

**Analysing trainee beliefs about thesis writing and  
professional development  
in a constructivist thesis writing experience**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this case study was to identify the beliefs of eight pre-service teachers about thesis writing and professional development while and after writing their BA thesis through diary and survey inquiry. This research was conducted in the teaching area of the major in Modern Languages (LEMO) from the Autonomous University of Puebla (BUAP). The methodology used to identify trainee beliefs was applied in two periods: during the process to include *reflection in action*, and after the process obtaining *reflection on action* as suggested by Schön (1983, p. 26). Thus, the participants wrote their electronic dialogue diaries while taking the two Research Seminars and writing their thesis. In this diaries they expressed their thoughts and feelings, sent them to the teacher and the teacher answered them also via e-mail. Then, when the Research Seminars had finished, they answered the questionnaire called Thesis and Professional Development Questionnaire (TAPDQ), which was especially designed for this research taking insights from Eraut (1995), Fullan(1995), Burns et al (1999), Schmekes (2004) and Viaggio (1992). This questionnaire contains Likert scales and some open questions. The findings of these studies reveal that participants were aware of their lack of expertise in thesis writing and they looked for strategies to overcome this problem. Also, the findings suggest that the participants were benefited from the constructivist methodology employed in the Research Seminars. Most of the participants reported having acquired skills, knowledge, having improved their attitude and having become better students after writing their thesis. This doctoral thesis begins exploring an area that has not been explored on ELT teacher cognition at least as reported in the research reviews done by Borg (2003, 2006) and Reyes & Rodríguez (2007). It aims to contribute to get a better understanding the thesis writing processes in teacher education programmes in public universities in Mexico.

**MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY**  
**STATEMENT OF CANDIDATE**

I certify that the thesis entitled *Analysing trainee beliefs about thesis writing and professional development in a constructivist thesis writing experience* submitted for the degree of Doctor in Applied Linguistics is the result of my own research, except otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis or any part of it has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other institution.

The ethics committee approval to conduct the research for this thesis was obtained with the protocol number HE25MAY2007-D05245.

Rebeca Elena Tapia Carlin

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## DEDICATIONS

I want to dedicate this thesis to my family, especially to my husband Ricardo, my children Cecilia and Bernardo and to my parents Alicia and Agustín -may he rest in peace-. I want to thank you for your valuable support and patience that were so important to the conclusion of this project.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

English Language Teaching (ELT) Education programmes at Bachelor of Arts (BA) level in Mexico have emerged as part of the effort to professionalize the field of ELT in this country (Sayer, 2007, p. 57). In the 1990's and up to the beginning of the 2000's these programmes maintained the thesis as one of the main options to award the degree (Smith, 2001, p. 77). However, they also began to modify this practice due to the recommendations of the Mexican ministry of education (SEP) since 2001 as noted by Sayer (2007, p. 58), and to consider other options apart from the thesis to award the degree to their students. Nowadays, these programmes have integrated and are looking for other options to award the BA degree (Sayer, 2007). It is worth mentioning that in this doctoral thesis, the word *thesis* is considered as "a piece of research that is required by a university in order to award an academic degree" (Criollo, 2003, p. 15).

Since the beginning of the 2000's, these ELT programmes have become more and more aware of the importance of the theses and its relationship to graduation rates due to the evaluation policies implemented by the SEP linked to the possibility to get funding for project development. However, the acceptance of the thesis as an option to award the degree in these programmes varies. Some of their professors are in favour of making the thesis obligatory for all ELT students in BA programmes (Busseniers, 2001); others suggest to maintain it and use it to give students an opportunity to express their voice (Mugford & Sughru, 2007); and some others think that writing a thesis should be an option only for those students who find research

attractive (Sayer, 2007, p. 59). In spite of the fact that BA programmes in ELT in Mexico in public universities have accepted different options for awarding the degree to their students, most of them are still facing serious problems in relation to their graduation rate index (Tapia et al, 2009). In the research conducted by Tapia et al (2009) participants mentioned that the main factors that cause low graduation rates in BA programmes in ELT in public universities are that students start working after finishing their subjects and then forget about finishing all the requirements to get the degree; that they do not have adequate level of English; that thesis supervisory practices are not adequate and that there are few options to award the degree to students (p. 44). Thus, participants suggested the need to address these issues collaboratively in order to increase graduation rate indexes (pp. 45-46). Thus, one of the areas that need to be studied and modified according to the participants in Tapia et al (2009) is thesis supervision. Then, it seems necessary to revise the issues involved around it, and this is what motivated the focus of this doctoral research.

This research took place in the major of Modern Languages (LEMO) at the Universidad Autonoma de Puebla (BUAP) that is a public university in central Mexico. Founded in 1984, this BA was one of the first undergraduate programmes in ELT in Mexico. The LEMO has two programmes, teaching and translation that are offered either in English or in French. The research for this doctoral thesis was conducted in the English teaching program. The LEMO has organized its courses in two levels: the basic and the advanced one. In the basic level, students learn the target language and they start acquiring basic knowledge about the field they will be specialized in, through courses mainly taught in L1 (Spanish). After they have completed this preparation, they continue learning the target language and learning about the area of specialization, but now the subjects are given in the target

language. In this way, students learn the language and about the language through content courses as Brinton et al (1989) suggest. The subjects related to thesis writing in both levels are the following. In the basic level: *Reading and Writing courses 1 and 2* as well as the subject called *Techniques of Documented Research*; whereas in the advanced level students take *Academic Writing, Research Methodology and the Research Seminars 1 and 2*. It was in these last courses -Research Seminars 1 and 2- that the research of this doctoral thesis was conducted. In the Research Seminars 1 and 2 students are required to conduct a piece of research and write a BA thesis of about 10 000 to 15 000 words approximately. This thesis is then a research report that contains five chapters. Chapter 1 is the Introduction where the student presents the focus of the research; Chapter 2 contains the Review of Literature that will support the study; Chapter 3 is about the Methodology that will be used both to collect and to interpret the data; Chapter 4 reports the Findings or Results of the study depending on the approach used, that could be either qualitative or quantitative and finally Chapter 5 presents the Conclusions drawn after conducting the research. Students usually write their thesis individually, but they are allowed to do it in pairs if they decide so.

In spite of all these agreed elements of BA thesis at the LEMO, supervisory practices vary from teacher to teacher, and exploring them would reveal strengths and weaknesses that could help improve them. As it will be explained in great detail in the body of this thesis, I have analyzed and reflected on my supervisory practices at LEMO especially since 2001 looking for ways to improve them. This doctoral thesis actually contributes to analyze the way I supervised thesis at LEMO with a group of students that took the Research Seminars 1 and 2 and wrote their BA thesis from Fall 2006 to Spring 2007 through the analysis of their beliefs about thesis writing and

professional development. It was in these courses where I tried to implement a 'reactive syllabus', that is, a syllabus highly sensitive to these learner needs as suggested by Davies (2009), based on my experience as a thesis supervisor at the LEMO. In this experience, I innovated and became a *change agent* adopting a *normative-educative strategy* which is based on the premise that change is a complex phenomenon as stated by Kennedy (1987, p. 164). In this view, it is recognised that people act according to the values and attitudes prevalent in a given society or culture, and accepting change may require changes to deep-seated beliefs and behaviour. This scholar suggest that the implementation of this strategy would require a collaborative, problem-solving approach involving all the persons affected by this change in order to help them make their own decisions about the degree and manner of change they want to accept. Thus, this approach is not only concerned with an innovation, but with "the process of development that individuals experience as a result of involvement, and which can lead to a continuing interest in further change and innovation" (Ib). The reason why I chose this *normative-educative strategy* to implement the innovation was due to the fact that my previous experience as thesis supervisor has indicated me that LEMO students enter Research Seminars with beliefs that do not allow them to be successful thesis writers. Part of the implementation of the strategy was proved to be successful (Witten et al, 2007) according to Markee's (2001) framework.

This doctoral thesis aims to analyze the beliefs of the participants in two studies conducted for this purpose. The first is a diary study where 'reflection in action' is reported. The second study is based on a questionnaire and it presents 'reflection on action' (Schön, 1983, p. 26). The two studies are qualitative; they have eight participants who volunteered to participate in them. Both studies complement each

other. The first analyses the beliefs of the participants throughout the Research Seminar courses and the second after finishing them.

It is important to mention that the names of the participants were substituted to protect their identity, so the names used in this research are not their real names. Besides, it is important to mention that the data for the two studies is presented as it appeared on students writing; thus, grammar and spelling mistakes on participants' data appear on the text of this thesis due to their occurrence in student's original writing. The next sections of this chapter provide more information about this doctoral thesis and the rationale behind it.

## **1.2 Introduction to the problem**

This section presents some theory and issues involved around the problem that generated this research.

Pre-service teacher beliefs

*Pre-service teachers* are those engaged in initial teacher education programmes at undergraduate or postgraduate level (Borg, 2006b, p. 51). *Pre-service teacher beliefs* are the beliefs that these subjects hold. Borg (2006b, p. 46) notes that the specific concerns that have been explored in this area are four:

- \* Trainees' prior learning experience and cognitions
- \* Trainees' beliefs about language teaching
- \* Trainees' decision-making, beliefs and knowledge during the practicum
- \* Change in trainees' cognition during teacher education

This thesis addresses the last area that is, change in trainees' cognition during teacher education.

Peacock (2001, p. 178) points out that there is still a shortage of research that investigates the beliefs of pre-service ESL teachers and Allen (2002, p. 519) states that relatively few studies have investigated the beliefs of prospective second and/or foreign language teachers. Borg (2003) claims that there is also a need for more research in contexts that are more representative of language classrooms including studies with non-native English speaking teachers. Also Borg (2006b, p.71) claims that the volume of research in this area remains small. Allen (2002, p. 519) goes on to state that there is a need for research in teacher cognition because examining the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom actions can inform educational practices.

Writing a thesis is a challenging task. Pre-service teachers lack the expertise to write it and they are not aware of the importance of this project for their academic growth (Suárez-Iñiguez, 2000, p. 21). Similarly, Borg (2006a, p. 23) argues that teacher research has the potential to benefit both teachers' professional growth and teaching practice, but in order to be successful teachers need to be motivated.

