

# **Autobiographies: A Way to Explore Student-Teachers' Beliefs in a Teacher Education Program**

**Autobiografías: una forma de explorar las creencias de docentes  
en formación en un programa de Licenciatura en Inglés**

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Autobiographies depict with words life stories, personal experiences, and perceptions that allow researchers to deeply understand the way people see life, reflect, and construct meaning out of experiences. This article aims at describing the contributions of autobiographies as valuable resources in qualitative research when exploring people's beliefs, personal knowledge, and changes as a result of experience and learning. This is all based on a research project carried out at a Colombian public university, where students from the undergraduate English teaching program wrote their language learning stories which were used as an instrument to garner data. The project also aims at demonstrating how these narratives exhibit human activity and diverse events that may have a significant effect on the epistemologies and methodologies of teacher education.

*Key words:* Autobiographical narratives, qualitative research, students' beliefs, teacher education.

Las autobiografías perfilan con palabras las historias de vida, experiencias personales y percepciones que brindan a los investigadores una profunda comprensión de la manera como las personas ven la vida, reflexionan y construyen significado a partir de esas experiencias. Este artículo tiene como objetivo describir las contribuciones de las autobiografías como recursos valiosos en la investigación cualitativa por cuanto son un medio para explorar las creencias, el conocimiento personal y los cambios en los individuos como resultado de la experiencia y el aprendizaje. El presente trabajo se basa en una investigación realizada en una universidad pública colombiana, en la que estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Inglés narraron sus historias sobre el aprendizaje de la lengua; narraciones que fueron usadas como instrumentos para la recolección de información. Adicionalmente, se busca demostrar cómo dichas narrativas describen la actividad humana y diversos eventos que pudiesen tener un efecto significativo en la construcción epistemológica y metodológica en la formación de docentes.

*Palabras clave:* autobiografías, creencias de los estudiantes, formación docente, investigación cualitativa.

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## Introduction

This paper aims at showing the significance of studying autobiographies as a source for examining student-teachers' beliefs, the way they are analyzed and the answers they provide regarding how students start framing their understanding about teaching by looking at their learning histories. The accounts also revealed the concomitant influence of teacher education subjects on their renewed or in-construction pedagogical conceptions. To understand the student-teachers' conceptions and the role they play in their education may make a great contribution in two directions. One of them is to rethink the teacher education programs content and student-teachers' own conceptions behind the theories presented in such programs. The second one is to enhance student-teachers' knowledge growth providing them with opportunities to make their preexisting knowledge explicit to be examined and challenged (Calderhead & Robson, 1991). This study also attempts to provide insights that may serve to guide similar studies and conceive autobiographies as a way to promote pedagogical practice understanding and teacher development in teacher education programs, as it has been a major discovery in this research. It simultaneously attempts to lead to new considerations of our role as teacher educators who particularly guide teaching practicum processes. Unfortunately, based on the related literature, both this issue and the contribution that personal accounts may make to teacher education programs tend to be overlooked in our context, as stated by Woods (as cited in Mendieta, 2011):

Research has addressed extensively what happens to second language learners from a host of perspectives but has failed somehow to examine the processes by which language teachers plan and make decisions about teaching, as well as what they bring to the second language classroom such as knowledge base, beliefs and experiences. (p. 90)

To arrive at the findings in this study, it was also important to explore ways of analyzing narratives as a

path of learning and growing as learners of teaching and teacher educators. For this purpose it was crucial to follow a systematic process in order to interpret the participants' stories. The implicit timelines of the students' learning and teaching histories helped identify the critical incidents, salient factors, and trends likely to influence student teachers' teaching theories and classroom practices, issues which will be expanded upon in the research design segment.

The oncoming sections of this article will discuss the concepts of autobiographies as a narrative mode and their role in the exploration of beliefs in pre-service teachers, as well as their contribution to teacher education programs. Furthermore, the methodology followed is described and the results and conclusions presented.

