JUDGEMENT: INSCRIBED: Normality) [...]. We all have been pushed to work on it together, some of us are *angrier* (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: angry) than others, needs are different. [MSMG1]

Negative evaluation of teacher training was also found in extract FIToG1. Analysis suggests that the lack of teacher training made teachers feel uncertain, and this uncertainty led to feelings of displeasure.

Everybody in the whole state is *displeased* (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: displeased) because *in the 2006 program we had a lot of training* (JUDGEMENT: INVOKED: Normality). *We felt confident* (AFFECT: INVOKED: uncertain) [because] we knew the program well. [FIToG1]

A third negative attitude seems to have resulted from the negative evaluations of the quality of the teacher training courses and the strict position taken by one of the sub-principals. This can be observed in extract MTMoT3 below. Analysis indicated that the participant considered that one of the teacher training courses offered for the implementation of the NEPBE was useless. Analysis of the extract also suggests that the irrelevance of course contents combined with the non-indulgence of a sub-principal resulted in feelings of displeasure. (Note: displeasure was the closest translation found for the word *inconformidad* in this context).

In relation to the Friday courses, we already know it [the second language], we master it since we were 14 or 15 years old and we have a certification (APPRECIATION). So, *why are we forced to go?* (AFFECT: INVOKED: displeased) (JUDGEMENT: INSCRIBED: Propriety) to a course if we know and master the language (APPRECIATION)? *What is more, I get absence marks and I get reports and the sub-principal asks me, why don't you attend?* (JUDGEMENT: INSCRIBED: Propriety) So, that's my *displeasure* (AFFECT: INSCRIBED: displeased). [MTMoT3]

Similarly, in extract MSMnG9, the participant evaluated negatively the trainers. First, the participant reported to have overwhelmed the trainers with questions (invoking uncertainty) and confused those who could not answer the questions (an invoked negative appreciation of their capacities to answer the questions). Not having received the expected answers from the teacher trainers triggered a sense of dissatisfaction as inferred from the use of the lexical item *chaos* to refer to the program.

[...] the program changed in November 2011 [...] a meeting that lasted several hours with people who came from city X [and] went to city Y. They were with us [and] *we overwhelmed them with questions* (AFFECT: INVOKED: uncertain). *We made them feel confused* (JUDGEMENT: INVOKED: Capacity) [...]. In my opinion, the 2011 program is a *chaos* (AFFECT: INVOKED dissatisfied). [MSMnG9]

Finally, extract FTMsT4 gives evidence of how the participant made a negative evaluation of the administrators of the NEPBE. An invoked feeling of displeasure was triggered by the fact that "people from the top only give orders" (as inferred from the euphemisms used by the participant). The use of the lexical item *insubordination* also invokes a feeling of dissatisfaction indicating a negative predisposition to act / attitude.

[...] I mean, everything should come well [organized] from the top [...] and *they should not give us orders about what to do* (AFFECT: INVOKED: displeased) (JUDGEMENT: INSCRIBED: Propriety). Supervision and coordination activities are very important [...]. That is why there is now such *insubordination* (AFFECT: INVOKED: displeased). *There must be good supervision and coordination* (JUDGEMENT). [FTMsT4]

4. Discussion

Data reduction procedures were focused on identifying lexical items that reflected negative feelings as indicators of negative attitude. Seven extracts resulted from the procedure. Negative feelings were not related to the curriculum, but to the negative evaluations of the procedures used for the dissemination of the information about the NEPBE, and the quantity and quality of teacher training.

Language works as a means to externalize people's inner and social understanding of reality. Data for the study came from ESL teachers, in seven cities of the state that participated in different focus group discussions. The shared negative attitude toward the program administrators suggests that top-down policy implementation that did not engage cues from secondary ESL teachers –the actual implementators of educational policy–, did not fulfil their expectations. Closer attention should be paid to participatory curriculum development that involves all stakeholders, primarily teachers, and provides opportunities for mutual learning. A fresh new start should be considered before sustainable decisions are likely to become more difficult to put in place successfully.

On the other hand, the constant reference to the lack of teacher training and information could also be an indicator of the bivalent ways in which the participants positioned themselves in the implementation process of the reform. It seems that the participants assumed a role in which they wanted to be told what and how to do their job (see extracts MTMoG1, FTToG1, MSMoG1 and MTMoG1). Simultaneously, they claimed that they were not taken into account in the program design (FSMoT3). These findings may suggest that the participants probably felt the urge to have a more active participation in reform decisions. However, they positioned themselves as program executers because that is the role that they know best.

Finally, linguistic evaluations of both, teachers and supervisors, were negative toward the reform. If these stakeholders are not allowed discretion in the implementation process with respect to local conditions, then the policy is at risk of failure. Expertise of people impacted by the policy is essential to increase the likelihood of its approbation and success.

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Note ¹. Transcription conventions: (1) Underlined: Intensification resource. (2) Bold: Attitude marker. (3) Bold and underlined: Attitude marker with infused grading. This is an example.