Thesis supervisors of pre-service language teachers also face difficulties in their supervisory practice. Nowadays, the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP), which is a public university in the state of Puebla, Mexico is encouraging their teachers to use a constructivist approach to teach university students (BUAP, 2007) and this is influencing supervisory practices. But in order to meet the needs of pre-service teachers when writing a thesis, it is advisable to have a better understanding of this process and the issues involved in it. Identifying trainee beliefs about their thesis writing experience could be beneficial for students and their supervisors.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The aim of this study is to identify the beliefs that pre-service teachers hold about thesis writing, professional and personal development while and after writing their BA thesis in two consecutive courses (Research Seminars 1 and 2) in an English EFL teacher education program in a public university in central Mexico and through this analysis to reflect on supervisory practices.

There is a shortage of research on trainee beliefs about thesis writing and professional development in English teaching education programmes. The reviews done by Borg (2003, 2006b) and Reyes and Rodriguez (2007, p. 336) do not report studies conducted exploring these themes. Some research about supervision practices and beliefs at international level has been found on mainstream education addressing issues of postgraduate supervision (Aspland et al, 1999; Burns et al, 1999; Francis & Ingram-Starrs, 2005; Murphy et al, 2007; Pearson & Brew, 2002; Styles & Radloff, 2001). However in Mexico the only study published found was the one by Mugford and Sughrú (2007) studying 'voice' in undergraduate thesis writing and issues related to this topic in ELT programmes in public universities.

### **1.4 Research questions**

This study strives to answer the following research questions.

1. What beliefs do pre-service teachers hold regarding professional development while and after writing their BA theses?
2. What beliefs do pre- service teachers hold regarding the relationship between thesis writing and professional development while and after writing their BA theses?



3. Do they consider thesis writing as part of professional development?
4. Do they consider thesis writing as part of their personal development?
5. What role did their supervisor beliefs about thesis and professional development play in the process of thesis writing of these pre-service teachers at BA level?
6. Have the pre-service teacher beliefs about professional development changed after writing their thesis?
7. Has the teaching methodology used been useful to shape pre-service teachers pre-existing beliefs during the process of thesis writing?
8. What benefits has the teaching methodology produced in the pre-service teachers?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The study aims to identify the beliefs about thesis writing, professional and personal development of the participants. As there is a shortage of research in this area, this study can contribute to generate research in teacher cognition about thesis writing, professional and personal development. Besides, as pointed out earlier, uncovering the learner's beliefs while and after writing their thesis, can allow both students and supervisor to become aware of the issues or difficulties faced by the students in this process as stated by Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, pp. 23.24). Although this is a case study with eight participants and the findings cannot be generalized, doing a qualitative study of their beliefs can contribute to get a better understanding of the thesis writing process in this context.

## **1.6 Research content and organization**

This thesis is organized in five chapters. This part of the thesis -Chapter 1-, presents the problem, the research questions and the significance of the studies. Chapter 2 presents the Review of Literature related to the two studies in general in order to provide a conceptual framework for the research. Thus, the Review of Literature in the studies only contains information related to the data collection methods used in each of the studies. Chapter 3 contains the first study of this thesis, a case study with diary research where 'reflection in and on action' is analysed through data obtained from electronic dialogue diaries. Chapter 4 contains the second study of the thesis, and it is a case study with survey research conducted with a questionnaire especially designed for this study. Reflection 'on action' is reported here. Finally, Chapter 5 closes this work by presenting the conclusions of the thesis and the implications of this thesis for teacher education programmes and supervisory practices occurring in them.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of literature of the main topics included in this doctoral thesis. They are six: teacher education; constructivism in language teacher education; the role of reflection in teacher education and its relation to professional development; pre-service teacher beliefs and teacher education; teacher and supervisor beliefs and novice research and thesis writing.

### **2.1 Teacher education**

Cross (2003) states that Language Teacher Education is crucial because “the quality of teaching determines to a great extent the quality of education. In countries with rapidly growing populations, there is a tendency to put untrained teachers into classrooms to meet the demand or expand access to schooling” (p. 41). There is a real need for English Language Teaching (ELT) education programs in Mexico, due to the fact that the educational policies given by the Mexican ministry of education (SEP) are promoting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching from primary level both for public and private institutions as pointed out by Davies (2009).

Furthermore, Wallace (1991, p. 147) claims that teacher education courses should be:

- Broadly educative, in terms of the trainee personal and intellectual development, and
- Fully professional, to prepare the trainees for the profession by making them competent to assume their responsibilities and to foster continuing development of its graduates as autonomous professionals and reflective practitioners.

If teacher education aims to achieve this goal, it needs to have a model to be used as a guide to follow. The next section presents a model for teacher education.

### *Goals and content of ELT education programs*

Byram (1999, p. 78) proposes a model for Language Teacher Education called 'A model of intercultural communicative competence'. In order to pursue this model, he suggests developing attitudes, knowledge and skills. He proposes this model to help teachers to decide on the objectives and content of language teaching education.

The model is presented in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Byram's model for intercultural communicative competence

1. Knowing how to be
  - Attitude formation and change
2. Knowledge
  - Determination of a body of knowledge
  - Knowledge of the processes of social interaction
3. Knowing how to understand
  - Comparative text analysis. Interpreting and relating existing knowledge.
4. Knowing how to learn
  - Exploration and discovery of new knowledge. Building up knowledge.
5. Knowing how to do
  - Interacting in real time with others. Social interaction.
6. Knowing how to engage
  - Developing critical thinking about self and other and about own and other culture. Education for citizenship. Identification of values.

According to Byram (1999) *attitudes* are the pre-condition for successful intercultural interaction. He believes that attitudes need to be positive and that pre-service teachers need to have attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to

understand others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours, and to analyze one's own meanings and behaviours from the point of view of the others with one is engaging (p. 74). Regarding *knowledge*, the author mentions that the acquisition of knowledge by the individual occurs through primary socialization (family) and secondary socialization (usually informal education). *Skills* are the third element discussed by Byram (1999, pp. 76-77) as part of his model. The skills he suggests are: discovery, interpretation, interaction and critical awareness. The skill of discovery is the ability to recognise significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations and their relationship to other phenomena. It is the skill of building up specific knowledge as well as understanding of the beliefs, meanings and behaviours which are inherent in particular phenomena, whether written texts or spoken interactions. Thus, this skill may also be part of social interaction. The skill of interpreting and relating draws upon existing knowledge. This skill is only related to texts. The skill of interaction is an integrative skill. The individual needs to draw upon their existing knowledge, to have attitudes to be sensitive to others with different origins and identities and to apply the skills of discovery and interpretation. This model signals key objectives for teacher education. It highlights the importance of working with the trainees in an integral way to educate their attitudes, knowledge and skills. Translating these ideas into specific objectives in the different subjects of the curriculum in teacher education programmes would enhance quality education. Actually, all subjects should contribute to achieve this goal.

## **2.2 Constructivism in language teacher education**

The thesis writing courses could be a place to educate the attitudes, knowledge and skills of learners. This goal can be achieved in a constructivist environment. This section presents theoretical and practical aspects of constructivism.

### *Constructivism*

Constructivism is a theory of learning which states that students learn by actively constructing their own knowledge (Scholnik et al 2006). Von Glasersfeld (1995 cited in Scholnik et al 2006, p. 12) states that “concepts cannot simply be transferred from teachers to students – they have to be conceived”. Thus, constructivism supports the idea that knowledge must be constructed or reconstructed by individuals through a process of interpreting new information in terms of prior knowledge and experience (Noel, 2000, pp. 183-184). Driver (1986 cited in Gunstone, 2000, p. 263) describes various aspects related to a constructivist view of learning by highlighting that learning outcomes depend both on the learning environment and on the knowledge of the learner; learning involves the construction of meaning and this is a continuous and active process where patterns appear; meanings once constructed are evaluated and can be accepted or rejected, thus, learners have the final responsibility for their learning.

There are two main approaches to constructivism: the *cognitive* and the *social*. The former is associated with the work of Piaget and the latter with the one of Vygotsky. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, they both believe that students learn by constructing their own knowledge, but the emphasis on the two approaches is different. *Cognitive constructivism* concentrates on the importance of the mind in learning whereas *social constructivism* focuses on the role played by the environment and the interaction between learners (Scholnik et al 2006, p. 13).

*Cognitive constructivism* is based on Piaget's work. Piaget studied genetic epistemology, that is, the study of the origins and development of knowledge. His

theory involves the emergence of qualitative stages of reasoning. These are described next. First, is the *sensory motor stage* where operations are carried out in action, not mentally, and it takes place when human beings are from 0 to two years old; then the *pre operational one*, from two to six years old that involves internal actions that proceed in a rigid, non-reversible manner; after that, the *concrete operations stage* ( from six to twelve years old) where internal actions that can be reversed take place, but they are restricted to real or concrete transformations of behaviours and finally the *formal operations stage*, starting at twelve, where internal actions that can be reversed take place but they are related to form and abstractions independent of reality content (Berzonsky, 1981, pp. 222-226). For Piaget, *intelligence* is represented by one's effectiveness in adapting to the environment. Piaget believes that one adapts or deals with environmental imposed problems via cognitive functioning. Function involves acting and solving problems, dealing with obstacles through two complementary processes known as accommodation and assimilation. Cognitive functioning proceeds towards a state of balance or equilibration between an individual's mental schemes and reality. The complementary processes of assimilation enhance this equilibration. Assimilation refers to taking or ingesting, whereas accommodation is concerned with adjusting the system to help conform to what is being assimilated. It should be stressed that disequilibrium is subjective and depends on the individual. Furthermore, the individual must become aware of the contradiction between his or her scheme and objective reality for disequilibrium and subsequent accommodation to occur. To resolve contradictions via accommodation, an individual needs to reorganize existing schemes or structures. According to Piaget, the awareness of contradictions is the basis of equilibration- disequilibrium and the major mechanism for stage transition (Piaget, 1964). Thus, "within a Piagetian framework, a teacher's role is to promote

disequilibrium that will lead to accommodation – that is the Piagetian equivalent of learning” (Berzonsky, 1981, p. 221).