## Theoretical Framework

### Autobiographies in Teacher Education

Autobiographies as a way of narrative have become paramount in the teacher education field and, indeed, have become a lens to explore and facilitate understanding of teaching practices and to delve into the what, the how, and the why of pedagogical actions. In some local studies connected to the use of narrations to explore beliefs and practices, Clavijo (2000) draws attention to autobiographies as a way to bring together who the teachers are as people, their sense of self, their knowledge base, and understanding of their practices and social, historical, and cultural values as well as how they permeate practice. The latter were also evident in the present study as a decisive dimension in approaching the interpretation of autobiographies. Regarding the approaches followed in order to uncover what autobiographies contain, Mendieta (2011) describes the construction of narratives around teachers' experiences and beliefs with respect to curriculum. Those experiences and

beliefs are reflected in the past and present language learning and language teaching practice. The final integration of the former items into a story after the analysis reflects commonalities and differences of the participants' knowledge base, beliefs and experiences. Moreover, some of the outcomes brought to surface when exploring autobiographies have to do with the rediscovery of memories, the development of new perspectives on teaching, the discovery of reasons behind personal beliefs systems or the enunciation of new ones (Bailey et al., 1996). This has been an observable fact in this study which will be later illustrated. Furthermore, great emphasis has also been placed on teachers' identity as a need that teachers make sense of themselves by stressing the importance of relating the personal with the professional realm, as well as teaching and learning in the everlasting quest of self-understanding (Serna, 2005). Other local studies in the area have explored the topic of beliefs in relation to assessment and have made visible the dissonance between beliefs and practices (Muñoz, Palacio, & Escobar, 2012). In fact, this is a matter we highly anticipate to be undertaken near the end of the whole project through class observation.

Autobiographies as a mode of narrative have demonstrated that pre-service teachers, particularly, may also come to make sense of their pedagogical practices. In this vein, Stenberg (2011) states that focusing on teachers' own life experiences can help to access the inner beliefs, values, and understandings that fundamentally guide teaching practice. As underlined by this author, autobiographies appear as a valuable instrument to look at teachers' beliefs, conceptualizations, thoughts, and actions in the present. Besides, they are influenced by experiences from the past, expectations for the future and shape teachers' practices (Kelchtermans, 2009). According to Johnson (1999), autobiographies are a way to capture the richness of prior experiences and to get into the critical analysis of those experiences and beliefs in

order to come to comprehend the complexity of the understandings of teachers, teaching, and learning.

For this study, the exploration of the autobiographies as narratives has been grounded in two current and broad correlated theoretical trends: socio-cultural perspective (Johnson, 2009) and teachers' cognition (Borg, 2009).

### **A Socio-Cultural Standpoint to Teacher Education**

The socio-cultural perspective is a fairly new one which entails the theoretical ground to explain and conceptualize teacher learning, language teaching and teacher education overall. In this line, this perspective sustains the value of autobiographical accounts in the examination of what is behind student-teachers' beliefs and how their practices are or may be the reflection of their previous experiences as social individuals. A fundamental principle of a socio-cultural theoretical perspective is that human cognition is understood as originating from and fundamentally shaped by engagement in social activity. In this regard, Johnson (2009) points out:

The processes of learning to teach are socially negotiated. Teacher learning is understood as normative and life-long; it is built through experiences in multiple social contexts first as learners in classrooms and schools, then later as participants in professional teacher education programs, and ultimately in the communities of practice in which teachers work (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Grossman, 1990). (p. 10)

### **Teacher Cognition and Sense Making in Pre-Service Language Teachers**

Complementary to the socio-cultural view, teacher cognition is defined by Borg (2006) as developments in research which have focused on how teaching as well as teachers' mental lives have been conceptualized. Some of the themes tackled when exploring pre-service teachers' cognitions are related to beliefs about language teaching, cognitions in relation to practicum experiences,

teachers' instructional decision making and practical knowledge. On the same subject, the core of this study is the examination of prospective teachers' beliefs about teaching strategies which, through the use of autobiographies, showed the link between their previous experiences as language learners and their growing images of teaching.

Beliefs, considered as changeable and dynamic, do not occur in a linear fashion, but they comprise social, cultural, and political forces which causes students' conceptions and beliefs to be rooted in a system that seems hard to be altered (Goodson, 2005). In addition, in Lortie's words (as cited in Bailey et al., 1996), their apprenticeship of observation and the influence of teacher education programs dealing with the process of learning to teach become their prior knowledge and knowledge base for the establishment of new constructs, reorganization of existing structures until they hopefully turn into stable general and personal theories. In student-teachers' autobiographies in this study, the accommodation and activation of their different sources of beliefs and their interpretation of learning to teach were extensively evidenced.

In different studies about learning to teach, the power of prospective teachers' experiences as learners and how such experiences help to frame the conceptions, beliefs systems, values, and images for their future practice, have been recurrent. In the process of searching for what happens when these students make public their life stories within their life histories (Goodson, 2005), it has been brought to light the way students start conceptualizing and shaping or reshaping their decision making and practical knowledge. In the present study, this was reflected in the participants' in-construction philosophies of teaching, identity issues, the influence of teacher education courses, and student-teachers' wishes and future plans, which will be presented and discussed later in the document.

## **Research Method and Research Design**

This paper is based on a qualitative research project carried out at University of Tolima, Colombia, where students from the B.A. in English program wrote about their language learning stories in order to explore their beliefs concerning English teaching strategies. Through these narratives, autobiographies rather, students exhibited their experiences, diverse events, happenings, and actions they had lived in their English learning process and that had had a significant effect on their epistemologies and methodologies of teaching as student-teachers (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Since stories provide an open access to the identity and personality of individuals and reflect their inner reality in the outside world, autobiographies constitute a fundamental element to explore and analyze, via the B.A. in English program, students' beliefs concerning English teaching strategies.

We all are storytellers by nature and stories provide consistency and continuity to our experiences and have an important role in our communication with others (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Besides, telling a story is having the opportunity to create an identity, and a particular self which will fit specific contexts, purposes, and audiences (Ricoeur, 1980). That is why autobiographies provide a vast sea of possibilities to explore and describe students' beliefs.

The following questions have guided this study and have yielded the subsequent results:

### **Questions**

How do autobiographies reveal student-teachers' beliefs about English language teaching strategies?

How do autobiographies unveil the contribution of the preparatory subjects of the B.A. in English program to the course of student-teachers' beliefs?

## Participants

This research was carried out at Universidad del Tolima, Colombia, the only public university of the region. Nine student-teachers from the B.A. in English program volunteered to be participants. Their names have not been used in this study responding to ethical issues. Instead, we used their initials in order to respect their identity as agreed in the consent letter they signed. They were doing their didactics and first teaching practicum course which are part of the pedagogical preparatory stages. They were also about to start their second teaching practicum in different public schools in Ibagué in 2010.

Each one of the participants wrote an autobiography about their English learning experiences throughout their school years and it became one of the instruments used for data collection in the study. With this instrument, we intended to learn about their prior learning experiences, their current beliefs about teaching strategies, their reflections and all the sense-making of their language learning stories in their life histories.

## Autobiography Implementation

Narratives have value in educational studies as tools to access teachers' thinking and practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1990). The narratives in this study are autobiographies which are "self-stories" that narrate a set of language learning experiences within particular contexts. Denzin (as cited in Stenberg, 2011) describes a biography as a self-story that positions the teller in the center of a narrative; it is a story about the individual in relation to an experience and is built upon the statement that any individual is a storyteller of personal experiences.

The assignment for students was to write some prose concerning their prior language learning experiences by answering the following lead questions, which were adapted from some guidelines provided by Johnson (1999) and Borg (2006):

1. In what ways has your personality influenced the way you learn? Have your teachers taken this influence into account when planning and executing their classes?
2. What language learning experiences have you had and how successful have they been?
3. From the teaching practices you have been exposed to throughout your language learning process, describe both the effective and ineffective ones.
4. How has your experience as a language learner influenced your decision of becoming a language teacher?