*Social constructivism* is based on Vygotsky’s work. Vygotskian tradition considers humans as both shaped by and shaping their living conditions. “In neo-Vygotskian theory ‘activity’ is the most fundamental and comprehensive concept suggesting that the functioning and development of human individuals are to be studied in the context of their participation in socio cultural practice... in a variety of activity systems...” (Van Huizen et al , 2005, p. 271). The historical aspect of the theory suggests that both an *activity system* and its individual *participants* are involved in a process of development. The development of participants requires them towards a fuller (more extended, more responsible and more autonomous) participation that presupposes the ‘moving inward’ (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 106 in Van Huizen et al, 2005, p. 272). It is necessary to consider that throughout this development process, the individuals need an environment presenting and modelling an ideal standard of achievement and they also need supporting conditions for a successful approximation of this standard. This will take them to the ‘zone of proximal development’ where ideal forms are provided and the teacher will scaffold students to collaborate in the creation of knowledge; then individuals will develop meanings through being engaged in social practices. Furthermore, communicating meaning within the overall practice is a two sided process. Meanings can be clearly perceived when they are clearly and consistently presented. As a person, the individual confronts the meanings presented to him or her and he or when chooses whether to appropriate or reject these meanings. Appropriation implies that meanings are integrated into the personality through a process of evaluation and choice (Van Huizen et al, 2005, p. 280-281). Learning can be considered both a process of self-



organization and acculturation that occurs while participating in cultural practices, frequently when interacting with others (Cobb, 1996, p. 45). Thus, both cognitive and social constructivist approaches can be integrated.

But constructivism should not be confined itself to purely cognitive reflection.

According to Garrison (1998) “educators must strive to include the body, its actions and its passions more prominently in the curriculum. The *pragmatic social constructivism* of George Herbert Mead & John Dewey allow us to do so” (p. 43). In this approach embodied action rather than abstract reasoning is leading learning. “In the unity of the act, the agent is attempting to harmoniously coordinate within the world” (Garrison, 1998, p. 45). When the learner reflects on the activity it becomes possible to distinguish between the activity, the feeling and the idea, but Dewey disagreed with this functional distinction or dualism between mind and bodily activity. For him, the relation between affect and ideas is circular. Furthermore, act precedes the discrimination of stimuli and response. In other words, we do not know the result until the agent construct the stimulus object as much as the stimulus object constructs the agent response. That is, the student is as active in constructing its environment as the environment is active in constructing the student. When the two events interact, the first event enhances the potential of the second event and vice versa. Good teachers know this from their experience working with their learners (Ib). According to Garrison (1998, p. 59), the most important lesson of pragmatic constructivism is the fact that learners recognize ‘I can do’. He goes on saying that beliefs are embodied dispositions to act which relate to emotion. He suggests then to eliminate the dualism of mind-body self-society in order to reconnect the extremes of these fundamental processes.

*Pragmatic constructivism* can be taken to the classroom. Díaz-Barriga & Hernández (2002, p. 9) describe the features and activities performed by constructivist teachers. A *constructivist teacher* is a mediator between knowledge and his/her students learning. (S) He shares experiences in a co-construction of knowledge where meaningful learning is enhanced through adequate help adjusted to specific learner needs and interests –scaffolding-. In this process the teacher helps learners to become autonomous by a gradual transference of responsibility and control of their own learning. Hogan & Pressley (1997, pp. 187-189) give a set of suggestions to scaffold students learning in constructivist classrooms. First, they suggest identifying students' interests and establishing a shared goal. They point out that it is important to maintain the pursuit of goals. Then they suggest using a Socratic style of interaction by asking high order questions to prompt deep reasoning rather than recitation. They also mention the importance of remaining continuously aware of student's cognitive and affective states and their levels of competence. They also highlight the importance of providing feedback, coaching students practice, providing tailored assistance and explanations where necessary. They recommend teachers to respond flexibly to student's errors, show a high level of affective support and nurturance and reduce the intensity of the support as the responsibility of the learner grows. By following these steps teachers can be effective scaffolders.

### *Constructivism in teacher education*

There are three paradigms in teacher education according to Van Huizen et al (2005) competency based, personal orientation and reflection and inquiry. The *competency based paradigm* “emphasizes the need for teacher educators to bear fruit in effective performance in the daily practice of teaching” (p. 268). It seems to reduce the teacher role as a technician. The *personal orientation paradigm* emphasizes the fact that “a

teacher uses his or her own person and that teaching requires a fit between the teacher as a functionary and the person of the teacher” (p. 269). Thus, the personality of the teacher as well as her personal meanings and values play a crucial role. However, this approach has received some criticisms due to the fact that it neglects the influence of the socio-cultural environment in shaping the person’s meanings and values (p. 270). “The development of individuals as participants in an activity system is not limited to the appropriation of cultural tools and repertoires... it extends to the formation of a personality enabling them to make committed action choices” (Van Huizen et al, 2005, p. 273). The *paradigm of reflection and inquiry* for teacher education on the other hand, puts his emphasis on the fact that professional repertoires are not established once and for all and they are not given outside professional practice. They have to be continually reaffirmed or modified by questioning experience in the light of standards of evaluation (Van Huizen et al, 2005, p. 270). After discussing these three paradigms for teacher education, Van Huizen et al (2005, p. 282) propose an orientation basis for teacher education taking as a basis Vygotsky’s pupil Galperin’s ideas discussed in Haenen (2001). They suggest to present the teacher education programme as a meaningful whole and to apply a Vygotskian perspective on teacher education (Van Huizen et al, 2005, p. 161). Then, ideal forms should be provided to learners to foster personal involvement in this practice and roles and competences to be learned. Once established, they mention that it could serve as a frame to evaluate trainee’s progress in the program.

Implementing a Vygotskian perspective on teacher education will require changes on the environment of the program. Teacher educators should model a structure and create an organized environment to generate meaningful learning and develop a professional identity (Van Huizen et al, 2005, p. 285). As Noel (2000) points out, if

teacher education programmes are aiming to educate constructivist teachers, learning environments in these programmes should be designed accordingly. In this way, teacher educators can provide students with opportunities to learn the 'how' to 's' of teaching (p. 184). Furthermore, making room for constructivism in teacher education would require flexibility and willingness to pre-plan only a generic curriculum. A *generic curriculum* should only include the main points that need to be covered in the course but it should not be rigidly predetermined. This type of curriculum would typically list the strategic knowledge that needs to be learned and would leave room for a variety of sources to which this strategic knowledge could be applied (Schcolnik et al, 2006).

### **2.3 Role of reflection in teacher education and its relation to professional development**

Teacher education programmes aim to educate professionals. This education requires then, to help learners to become reflective professionals (Wallace, 1991). The following section discusses some issues involved in reflection and the way it relates to professional development.

#### *Reflection*

According to Loughran (1996, p.14), reflection is defined as the deliberate and purposeful act of thinking which centres on ways of responding to problem solving situations in teaching and learning". Reflection can be done *in action*, that is can occur simultaneously to practice, or it can be done *on action*, "thinking back on what we have done" (Schön, 1983, p. 26). Reflection is also advised by Richards & Lockhart (1996), who claim that much of what happens in the classroom is unknown to the teacher (p. 3). Also Gilpin (1999) states that classrooms are places where there are routines, rituals and recipes but teachers are often blind to what happens in

the classroom (p. 111). Wallace (1991) suggests that it is important to reflect in order to improve our teaching and integrate theory with practice.

According to Zeichner & Liston (1996, p. 6), a reflective teacher examines, frames and attempts to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice; is aware of and questions the assumptions and values (s) he brings to teaching; is attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which (s) he teaches; takes part in curriculum development and is involved in school change efforts, and takes responsibility for his/her own professional development. They also mention that reflection leads to awareness. Being aware of one's own values and beliefs may generate change (López, 2000).

### *Change*

Change is seen as a major dimension of teachers' professional lives and is considered as multidimensional and influenced by personal and contextual factors. Both pre-service and in-service teacher education seek to find ways and opportunities for thoughtful, positive change (Richards et al, 2003, pp. 41, 47). Freeman (1989 cited by Richards et al, p. 47) argues that change does not necessarily mean doing something different it can mean a change in awareness. It could be an affirmation of current practice. He also considers change as something that may not be immediate or complete. He states that some changes are quantifiable and that some types of change can come to closure and others may be open-ended. For example, a teacher changing his/her job may be a change that comes to closure and if (s) he tries to include the teaching of strategies in his/her lessons in a gradual way may be an open-ended change.

Teacher change relates to teachers beliefs. Changes in teacher practice are the result of changes in teachers' beliefs (Richards et al, 2003, p. 41). Teachers need to discover their values and beliefs in order to change their teaching practice (López, 2000, p. 16).

As the teacher gains experience and knowledge he/she begins to develop an individual teaching approach or method that reflects the teacher beliefs, values, principles and experiences (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 251). In other words, teaching reflects a philosophy of teaching. Crookes (2003, p. 48) mentions that a philosophy of teaching leads the teaching process, how students are treated, defines the role of the teacher and the role of learners and the way the world is viewed. Furthermore, Gebhard & Oprandy (1999, p. 18) suggest that exploring our teaching can help us to reach an awareness of our own teaching beliefs and practices. On the other hand Wallace (1991, p. 49) proposes the Reflective Model for teacher development. He states that both 'experiential' and 'received' knowledge should lead practice and reflection. Reyes (1998, p. 116) also suggests that teachers should analyze their own practice, but also that of colleagues in order to improve his/her teaching practice. However, reflection may only happen if teachers are given opportunities to use conscious reflection to understand the relationship between their thoughts and actions. Some methods to foster reflection on teachers are journal, observation, and teacher-group discussions (Farrell, 2001, p. 23).

But teacher development can only occur when the teacher decides to do so (Bailey et al, 2001, pp. 5-6). Donaghue (2003, p. 344) argues that teachers' personal theories, beliefs and assumptions need to be uncovered before development can occur. Pennington (1995 cited by Farrell, 2001, p. 24) says that teacher change and

development requires an awareness of a need to change. Richards (1990 cited by Farrell, 2001, p. 24) highlights the importance of reflection as a key component of teacher development. He states that reflection can help teachers to guide their actions not by impulse, intuition or routine, but by reflection and critical thinking.