We wanted to identify and analyze trends, critical incidents, and salient factors influencing their beliefs about English teaching strategies (Bailey et al., 1996). The students wrote one or two-paged compositions which were read and analyzed following the systematic process described below.

## Reading to Hear the Authors' Voice

Within this process there were three reading moments which had specific intentions. The first reading had the purpose of just hearing what participants were saying. The second moment sought to interpret the information and identify the narrative core, which contained the most significant aspects of the narration. This reading allowed the researchers to identify events, meaningful issues or moments which were highlighted with different colors. The third reading aimed at re-reading the highlighted sentences or expressions in order to construct understanding of what the teller was communicating.

The process was complemented the holistic approach of Lieblich et al. (1998) and embraces the stories' units of analysis, derived from the plot structure and from progression. In this regard, ascending and descending points, climax, and turning points in the stories were at the heart of the entire analysis. The whole process helped to make sense

of the stories told and unveiled useful insights and answers for this study. The ascending, descending, climax and turning points were identified by the use of descriptive words—adjectives and adverbs—that portrayed the participants' experiences and feelings.

### Mapping the Narration

A story map was designed to find the participants' voices in a particular time frame and to systematically organize the learners' experiences of the past, present, and future. This map helped us to become aware of the strength of each moment participants described in their autobiographies; we could see through a line story the whole language learning process of each one of the participants.

### Finding Patterns and Meaningful Events

The purpose of this moment was to find repeated patterns or repeated storylines which became meaningful details to fully understand the issue we were investigating. These patterns and meaningful events were then condensed in a narrative core which had the purpose of summarizing and putting together the most significant issues of the narration. You may not find all the information you need in one single story, "but each one provides pieces for a mosaic or total picture of the concept" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 88). The repetitiveness of patterns and main events, which were analyzed and described in detail here, yielded the definition of the categories.

### Data Analysis

We approached the analysis of the autobiographies following essentials within Clandinin and Connelly's model (1995):

- One of them was *content*, which helped us a lot with rising categories related to the objectives of the study. This process, called *Unity of Analysis* by the researchers, showed us new perspectives and

different routes as to how to approach student-teachers' thoughts, ideas, feelings, and most of all, beliefs.

- A second one was *form* which enlightened the analysis and paved the way to the evolution in the structure of the narration. It was of great importance when realizing how ascending and descending positions were evident, that is, high points or dramatic turning-points in autobiographies.

By taking these two aspects into account, we analyzed the story trying to "weave history from the past" aiming at understanding the narrative in the three historical moments—past, present, and future—and being able to give meaning to the ascending and descending tones in history, leading to the important aspects in the autobiographies we called "narrative cores," which are precise reflections of student-teachers' beliefs about teaching beliefs that are the product of their own learning experiences.

These narrative cores helped us by giving each student-teacher an identity, where convergences and divergences among participants were highlighted. According to Burns and Richards (2009):

Stories are used to organize, articulate, and communicate what we know about ourselves as teachers, about our teaching, about our students, bringing together past, present, and future . . . we cannot properly understand teachers and teaching without understanding the thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that influence what teachers do. Similarly, in teacher education, we cannot make adequate sense of teachers' experiences of learning to teach without examining the unobservable mental dimensions of this learning process. (pp. 158, 163)

There were two moments in which the analysis was made. The first moment was called "listening to the authors' voice." In it, we categorized information and labeled sub-groups as: Character (participant's name), Setting (place and time), Problem, and Beliefs. As previously exposed, particular issues—expressed in the form of inquiry—were suggested to student-teachers as a