Eraut (1995, p. 232) claims that being a professional implies commitment in various ways. First, a moral commitment to serve the interests of students by reflecting on their well-being and their progress and deciding how best it can be fostered or promoted. Second, a professional obligation to review periodically the nature and effectiveness of one's practice in order to improve the quality of one's management, pedagogy and decision making. And finally a professional obligation to continue to develop one's practical knowledge both by personal reflection and through interaction with others.

Ur (2002, pp. 388-392) suggests various ways to develop and become professional in our field. She states that being a professional means to belong to a group where the members of that group possess certain skills, knowledge and conventions that other people do not have. She distinguishes between *professional* and *amateur*, *technician* and *academic*. Regarding the difference between *professional* and *amateur*, she claims that the difference consists on the performance reflected by the quality of preparatory and ongoing learning, standards and commitment.

Commitment can be translated into activities that lead to development such as reading journals and attending conferences and workshops from our field to be updated (Brown, 1994, p. 430). Ur (2002) also explains that the difference between a *professional* and a *technician* lies in the fact that the craftsman performs acts with skill and becomes more skilful as time goes on. On the other hand, the professional

requires not only the skill, but (s)he needs to be able to make decisions based on knowledge and thought; this is similar to what Wallace (1991) proposes in the reflective model. And finally Ur (2002) makes the distinction between the *professional* and the *academic*. The main difference between them is that the *academic* is occupied in thinking and researching, but it is not an agent of real world change (p. 390); whereas the professional is a person who tries to make changes in the real world, and then the research that (s) he conducts is directed towards that aim. This is where *writing a thesis* is brought into the discussion as a tool to enhance professionalism.

Bailey et al (2001, pp. 6-7) suggest various reasons for professional development in ELT. The first is to acquire new knowledge and skills, and to keep up with world change. They can be achieved through thesis writing as mentioned above. Another reason is that professional development can lead to an increase in income and/or prestige within the context of our current jobs. This does not apply to this research due to the fact that the research was conducted with pre-service teachers. Also, Bailey et al (2001) suggest that by pursuing professional development empowerment can occur (Edge, 1992 cited by Bailey et al, 2001, p. 7). Empowerment is “working out our own way forward, based on our own understanding”. The last reason discussed by Bailey et al (2001) to pursue professional development is that continued professional growth and a positive attitude can help us to fight negativity in our teaching contexts.

Now in order to reach development, the teacher needs to set short and long term goals for continued professional growth (Brown, 1994, p. 430). But all these actions may only be done if teachers change their beliefs and desire to change their teaching



practices as stated earlier. This is true both for pre-service or in-service teachers. All these authors point out that reflection and self-analysis play an important role in the process of change due to the fact that they help the teacher to become aware of the need for change. Awareness then is a requisite to generate change. These features are the starting point for the present research.

## **2.4 Pre-service teacher beliefs and the effect of teacher education on those beliefs**

By the late 1970's *learner centeredness* emerged as a key concept in second language teaching acknowledging the fact that learner's varied responses to teaching are an important factor in language learning, sometimes even more important than the teaching itself (Benson, 2004, p.6). This approach emerged as a humanistic reaction to behaviourist theories that gave little importance to the variability of learner's responses to input. Research on learner-centeredness research began in the 1950's with studies on attitudes and motivation. It is now widely recognized the importance of understanding the learner in order to give effective second language education (Ib.). One way to have a better understanding of the learner is to explore his/her beliefs about learning.

*Pre-service teachers* are those engaged in initial teacher education programmes at undergraduate or postgraduate level (Borg, 2006b, p. 51). *Pre-service teacher beliefs* are the beliefs that these subjects hold. Borg (2006b, p. 46) notes that the specific concerns that have been explored in this area are four:

- \* Trainees' prior learning experience and cognitions
- \* Trainees' beliefs about language teaching
- \* Trainees' decision-making, beliefs and knowledge during the practicum

\* Change in trainees' cognition during teacher education

This study addresses the last area that is, change in trainees' cognition during teacher education.

Pre-service teachers are also students, thus, it would be important to study their beliefs to give them effective education using a learner centred approach. New models for university education relate to learner centred education which seems to have emerged from the constructivist paradigm of learning (Pilay, 2002).

The performance of students in teacher education courses has begun to be researched especially in the area of teacher cognition as pointed out by Borg (2003, 2006b) where several studies have been conducted. Language teacher cognition refers to "what language teachers think, know and believe – and of its relationship to classroom practices" (Borg, 2006b, p. 1). Borg (2006, b, p. 63) reports 10 studies of the impact of teacher education on pre-service language teachers. Two of these studies were chosen to be discussed due to the relevance for this thesis. They are Gutierrez Almarza (1996) and Cabaroglu & Roberts (2000).

Gutierrez Almarza (1996) analyzed the learning of four student teachers on a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course in the U.K. The findings of this study show a distinction between cognitive and behavioural changes that teacher education programs may cause. In this study, the learners adopted a specific teaching methodology that was taught to them in the program. It seems that this behavioural change was partly caused by the need of the student teachers to conform to the teacher expectation as they were participating in an asymmetric classroom (Breen, 2001, p. 131). In the cognitive area however, student teachers

varied in their acceptance of the suggested approach to teaching. I think that this pattern may be repeated in teacher education programmes. Most programmes have asymmetrical learning environments where learners know they have to conform to certain standards, but when asked to express their views freely, their answers may vary, and they may display variation in the acceptance of the standard suggested by their teachers.

The study conducted by Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) will now be discussed. These scholars aimed to analyze the process of a sequence of belief development of 20 PGCE Modern Language students. They collected the data through three consecutive in depth interviews. The data collected allowed them to analyze the belief development process. Their findings show that only one participant did not modify his beliefs during the programme. These scholars established categories of the belief development process. After analyzing the data, they claim that some changes can occur during teacher education in student belief systems.

There seems to be a shortage of research about the impact of teacher education in pre-service language teachers in the Mexican context, at least as reported by Reyes & Rodríguez (2007, p. 336). In relation to the impact of teacher education in pre-service language teacher's beliefs about thesis writing, two works were found: a conference reporting research (Tapia, 2006b) and a published research article (Mugford & Sughrua, 2007). Though this is not an exhaustive list, they will be discussed next due to the value that they present for this doctoral thesis.

Tapia's (2006b) study was conducted at the BUAP with a group of pre-service English teachers. This study reported the experiences and beliefs of a group of

Modern language students about the process of thesis writing at BA level.

Participants answered a questionnaire with open questions where they were asked to describe their experience writing each chapter of their thesis, give advice to peers writing that section and give advice to supervisors helping students write that section of their thesis. Though students did not answer a questionnaire at the beginning of the process, their answers to the instrument at the end of it reveal that their beliefs about thesis writing were partly conformed to the beliefs held by their teacher.

Mugford & Sughrua (2007) seems to be the only Mexican research article published about this topic -at least in the Mextesol Journal-. It analyzes the impact of language teacher education on pre-service teacher beliefs about thesis writing. This work presents a comparative study between two TEFL BA programs of two Mexican universities. The authors describe it as a qualitative study because the data was obtained from interviews and the reflections of the researchers as experienced teachers of academic and thesis writing. The findings revealed both learners beliefs and needs through the description of their experiences as thesis writers in teacher education programs. Participants reported being forced to please the teacher in order to pass the course by sacrificing their own ideas and voices. The article points out the needs of the learners to foster their autonomy and critical thinking as well as their need to have their own voice respected by their thesis supervisor.

## **2.5 Teacher and supervisor beliefs**

This section presents the definition of teacher beliefs and supervisor beliefs and how these two roles are often interrelated in teacher education contexts.

### *Towards a definition of teacher beliefs*

First of all, two similar definitions of beliefs are given. Richardson (1996, p. 103) defines *beliefs* by stating that they are “psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true”. Borg (2001, p. 186) defines *belief* as “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, that is evaluative because it is accepted as true by the subject and it has emotive commitment, it guides thought and behaviour”. According to Borg (2001, p.187) there are two types of beliefs: *espoused beliefs* and *beliefs in action*. *Espoused beliefs* are the ones the subject verbally recognizes as his/hers; *beliefs in action* are the ones visible through the actions performed by the subject. Pajares (1992) proposed the idea of a *belief system* formed by the individual’s beliefs, attitudes and values; he claimed that *belief systems* and knowledge are highly intertwined. Richards & Lockhart (1996) state that *teacher belief systems* are founded on goals. It is important to study *teacher beliefs* due to the fact that “there is a growing body of evidence to indicate that teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs, which are closely linked to their values, their views of the world and their conceptions of their place within it” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 3). In relation to this topic, Borg (2006b, p.1) uses the term *teacher cognition* to refer to “what language teachers think, know and believe and of its relationship to classroom practices”. Similarly, Woods (1996, p.196) proposes the construct *BAK* that includes beliefs, assumptions and knowledge to refer to *teacher cognition*.

For this study, the definition of *beliefs* given by Borg (2001) will be used due to the fact that her definition was given for *teacher beliefs* thus it relates to the aims of this study.

### *Supervisor beliefs*

Wisker (2005) defines a supervisor as a professional who acts as a tutor, friend or colleague that helps the learner to become an independent researcher through guidance, modelling and managing. In order to pursue these goals, the supervisor gives both education and training (p. 22). Education is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and understanding with an emphasis on 'knowing that' (Deng, 2004, p.162). Second, training is directed toward the competence in a particular practice. It may not need to question or change the beliefs of the person. However, education leads to the necessity of transforming the beliefs and perspectives of the person who is educated. Third, training is an activity that has extrinsic and instrumental worth. Education attempts to provide the person with broad intellectual and moral perspectives on the world and his/her place in it, which can have extrinsic or intrinsic worth (Deng, 2004, p.163). Fourth, training relates to short term goals and education to long term goals (Singh & Richards, 2006, p. 3).