Table 1. Story Mapping

Characters	Setting	Problem	Action/Beliefs
Participant T Primary teacher (kind teacher)	Grade 1 -school	<p>Meaningful class activities.</p> <p>Activities related to real life contexts promote understanding.</p>	<p>-This exercise was very meaningful for me because I have always loved the nature.</p> <p>-Teaching about colors, relating this topic with farm animals, use pictures.</p> <p>-English teacher provided me meaningful activities related with a real context in order to have a better understanding.</p> <p>-I was very interested...in it.</p>
Elementary teacher	Elementary	<p>Traditional teaching, pronunciation of sentences and isolated words.</p> <p>Reduce view of communicative competence.</p> <p>A contradictory situation and activities presenting isolated language, vocabulary out of contexts.</p> <p>Traditional teaching is an obstacle for developing communicative competence.</p>	<p>-Teaching focused in a traditional way because of the methodology...this caused my communicative competence was reduced to pronounce sentences and isolated words.</p> <p>- Generating contradictory situation in my learning process because...I was able to write but I was not able to produce.</p> <p>-The other skills were reduced to a few listening and speaking exercises as songs and role-plays...were carried out without a real and meaningful context.</p> <p>-Teacher didn't take into account it as an essential element in...learning process and understanding.</p>

starting point for autobiography writing. Consequently, analysis in this case focused on those aspects (Table 1). *Setting*, for instance, accounted for the moment in the participants' language learning story, either elementary, high-school, or university, that was the object of narration at a certain moment; we called the next one *Problem*, since aspects described here were all awkward to participants throughout their English learning processes; it clustered aspects such as English teachers, English language teaching methodology, students' perceptions, students' feelings, students' opinions about themselves, students' general perceptions and opinions about language teaching and their process of becoming future teachers; English language learning experiences, evaluation, personality features affecting language learning processes, effective/ineffective teaching practices, learning strategies involved, and skills development. The *Beliefs* section, for its part, sometimes accounted for descriptions of student-teachers' beliefs about their learning experiences and, at other times, for actions undertaken by teachers in schools that were justified or explained by the students according to their own beliefs system, all of them being related to the aspects listed in the Problem section.

Then, analysis continued and a second moment emerged which was "piecing history together." In this new stage, the same information was divided again into past, present, and future moments through which we pretended to identify new sound details deeply intertwined in data. As asserted by Lortie (as cited in Johnson, 1999, p. 19), "novice teachers need to appreciate how their personal history and experience of schooling influence their perceptions of classrooms" in such a way that beliefs continued to be formed. As stated in the introduction, past, present, and future moments were identified and classified following the holistic model of analysis by Liebitch et al. (1998).

All this process of analysis allowed us to unravel the students' memories that had influenced their conceptions about language teaching methodologies.

This is perfectly supported by Johnson (1999) when she states that:

For most teachers, the apprenticeship of observation encompasses two types of memories. The first is our memories as students: how we as students were expected to talk and act and what we learned from the experiences of being students. The second is our memories of our former teachers: What these teachers did and said and how they approached teaching and learning. Unknowingly these memories become the basis of our initial conceptions of ourselves as teachers, of how they influence our views of students, formulate the foundation of our reasoning, and act as the justifications for our teaching practices. Interestingly, these memories also seem to have a lasting impact on the kind of teacher we each aspire to be. (p. 19)

## Findings

This section describes the categories that emerged throughout the analysis of autobiographies which bring to the fore enlightening answers to the research questions. The first of them was related to how student-teachers' beliefs about learning strategies can be uncovered through the analysis of autobiographies, and the second one had to do with how the participants' autobiographies could unveil the contribution of the preparatory courses of the B.A. in English program to the construction of those beliefs. The categories will be described and supported by students' voices that recreated their own language learning experiences in the narrations and allowed us to see the influence of such events on their former and new beliefs.

From the participants' language learning experiences in elementary and high school, we named a central category Sources of In-Construction Beliefs since the beliefs explained the "what and why" of the opinions participants themselves had about English language teaching strategies. In the source, they described what their elementary and high school teachers used to do in English classes; the "traditional" (using participants' words) methodological approaches

they were exposed to for years in which no place was left for interaction, active participation, or correction and feedback; the boring techniques and strategies their former teachers used in classes; and the participants' informed and reflective opinions about all those issues.

The following are the different sources of in-construction beliefs of the students in relation to the language teaching strategies.