Connell (1985, cited in Murphy et al, 2007, p. 210) state that "supervision is the most advanced level of teaching in our education system". This means that supervisors are teachers and they hold beliefs which are integrated into their *belief systems* as stated by Pajares (1992). Teacher educators in ELT programmes are language teachers and thesis supervisors at BA, masters or doctorate level. Skindsvatter et al (1988 cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1996, pp. 30-31) suggest that *belief systems* from language teachers –that could also be supervisors- are derived from various sources: their own experience as language learners; experience of what works best; established practice; personality factors; educationally based or research based principles and principles derived from an approach or method. According to Richards & Lockhart (1996) the topics which language teachers hold beliefs about are:

English, learning and teaching; the curriculum and the programme and language teaching as a profession (pp. 32-41). Thus, if the supervision process occurs in language teacher education programmes, the beliefs of the teachers will shape their supervisory practice affecting the teaching learning process.

Regarding supervisor beliefs Burns et al (1999, p. 71) reported three ways in which supervisors and students typically think about supervision: *thesis, professional and personal* orientations. Each of these orientations leads to different practices. In the *thesis* orientation, the focus of the supervision is on helping the students produce their theses in an efficient and academic way. In the *professional* orientation supervisors see the process as a kind of apprenticeship for induction into academic life. And in the *person* orientation supervisors focus on the whole person and they are sympathetic and supportive of academic and non-academic aspects of students' lives. To sum up, supervisors hold beliefs about thesis writing, professional development and about the supervision method, that is, about teaching and learning. These beliefs become visible when supervisors guide students to conduct their research (Muñoz, 1998, p. 36). Depending on the way they think about supervision, they may only concentrate on the process of thesis writing, or they may address professional and personal issues as part of their supervisory practice depending on the beliefs they hold.

#### *Supervising thesis writing process*

As Muñoz (1998, p. 36) states adequate, informed and professional supervision practices may produce excellent results whereas inadequate supervision practices can make learners lose their motivation to write their theses and as a result produce failure in thesis writing processes. Besides, affective factors that are involved in

thesis writing are crucial as stated by Burns et al (1999). These scholars mention that some students during the supervision process may need supportive teachers who care both about academic and non-academic aspects of their lives. Continuous feedback both on the process and progress of research can be highly beneficial due to the fact that it “ensures the development and maintenance of quality student-supervisor relationships and therefore, it improves student completion rates” (Aspland et al, 1999). Thus, the supervisor needs to act as a supporting guide, in this way learners can view the thesis writing process as a doable task that can be enjoyed (Suárez-Iñiguez, 2001, p. 74).

## **2.6 Novice research and thesis writing**

Thesis students in pre-service language teacher education programmes at BA level are usually novice researchers. This section discusses issues related to this situation.

### *Novice researchers*

Novice researchers face problems to conduct research due to this lack of expertise (Suárez-Iñiguez, 2000, p. 21). Bell (1993, p. 1) mentions that novice researchers have to face the same challenges as experienced researchers. That is, they have to choose a research topic, identify the objectives of the study, plan and design a suitable methodology, devise research instruments, negotiate access to institutions, materials and people, collect, analyse and present information and finally produce a well written report. Novice researchers can learn how to conduct research and receive the benefits of doing this activity as academics and as persons. The ways this can occur are described in the following paragraphs.



### *Have a positive attitude and value writing your thesis*

“Positive thinking means maintaining a positive attitude toward the class, the teacher and the subject matter. Having a positive attitude helps learners to be successful” (Leaver, 1997, p. 144). As conducting research is a challenging task, having a positive attitude can be highly beneficial. The teacher or supervisor plays an important role in shaping this attitude because (s) he can help learners to trust themselves and to build their self-esteem (Molinar & Vázquez, 2001, p. 75). Rugarcía (1999, p. 56) mentions that our attitudes show our personal values and become visible through the decisions we make. Producing a good thesis can give students a sense of achievement and can help them value their work. Criollo (2003, p. 3) points out that these are written to obtain a degree and most students value this. The following paragraphs provide advice for novice thesis writers.

### *Choose an interesting topic*

Hedge (1988, p. 21) emphasizes the importance of motivation to write a text. This motivation can arise when students choose an interesting topic for them to write about. Criollo (2003, pp. 7-8) explains the steps needed to select a topic. “Define your interests, think of a possible topic, review the literature, identify specific researchable problems, decide on one of them and focus on it”. By choosing a research topic based on the researcher interests, (s) he can get involved easily in the process and it can become a more motivating, interesting and rewarding experience. As Ibañez (1995, p. 25) notes, the thesis writer needs to ‘be in love’ with his/her thesis topic.

### *Read previous research and learn from it*

Students writing a thesis for the first time “can learn through critical reflection and having a conversation with experts” (Pearson & Brew, 2002, p. 140). Reading research articles is an excellent way to learn how to conduct research. Besides, the literature plays a crucial role in writing a thesis as noted by Swales & Feak (2000, p. 114) “reference to prior literature is a defining feature of scholarly and research writing”. Reading the literature can help thesis writers to produce a section of their thesis. Mercado (2001, pp. 104.105) indicates that in order to write a section of a thesis it is necessary to identify key ideas from readings, develop them and write the conclusion of that part. He suggests writing the introduction at the end. That is, novice researchers need to learn from authors first and then write. Once the text is complete it would be easier for them to write the introduction.

### *Organize your time*

Bell (1993, pp. 152-153) provides seven suggestions to be successful as researchers related to time organization. They are: set deadlines; write regularly; create a rhythm of work; write up a section as soon as it is ready; stop at a point from which is easy to resume writing; leave space for revisions and publicize your plans. If a researcher organizes his/her time, the research process can be conducted with fewer problems. Also, Suárez-Iñiguez (2001, p. 25) remarks the importance of discipline, dedication and continuous work to be successful thesis writers.

### *Get used to drafting and editing*

Process writing suggests the productions of drafts and recommends peer feedback (Tsui, 2003, p. 230). Students usually expect the feedback from their teacher, but peer feedback can be also beneficial. With peer feedback, learners can take a more

active role in the writing process and can decide whether or not use their peer's comments (Hyland, 2000, p. 33, 35). After producing a draft, it is necessary to edit them. Editing is a crucial process to ensure quality in thesis writing. Bell (1993, p. 160) proposes the writer to "work through your first draft section by section to ensure its sense, accuracy, logical sequencing and soundness of expression".

### *Learn from the experience of writing a section of your thesis*

Two factors make the writing process easier. First, writing and reflecting on writing makes further writing easier. So, writing one thesis chapter can ease the writing process of the following one. Reflecting on the strategies used to write a chapter can help learners to apply them in the production of other chapters. As Schmelkes (1998, pp. 147, 162) points out, the content of thesis chapters is highly interrelated; thus, producing one chapter facilitates the writing of the following one. Second, choosing an interesting topic makes writing easier. As Barras (1996, p. 127) notes, students should chose a topic to research in which they are already interested to help them in the writing process.

### *Follow your supervisor's advice*

Though the thesis writing process is done by the student, the supervisor plays a very important role as pointed out previously. Suarez- Iñíguez (2001, pp. 21, 24) highlights the importance of teaching learners how to conduct research and explaining them the amount of work and effort needed to finish their thesis. Experienced researchers can guide students more easily in this process. As Suárez-Iñíguez (2000, p. 74) mentions, having experience about research facilitates thesis supervision. Though many decisions in the thesis writing process are made by the student, the approval of the supervisor as an experienced researcher is important. Mercado (2001) mentions

that the approval of the supervisor is needed from the point where the student chooses his/her research topic (p. 36).

These features were identified in order to provide a conceptual framework for this thesis. The next chapter includes the first study of this work.

## **Chapter 3: Study 1**

### **Identification of teacher trainees' beliefs about thesis writing, professional and personal development: A case study with diary research**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study is to identify the beliefs that pre-service teachers hold about thesis writing, professional and personal development throughout the process of writing their thesis by analyzing their electronic dialogue diaries. These diaries were written in two consecutive courses (Research Seminars 1 and 2) in an EFL teacher education program in a public university in central Mexico. An example of a diary of the participants can be seen in Appendix A.

The content of the study is divided in five parts. The first discusses the literature about the use of diaries to conduct research. The second describes the problems experienced by thesis writers and methods confronting them in the two Research Seminars where the participants wrote their theses. The third describes the study and the fourth discusses its findings. Lastly, the fifth presents the conclusions of the study.

#### **3.2. Literature Review**

##### *Diary studies*

"A diary ... is a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal" (Bailey, 1990, p. 215). Diaries are used as instruments to collect data and conduct research in diary studies. Bailey & Oschner (1983, p. 189) define diary studies as follows.

A diary study in second language learning, acquisition, or teaching is an Account of a second language experience as recorded in a first- person journal. The diarist may be a language teacher or a language learner, but the central characteristic of the diary studies is that they are introspective: The diarist studies his own teaching or learning. Thus he can report on affective factors, language learning strategies, and his own perceptions- facets of the language learning experience, which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer.

Thus, a diary study would typically include a language learning or teaching history (Bailey et al, 2001, p. 49).

Diary writing in an educational context has become a popular technique with different types of application. It has now been used quite widely in both language teaching and teacher training (Watson Todd et al , 2001, p. 354). There are various studies who report experiences on learner diaries. Studies conducted by Bailey (1980, cited by Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 16); Peck (1996); Watson Todd et al (2001); Woodfield & Lazarus (1998) are examples of them. It is through diaries that the researchers report having obtained interesting insights from individual perspectives on their language learning experiences (Tarone & Yule, 1989, p. 137). This use of diaries with learners is known as 'pedagogic', where language learners are asked by their class teacher to keep a diary (McDonough, 1994, p. 58).

Brock et al (1992 cited in Wallace, 1998, p. 63) present ten advantages for using diaries in the language classroom. They are discussed next.

1. Diaries provide effective means of identifying variables that are important to individual teachers and learners.

Diaries can help both learners and teachers to identify what is personally significant to the learner (Jarvis, 1992, p. 138).

2. They serve as means of generating questions and hypotheses about teaching and learning process.

Also, journals may enable the teacher to perform an ongoing needs assessment of the learners and identify issues that need to be discussed in class (Shin, 2003, p.8).

This is a very important advantage of reading the diaries of the students. Besides, if they are kept on a weekly basis, they can really help the teacher to improve his/her teaching due to the fact that feedback is received every week.

3. They enhance awareness about the way a teacher teaches and students learn. Besides, they are a very useful tool to help the teachers to respond more effectively to learners' needs (Gray, 1998, p. 30). As the teacher receives feedback fast, (s) he can identify and respond fast to learners' needs.

4. They are an excellent tool for reflection.

They help both learners and teacher to reflect on practice (Jarvis, 1992, p. 142).

They can raise awareness about the teaching learning processes. Both learners and teachers reflect when writing dialogue journals.

5. They are simple to conduct.

Diaries can be sent via e-mail and in this way the teacher can receive them, read and respond easily, as suggested by Shin (2003, p. 6); she explains that email was a useful tool for communicating ideas and for giving and receiving feedback".

Technology can save time and reduce distance. Besides, students feel more confident emailing the teacher their thoughts and feelings than expressing them face to face (Warschauer, 1995, p.33).

6. They provide a first hand account of teaching and learning experiences.

Also, they help both teachers and learners to become aware of them, and they can make a difference in the learning situation (Brown, 1985 cited in Bailey, 1990, p. 223). As diaries are usually written soon after the process has occurred, they allow the teacher to reflect *on action* as suggested by Schön (1983, p. 26).

7. They are the most natural form of classroom research in that no formal correlations are tested and no outside observer enters the classroom dynamics. It is in “reworking, rethinking and interpreting the diary entries, those teachers can gain powerful insights into their own classroom behaviour and motivation “(Bailey, 1990, p. 225). Thus, it allows the teacher to conduct ethnographic research or qualitative research to better understand classroom events and classroom dynamics.

8. They provide an on-going record of classroom events and teacher and learner reflections.

Furthermore, Schön (1983) suggests that diaries help teachers to be aware of the importance of their own reflection and to give meaning to new ideas and to revise their own practice. Diaries are a formal record that can be used to reflect and at the end of a period of teaching or that can be used to conduct research as suggested by Bailey (1990).

9. They enable the researcher to relate classroom events and examine trends emerging from the diaries.

Bailey (1990, p. 224) argues that simply writing diary entries does not yield the maximum potential benefit of the process. It is necessary to reread the journal entries and try to find the patterns in them. In dialogue journals, this happens when the teacher reads the entry of the student, but it would be important to keep a record in order to be able to read them again after the course has finished and be able to reflect on them (Schön, 1983, p. 26).

10. They promote the development of reflective teaching.



They can be used as storage for future reference and revision of what has been done (Jarvis, 1992, p. 141). Reflection occurs in dialogue journals in two moments: when the learner writes and when the teacher reads the entry of the student and responds to it.

As a conclusion it can be said that diaries can help teachers and learners to reflect, to grow as professionals and to document and analyze the everyday working experience that may be otherwise lost (Mc Donough, 1994, pp. 57, 64). As mentioned by Gray (1998, p. 36) the use of diaries can allow the learners and the course to be linked, and learner entries allow the teachers to learn.

#### *Electronic dialogue diaries*

Watson Todd et al (2001, p. 354) state that diaries can be written by learners, but they state that “the most effective journals involve an ongoing dialogue between learners and the teacher”. This type of diaries is called dialogue diaries or dialogue journals. These are diaries written by the learners and answered by the teacher. They can be defined as written conversations between teacher and student over a period of time, usually for the duration of a course, on topics that are or special interest to them (Peñaflorida, 2002, p. 349). Furthermore, Gebhard & Oprandy (1999, p.82) mention that “the purpose of a dialogue journal is to gain awareness through interaction with others”. They go on saying that the role of the teacher educator in this type of journals is vital because (s) he has the potential to transform the students thoughts and ideas into a meaningful whole through the responses that students receive (p. 83). With the help of the modern technology, dialogue diaries can be written and send via e-mail.

### **3.3 Problems experienced by thesis writers and methods confronting them in the two Research Seminars.**

#### *Problems*

According to Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 21) the main reason why students do not write their thesis is the fact that their programs do not prepare them to do this task.

Besides, many students choose another option to obtain the degree due to the fact that they are not aware of the value of writing their thesis (Muñoz, 1998, p. 21).

Undergraduate students find difficult to write a thesis. As they will face many problems they need adequate scaffolding (Whisker, 2005, p. 60).

Zorrilla & Torres (1992, pp. 7-8) mention that 95% of the responsibility of writing a BA thesis relies on the student, and the other 5% is the supervisor's. They also mention that most university students are terribly scared of writing a thesis and they try to avoid defending their thesis if the university allows them to graduate through other options (p. 5). Wisker (2005, p. 60) mentions that supervising undergraduate research is a challenging task because learners are not used to develop autonomy and also because they need effective scaffolding to develop good research and working habits for the future. Furthermore, undergraduate students, due to their lack of expertise in research and thesis writing may get stressed. According to Christison (2002), the brain downshifts under threat. Thus, it is important to look for ways to relax learners. Humanistic activities are one way of achieving this. As Moskowitz (1978, p. 18) states "a principal purpose of education is to provide learning's and environment that facilitates the achievement of the full potential of students".

Language learners and thesis writers need to be motivated to learn. Gardner & Lambert (1972, p. 148) mention two types of motivation: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental relates to needing language as an instrument to achieve other purposes. Integrative refers to wishing to integrate into the activities or culture of

another group of people. Participants seemed to lack both, especially regarding the Research Seminars. That is, they were not motivated to learn how to write their thesis because most of them did not have to defend it to obtain the degree, so, they lacked instrumental motivation. On the other hand, at the beginning of the course they were not aware of the fact that writing their thesis could be used to integrate them in the professional field.

Methods confronting these problems in the Research Seminars

### *Background information*

Using an *autobiographical reflexive approach* (Jaatinen, 2007), in the following paragraphs I am going to explain how I discovered the importance of reflection in the form of learner diaries and how I discovered the importance of incorporating at least partially the autobiographical reflexive approach in my language courses. I took a Diploma on Supervision and Mentoring in 2001 that made me reflect on my teaching practice. That diploma highlighted the importance of reflection not only for teachers, but also for learners through analysing the 'Reflective approach' to educate teachers proposed by Wallace (1991). So, I started applying reflection both in my practice as a teacher educator and thesis supervisor. In autumn 2002, I was asked to give an English course to a group of LEMO freshmen that were real beginners. That group actually was one of the six groups that were formed to give remedial English courses for these beginners. In order to help the learners to understand their language learning and acquisition processes, I asked them to keep a learning diary. Due to their level of proficiency, they kept it in Spanish in a small notebook. I did not read them all, but I checked them occasionally to give them some credits for their score. When I asked the learners to do it, I was not aware of the enormous responsibility that I was getting by asking them to do this task. When the course was over, I kept

ten of those diaries and began reading them when I entered the doctorate, in 2005. It was then that I realized how important these diaries were for the learners and that they wanted me to read them carefully and to take into consideration the content of their entries. These diaries were giving me immediate feedback of my teaching practice, but they were also a very important channel of communication between students and their teacher, but I almost ignored this. Students were highly motivated to write them and they shared their thoughts and feelings. They did reflection in action (Schön, 1983). Two students of that group participated as subjects of my doctoral thesis (Pedro and Julian).

On Spring 2003 I taught a course of Reading & Writing in Spanish and I asked those learners to reflect after reading some texts that had values and messages for life. Students liked the activities and learned reading and writing strategies, at the same time that they reflected about values that could be applied in their lives. On this occasion, another two students of that group were participants of my doctoral thesis afterwards (Marisol and Paula).

Time passed and on spring 2004 I taught another English course, but this time was level 4 of the LEMO, which was low intermediate. I had twenty eight students in that group. Some of these learners were also students of the Research Seminars where I conducted the research of my doctoral thesis. They were Carmen, Nancy, Sandy as well as Pedro and Julian. In this course I adopted partially the autobiographical reflexive approach to teach and learn a foreign language (Jaatinen, 2007). When I did it I was not fully aware of its application, but I did it by asking students to do a small project in small groups integrating the four skills based on their personal anecdotes. Students loved these activities; they developed a sense of ownership of

the language and the projects. They enjoyed constructing them and learned the language in a relaxed way.

Teaching these three courses (English 1, Reading and Writing, and English 4) allowed me to meet most of the learners that participated in my doctoral thesis, except for Yasmin, and also showed me the importance and benefits of including the autobiographical reflexive approach in language courses and using reflection as part of the activities of language teacher education courses.

### *Teaching methodology*

According to Dewey (1938) students learn from experience. However, not all experiences are equally educative (p. 25). Learning how to conduct research was a challenging activity for these novice researchers, thus I looked for ways to help them become better learners and as a result better teachers.

Sarwar (2001) conducted research about a curricular innovation to individualize large classes. In her study, she took elements from the learner centered and the communicative approach as well as constructivism. She used the four Rs of individualization: re-education, responsibility, relevance and rapport. Re-education meant to reconstruct the role of the teacher as a facilitator, and the learner as an active agent in the process of learning (p. 128). Regarding responsibility, learners were encouraged to be in charge of their own learning. In relevance, she chose materials relevant to the learners to foster meaningful learning. About rapport, she tried to 'humanize' a large class to motivate the learners (p. 129). With the application of this philosophy of individualization, she taught values, such as responsibility, self-confidence, collaborative work, friendship and tolerance. Similar to what Sarwar

(2001) did, I tried to individualize and empower learners to write their thesis by applying a constructivist methodology with elements of the learner centered approach. I also tried to be a facilitator and I invited learners to be active agents in their learning process. I encouraged learners to be in charge of their own learning (see Appendix C). Regarding relevance, I respected students' decisions on the research topics so they could develop a sense of ownership and foster meaningful learning. Again similar to what Sarwar (2001) did I tried to teach values, such as responsibility, self-confidence, collaboration, friendship and tolerance. So, I used an approach that had strong links with experiential learning, humanistic psychology and task based language teaching as mentioned by Nunan & Lamb (2001, p. 28). Also, I combined the *process approach* to teach writing which sees drafting as an important element in the writing process with the *product approach*, due to the fact that I asked learners to have a full draft of their thesis at the end of the process. Learners were encouraged to construct their own knowledge and this happened often through their interaction with peers, experts (authors) and the teacher. In constructivist learning, meaning varies across learners (Scholnik et al, 2006, p. 15). Watters & Diezman (1998, p. 75) note that constructivist teachers need to explicate prior knowledge linking ideas and to scaffold learning. Metaphors are an effective way to link previous knowledge with the new one. As explained by Cole (1990 cited in Jaatinen, 2007, p. 27) "metaphors provide a way of carrying ideas and understandings from one context to the other..." When learners understand the meaning of metaphors they feel motivated. An important condition to have successful teacher research is to have motivated teachers, knowledge and skills (Borg, 2006a, p. 23-24). This was also true for the participants. But also time organization is crucial when writing a thesis (Muñoz, 1998, pp. 139-140). The research Seminars were especially designed to meet these learner needs.