### Interaction of Experiences

Through stories, participants could compare and contrast the two worlds, being a learner and being a teacher. Thus, they realized how important it was to become a good language teacher and how inspiring or detrimental it can be to students. The recognition of these factors by the student-teachers tend to make visible the redefinition and reorganization of their views towards the teaching profession; they made this evident by their clear identification of teaching methodological and theoretical principles for the fundamental communicative skills development and language teaching.

The following excerpts demonstrate students' recognition of effective practices and value of *professional knowledge* (Shulman, 1986) that have had and may have an impact on their current role as learners and on their future one as teachers. These also depict the students' encounters with their learning experiences at university and their relationship with their emerging beliefs.

Effective English teaching involves: the development of all skills, the development of the communicative competence. It offers different strategies so different kinds of students may have the possibility to learn. (Learning styles) T

Through my learning process I have discovered my learning styles and I have understood that teaching and learning a foreign language is not an easy work. For me is really important to know how this knowledge can be applied. N

I think that my experience as a language learner has influenced my decision of becoming a language teacher, because I am a

learner and now I know a teacher can build a good and self-confident learner or may destroy the desire to learn. L

After further analysis of those origins, we also found in the student-teachers' opinions common patterns that evidenced the influence of the teacher education courses reflected in all the new ideas student-teachers have about teaching strategies.

### Teaching Education Courses at the University

This subcategory refers to the way students perceived their teacher education experiences throughout their university studies. From the students' view, their classes have been characterized by the implementation of different methodologies, and their teachers have become models to follow in their future. They also highlighted those learning experiences as novel, appropriate, and different from the ones in elementary and high school. Through their autobiographies, participants show the university as the "turning point" where things started changing and although it was difficult at the beginning for most of them, they have learnt many useful things from teachers and the different courses that have shaped their budding teaching styles.

I consider effective the subjects at the beginning because they had a link between theory and practice because they have shown methods, approaches, theories, authors and the most important part is that we can apply it. L

I hope using all the concepts that I have learned through the semesters as mediators between theory and practice, to take into account the context in a natural way where activities are going to be used in a real context with the objective that the students understand the meaning. N

Another effective teaching practice has been the model the teachers of the B.A. have, because these teachers have shown us good and several kinds of activities, approaches, methods that we can judge and in this way to correct, improve and implement in our classroom. L

The teachers had different methodologies...some were more significant for me than others. F

Regarding the above subcategories and in juxtaposition to the ideas exposed by the students in the previous excerpts, Johnson (1999) comments the following:

How they think about their subject matter content depends on their own experiences as learners of that content, their understanding of how that content is viewed and organized within the discipline, theoretical orientation, and instructional importance placed on the materials they use. How they think about their students depends on their own experiences as students; their beliefs about how students should act and learn; the academic, social, and personal expectations they hold for their students and how their students are viewed within the context of schools and surrounding communities in which they live. (p. 56)

The already addressed revision of the sources that intervened in the construction of student-teachers' beliefs about language teaching strategies derived into a parallel shaping of their growing *philosophy of teaching*, thus having a mutual relation with the building of their self-identity, features that we consider a noteworthy discovery in this study. "Developing a personal philosophy involves clarifying educational issues, justifying educational decisions, interpreting educational data, and integrating that understanding into the educational process" (Wiseman, Cooner, & Knight, 1999). This statement supports the preliminary conceptions student-teachers hold about principles for teaching a foreign language, their conceptions about what being a good teacher means, what good teaching entails and the way they project themselves as teachers. They start evidencing the construction of the philosophy of teaching through new understandings of what should prevail in the profession and characterize teachers' practice. These initial traces of shaping a belief system seem to respond to the influence of a landscape of personal

and language learning experiences. As will be shown, both successful and unsuccessful experiences have become the basis for envisioning different pedagogical practices with the purpose of developing not only language skills on the learners, but also to see them as the center of the teaching and learning process.