Furthermore, the methodology used and the course content were aimed to generate academic, professional and personal growth. This was done through quotations (see Appendix D), the humanistic activity, movies and reflection about them in groups and individually through their electronic dialog diaries. As Molinar & Vázquez (2001, p. 70) mention, education should strive to generate learners' growth in academic, professional and personal aspects.

Borg (2006a, p. 24) points out that "teacher research, at least initially, will often need to be scaffolded by a more experienced and skilled individual". Donato (1994, p. 37) argues that "the experienced individual is often observed to guide, support and shape actions of the novice who, in turn, internalizes the expert's strategic process". Learners need to be guided gently, so they feel that their guide is a full person, in this way they would be encouraged to learn. In other words 'care about students and share our wisdom' (Moskowitz, 1978).

Throughout my teaching career I have used films for various purposes. Similar to what Viñas (2008, p. 20) mentions, I have used them to enhance communication in the EFL classroom and to foster reflection about values. I used two movies in the Research Seminars, 'Finding Forrester' on the first and 'Pay it forward' on the second. Both of them are recommended to teach values by Sottit & Domene (2001, pp. 341, 271). An example of how to conduct an activity to foster reflection with movies can be seen in Appendix E.

Borg (2006a, p. 26) mentions that it is advisable to have opportunities to collaborate with other teacher researchers and to discuss the research with others. Revision of

owns writing is not an easy task for learners. This can be facilitated by “giving students opportunities to exchange papers with peers and provide feedback” (González & Roux, 2007, p. 55). Participants were novice researchers; they had to learn how to do their thesis. As I used a constructivist approach in my lessons, I tried to reduce my participation and encouraged them to speak in small group work and in oral presentations. As Van Huizen et al (2005, p. 272) note, students participating in a constructivist classroom participate in an *activity system*. Their participation “involves both the performance of action and the assignment of meaning”. Students gave and listened to oral presentations, this was the *performance of the action*. Regarding the *assignment of meaning*, they viewed oral presentations as a solution to the lack of expertise.

Feedback on students writing has traditionally been given by the teacher.

Responding to students writing is linked to the role the teacher is playing in the process (Leki, 1990, p. 59). Participants learned from the teacher to give feedback to their classmates by following a format provided by her that included a report of both positive and negative aspects of the work reviewed.

### **3.4 Study**

This section describes the participants, the instrument, and procedure used to collect and analyse the data in this study.

#### *Participants*

I had twenty three students in total. The group I had on the First Research Seminar continued almost intact in the Second Research Seminar. Only one student dropped out in the middle of the First Research Seminar and one new student took his place



on the Second Research Seminar. However, seven students out of twenty three I had (30% of the group) were studying the Major in Modern Languages to become translators, so they could not participate on my doctoral thesis research due to the fact that the study was aimed to study the beliefs of pre-service teachers. The rest of the group that is sixteen students (70%) were pre-service teachers. Eight from these students (35% of the group) gave their consent to participate in my doctoral thesis research at the end of both courses after receiving their scores. They allowed the researcher to use their electronic dialogue journals as a source of data. These eight participants were six female and two male whose age ranged from twenty two to twenty five years old. Six of them studied their high school in a public institution and two in a private one. Five were full time students and three had part-time jobs. They said that their research interests were in the following areas: teaching, teaching methodology, teacher effectiveness, teaching and pragmatics, learning strategies, linguistics and translation.

### *Instrument*

The instrument used to collect the data was electronic dialogue diaries. As mentioned before, “a diary ... is a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal” (Bailey, 1990, p. 215). Diaries are used as instruments to collect data and conduct research in diary studies. Watson Todd et al (2001, p. 354) state that diaries can be written by learners, but they state that “the most effective journals involve an ongoing dialogue between learners and the teacher”. This type of diaries is called dialogue diaries or dialogue journals. This instrument was used to collect data for this study due to the fact that it was used to generate reflection and to scaffold students

learning. Besides, they were chosen because they can be used as storage for future reference and revision of what has been done (Jarvis, 1992, p. 141).

#### *Procedure for data collection*

Students were told to send a learning diary to the e-mail address of their teacher every Thursday including thoughts and feelings related to the course and their theses writing process. Thus, the diaries were collected on a weekly basis during the two Research Seminars from August 2006 to May 2007. All the students of these seminars were required to write them to get 10% of their score, and the average of entries received per week was fifteen on the First Research Seminar and ten on the Second one. The length of the entries varied and the frequency also. Though they were supposed to send their entries on Thursday, some of them did it one, two or even four days later. They realized that their entries were always welcome and that they were read and answered by the teacher on an average of two to three days after being sent.

#### *Procedure for data analysis*

Taking as a basis the three areas proposed for thesis supervision by Burns et al (1999), that is thesis, professional and person, I developed eight categories to analyze the data, after reading some of the diary entries. They are the thesis; professional; person; thesis and professional; thesis and person; professional and person; thesis, professional and person and the last one is teaching methodology. Each of them was given a number and a colour. The primary colours were used for the first three, and the other colours emerged by combining the three primary colours.

They are shown on Table 1.

Table 1. Categories and colour key to process the data			
No	Category	Colour	Definition
1.	Thesis	Blue	Beliefs about thesis writing issues
2.	Professional	Red	Beliefs about professional issues
3.	Person	Yellow	Beliefs about personal issues
4.	Thesis + Professional	Violet	Beliefs about a combination of thesis with professional issues
5.	Thesis + Person	Dark green	Beliefs about a combination of thesis with personal issues
6.	Professional + Person	Orange	Beliefs about a combination of professional with personal issues
7.	Thesis+ Professional + Person	Pink	Beliefs about a combination of thesis writing with professional and personal issues
8.	Teaching methodology	Light green	Beliefs about the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars

These categories were used to colour the content of the diary entries. Then each entry was read and the statements of belief were identified and received a consecutive number. Then they were reported by category and subcategory. An example of this process can be seen in Appendix B where the diary written by Julian during the First Research Seminar is included showing how colour coding was used to classify the data obtained. The richness of the data was both positive and negative. Positive because a tremendous amount of information was obtained from the thoughts and feelings of the students written on their diaries and sent via e mail, but on the other hand, it was a time consuming and very complex process, but a very interesting one. Assigning content of the diaries and classifying them into categories was a very challenging process. Some of the entries could have been placed in more than one category and subcategory. I realized that all words written by students had the possibility to express a certain belief, and it required deep reflection to process and identify which belief was behind those words. I do admit however, that beliefs are

a difficult concept to handle, and I agree with Pajares (1992) on the fact that they are a rather messy concept.

After creating the categories for the analysis, the patterns of content in the diary entries per seminar were identified and they are reported on Tables 2a. and 2b. below. They show which categories were more frequently included as well as the most frequent combination of them.

Note: The numbers in the top axis refer to the combination of the categories presented on Table 1.

Table 2a. Patterns of content in the diaries of the 1 <sup>st</sup> Research Seminar													
N o.	Participants	Diary entries	38 5	35	38	3	38 57	38 54	38 56	38 51	38 1	38 6	38 51 2
1.	Carmen	13	5	3	2		1	1	1	1			
2.	Marisol	12	4		3					3	2		
3.	Nancy	12	7						2	3			
4.	Paula	13	7	1	1					2	1		1
5.	Sandy	9	5	1		1					1	1	
6.	Yazmín	14	10		2				1				
7.	Julian	15	8						4	3			
8.	Pedro	12	6	2	2					2			
	Total	100	52	7	10	1	1	1	8	14	4	1	1
	%Total	100 %	52 %	7%	10 %	1%	1%	1%	8%	14 %	4%	1%	1%

Table 2b. Patterns of content in the diaries of the 2nd Research Seminar										
N o	Participants	Diary entries	385	35	38	368	3856	3851	3876	85
1.	Carmen	7	2	2	1	1	0	1	0	0
2.	Marisol	7	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
3.	Nancy	7	4	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
4.	Paula	8	5	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
5.	Sandy	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6.	Yazmín	14	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

7.	Julian	9	4	0	1	0	2	1	0	1
8.	Pedro	4	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	63	42	5	4	3	2	4	1	2
	%Total	100%	67%	8%	6%	5%	3%	6%	2%	3%

As can be seen, participants wrote more entries on the First Research Seminar. I think this was due to the fact that they were more motivated and probably had more time to do it. While taking the Second Research Seminar they were doing their practicum and they had to design lesson plans, materials and teach with real students.

### 3.5 Findings and discussion

The findings of this study are quite extensive due to the type of data collected. *Five hundred and forty three statements of belief* seem to be found in the eight categories proposed to analyse the data. Actually thirty nine subcategories seem to have arisen. Though they sometimes seem to overlap, they were considered as one way to classify the data obtained. They are shown in Tables 3 to 10.