The following excerpts illustrate their new views about teaching strategies, approaches to teaching, knowledge of students' likes and interests, and the importance of rapport and human values:

You grow as you learn from your students...not only from the academic aspect you learn how to be a person. F

In this profession you learn patience, perseverance, dedication and respect. D

I would like to teach them from a meaningful and real perspective...with all the three basic skills. T

I want to be an excellent teacher...to have the responsibility to help others to develop their skills. J

Participation and self confidence, contributing to the development of communicative competence. N

In this category we also grouped other features that participants considered prime: contextualized learning of languages, meaningfulness gotten through real life situations, development of communicative competence, consideration of students' learning styles, and feedback treatment.

Teaching strategies should embrace meaningful activities related to real life, contextualized language, development of communicative competence, take into account learning styles and students' correction. T

The purpose of learning a foreign language is based on the development of language skills, be able to establish a conversation, interchange meanings, knowledge and so on, and you have to express your feelings and mainly talk. C

Take into account the students' interests, to create friendly environments, the use of games and class dynamics, provide real contexts. C

I consider that the way to correct the learner is key to open the learning door because you can interact, correct and help learner

to do it in the best way. Also collaborative learning where the students that have a high level help to others. The interaction where it provides opportunities for the negotiation of meaning. L

In addition, there was clear support of the innovative future plans they have for their students and their classes.

### Wishes and Future Plans

This aspect becomes another parallel effect of the process of the construction of student-teachers' beliefs. We arrived at this last category by listening attentively and understanding the voices of the participants in the study and their desire whether or not to become English language teachers. Although they likely perceive it as a difficult work, they encourage themselves and foresee their future students' successful learning processes as the most important and rewarding result.

I think that to teach is not easy. Really I want to be a teacher; I know that it may be difficult, but I know that I can do it. J

In conclusion, I think that really I would like to be teacher because of that I am studying this. L

In a future I wouldn't like to be a teacher...I never imagine to become a teacher...because I am aware that is a big responsibility and I am not prepared to face that situation because of my personality...I have an introverted personality and I am not confident to speak. D

I think my language learning has not influenced my decision to become a language teacher. N

I would like to teach them from a meaningful and real perspective...I would like to give the opportunity to the students to develop all the things that I could not on my personal learning process. L

I do not remember an exact moment when I came to the decision of being a teacher, even now it's something not clear for me... being a teacher is one option...I would like to be a teacher who is able to teach important languages...give to my students tools to be proficient...it would be great. M

### Conclusions

The aims of the research questions that have guided the process of this study are clear enough to account for, first of all, how the autobiographies reveal the student-teachers' beliefs about English language teaching strategies. Regarding this first question, participants in this study took a stand towards the questions that were suggested as guidelines for autobiography writing. Evidence collected shows that those beliefs have been forming since elementary or high school English classes. Participants' school teachers, their teaching styles, methodology used, and personal traits have shaped student-teachers' beliefs about English language teaching. They overtly describe how those conditions they have been exposed to enable them get a clear idea of what teaching should look like or be, and what a teacher should or should not do. That is, experience has formed both positive and negative ideas in students of what is and is not worth doing in a classroom.

Secondly, the other question (How do autobiographies unveil the contribution of the preparatory courses of the B.A. in English program to the course of student-teachers' beliefs?) was addressed at different moments during autobiography writing. Those beliefs, according to students' descriptions, have strengthened as semesters have passed and as content belonging in the Didactics courses and Teaching practicum have touched students' lives, and now underlie their opinions and ideas; in a word, their beliefs.

On the other hand, as researchers and teaching practicum counselors, this process of inquiry and analysis has impacted us very positively. First, it has helped us discover new perspectives on how to go beyond factual information and discover what underlies students' opinions. Also, it has trained us on how to newly size up qualitative information so that it yields tangible results. Lastly, it has lent us a hand in considering integrative and interdisciplinary

solutions at the moment of solving one's own or others' classroom difficulties.

Finally, concerning the B.A. in English Program(s), this project expands new perspectives as regards curricular integration and interdisciplinary relationships, an idea that goes hand-in-hand with the appropriate and necessary restructuring, sequencing, and support of content in curriculum.

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