Table 3. Sub-categories of beliefs about <i>thesis writing</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Attitude requirements for successful completion</li> <li>b. Social responsibility</li> <li>c. Writing and defence processes</li> </ul>

Table 4. Sub-categories of beliefs about <i>professional issues</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Professional practice</li> </ul>

Table 5. Sub-categories of beliefs about <i>personal</i> issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Life truths</li> <li>b. Family and friends</li> <li>c. Graduation requirements</li> <li>d. Teacher- students relationships</li> <li>e. Learning success</li> <li>f. Personal growth</li> <li>g. Personal history in academic writing</li> </ul>

Table 6. Sub-categories of beliefs about <i>thesis and professional</i> issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Research opportunity</li> </ul>

Table 7. Sub-categories of beliefs about the <i>personal experience writing a thesis</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Role of the teacher</li> <li>b. Choosing a research topic</li> <li>c. Writing a thesis chapter</li> <li>d. Thesis writing process</li> <li>e. Writing the literature review</li> <li>f. The role of peers</li> <li>g. Personal/attitudinal requirements</li> <li>h. Writing a thesis in pairs</li> <li>i. Editing process</li> <li>j. Importance of the thesis</li> <li>k. Foreign language in which the thesis is written</li> </ul>

Table 8. Sub-categories of beliefs about <i>professional and personal</i> issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Career development</li> <li>b. Future professional life</li> <li>c. Program evaluation</li> <li>d. Personal growth as professionals</li> </ul>

Table 9. Sub-categories of beliefs about <i>thesis and professional and personal</i> issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Career development</li> <li>b. Social responsibility</li> <li>c. Future professional practice</li> </ul>

Table 10. Sub-categories of beliefs about the <i>teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Oral presentations</li> <li>b. Peer feedback</li> <li>c. Movies</li> <li>d. Humanistic activity</li> <li>e. Metaphors</li> <li>f. Group work</li> <li>g. Role of the teacher</li> <li>h. Electronic dialogue diaries</li> <li>i. Quotes</li> <li>j. Music</li> <li>k. Thesis writing</li> </ul>

### *Belief identification tables*

Thus, for each subcategory, a table of beliefs was produced. These were called *belief identification tables*, and were labelled with a number and a letter following alphabetical order as they appear on Tables 3 to 10. These tables have three columns. The first has the sequential number of belief obtained in the broad category (the eight mentioned earlier with the colour coding system). The second column contains the belief and the third one indicates in which diary entries this belief was found. The diary entries include the pseudonym of the participant followed by two numbers, the first in parentheses and the other(s) without parentheses. The number in parentheses refers to the course where the belief was found, number 1 for the First Research Seminar and number 2 for the Second Research Seminar. The other number(s) refer to the sequential diary entry or entries where the participant mentioned that belief. In order to illustrate this example is provided next: Pedro (1) 3; (2) 4. This means that the belief was found in Pedro's diary entries; first on the First Research Seminar on his third entry and then on the Second Research Seminar on his fourth entry.

### *Problem-Solution Tables*

Again for each subcategory, a table providing a problem-solution approach was produced. They followed the same classification used for the *belief identification tables* but, they have two extra letters after the letter of the table 'ps' to indicate that they are a problem-solution table. For example, there is a Table 7a. and a Table 7aps. The reason why these tables were created was twofold: they serve to organize and summarize the information found in the data and prepare these findings to be discussed and easily understood. These *problem-solution tables* as their name indicates display one or more problems that seemed to be present in the beliefs of



that subcategory and the solution to that/those problem(s) that seemed to be provided by the participants through their beliefs. These tables have one or more numbers in parentheses after every solution presented and sometimes after the problem(s) identified. This means that every solution comes from one or more beliefs, and they are acknowledged by the number(s) provided in parentheses. The reason why not all the problems have beliefs next to them is because sometimes the problems are suggested indirectly in the solution and other times they are explicitly mentioned. When they are just suggested in the belief of the solution, they do not have a number next to them. On the other hand, when explicitly mentioned, the belief number is provided in parentheses next to them.

Cresswell (2005, pp. 481-482) suggests a similar approach to the analysis of narratives as the one used in this study which he calls restoring or retelling the story following what he calls a problem - resolution approach. He mentions that the researcher has to retell the story provided by the participant with the help of the same participant. I did not follow this process because it would prevent timely completion of my doctoral thesis. However, I took Cresswell's ideas as a starting point and I decided to retell the story following a Problem-Solution Approach. Thus I processed the diary entries in this way due to the fact that reading them carefully I tried to find in them problems and solutions to those problems present in the narratives of the participants. I would like to mention that in the discussion of the problem-solution tables I added sample quotes from the diary entries of the participants to illustrate the beliefs discussed. They are written with smaller letters and in italics. Similar to the code used in the *Identification Tables*, they contain two numbers next to the pseudonym to indicate the course where the students wrote that information and the diary entry where the quotation can be found.

It is worth mentioning that even though the discussion that starts at this point is written in a way that strong's claims are being made about the findings I would like to mention that these statements seem to have elicited participants' beliefs, problems and solutions suggested by the participants. It is not my intention to make strong claims but to present them as possible ways to improve the thesis writing process in a way that can foster professional and personal growth. Now the findings of this study are presented and discussed.

Table 3. Beliefs about thesis writing.

Three subcategories were found about this topic: attitude requirements for successful completion, social responsibility and writing and defence processes. Their tables are shown next.

Table 3a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>thesis writing</i> in relation to <i>attitude requirements to do it successfully</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	Writing a good thesis takes a lot of time and effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 8</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> <li>• Paula (2) 1</li> </ul>
8.	The writer of a thesis has to face difficulties to achieve this goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> </ul>
10.	Thesis writing implies hard work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> <li>• Carmen (2) 5</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 7</li> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>
17.	Writing a thesis is a complex task that requires detailed work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 12</li> </ul>

Table 3a. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *thesis writing* but in this case in relation to *attitude requirements to do it successfully*. Four beliefs were identified about this topic. They relate to one problem: the difficulty of writing a good thesis. The participants provided three solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 3aps.

Table 3aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>attitude requirements to write a thesis successfully</i> presented on Table 3a.
First problem: <i>Difficulty to write a good thesis</i> (1). Solutions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Devote a lot of time and effort (1, 10, and 17).</li> <li>2. Be prepared to face difficulties to achieve this goal (8).</li> <li>3. Do a detailed work (17).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 3aps.

Participants' beliefs show one problem in this topic. The *difficulty to write a good thesis*. It is a concern that appeared mainly during the First Research Seminar, but it continued for some until the second course. This problem arises due to the fact that it is the first time these students are writing a thesis. As Marisol mentioned,

*Marisol (1) 1: Most of us are afraid of it, not only to write a thesis, but to write a good One,...*

The solutions presented by the participants are discussed next.

1. Devoting a lot of time and effort.

Thesis writing is a challenging task that requires effort, but is rewarded with an academic degree (Criollo, 2003, p. 3). As participants lived this experience, they

realized that thesis writing required a lot of time and effort, but they are absolutely necessary to achieve this goal. In the words of Marisol and Sandy,

*Marisol (1) 1: Most of us are afraid of it, we know it takes a lot of time and effort,*

*Sandy (1) 8: I know this process needs a lot of time...*

## 2. Be prepared to face difficulties to achieve this goal.

Participants admit that thesis writing entailed difficulties, especially for them because it was the first time they are conducting a formal piece of research, as pointed out by Paula,

*Paula (1) 2: A thesis is a formal research...*

An important task for the supervisor is then to motivate them to conduct research and to help them have a positive attitude. A positive attitude helps them to face difficulties. This is the reason why I used Castañeda's (1991) reflections in the First Research Seminar.

This issue is expressed by Nancy,

*Nancy (1) 6: There are lots of difficulties while writing it...*

## 3. Do detailed work.

Producing a good thesis requires detailed work in various areas. Pedro expresses his concerns about this issue,

*Pedro (1) 12: ...to learn to start writing the thesis, something really complicated*

*because of the little details about using connectors when necessary, or*

*when we have to make some quotations, but the most difficult part was to*

*link one idea with another one.*

A thesis is a research report that follows conventions. Following these conventions requires detailed work. An example of this is the use of APA format in thesis writing.

This is why Criollo (2003) used a *genre approach* to show students how to do this detailed work called thesis by providing explanations and examples.

Table 3b. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>thesis writing</i> in relation to <i>its social responsibility</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
2.	A thesis can and should be shared with other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1, 11</li> </ul>
11.	A thesis can change the world and other people's views.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> </ul>
19.	Writing a thesis may or may not affect other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 1</li> </ul>

Table 3b. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *thesis writing* but in this case in relation to *its social responsibility*. Three beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to relate to one problem: the uncertainty whether a thesis can change the world and other people's views. The participants provided one solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 3bps.

Table 3bps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>the social responsibility of thesis writing</i> presented on Table 3b.
<p>First problem: <i>Uncertainty whether a thesis can change the world and other people's views</i> (11, 19).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share it with other people (2).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 3bps.

Participants' beliefs show one problem in this topic. The *uncertainty whether a thesis can change the world and other people's views*. It is a concern that appeared mainly

during the First Research Seminar, but it continued for some until the second course. This problem arises due to the fact that it is the first time these students are writing a thesis and they have never thought about this issue.

The solution presented by the participants is discussed next.

1. Share it with other people.

In both courses, I invited students to share their research with other people. The different options to do it were discussed in class: thesis defence, conference presentation and publication. Hedge's (1988, p. 21) diagram about the writing process was the source used to introduce this suggestion. Thus, some participants seemed to have taken this as a belief, not only espoused, but in action as defined by Borg (2001); that is, they did it, they shared their thesis in a conference. From the original group of learners that had twenty three subjects, two of them presented their thesis work in a national conference and two of them in international conferences within six months of having finished the Second Research Seminar. Although three of these presentations were done with a LEMO teacher still they have proven that some of the students of the Research Seminars decided to present their thesis in a conference.

The words of Marisol explain this solution.

*Marisol (1) 1: We should show our work to the rest of the people and not keep it hidden.*

Table 3c. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>thesis writing</i> in relation to <i>the writing and defence processes</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
3.	The hardest stage of thesis writing is the beginning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 3</li> </ul>
4.	The first draft of a thesis should be written with our heart and the last one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 5</li> </ul>

	with our head.	
6.	It is important to have an outline to write Chapter 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 12</li> </ul>
7.	An essential feature of Chapter 2 is organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 12</li> </ul>
9.	It is better to have a draft to correct than not having any draft at all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> </ul>
12.	A thesis is a formal piece of research thus; it needs to be written with reliable sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 2</li> </ul>
13.	The first step to write a thesis is to choose a topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 1</li> </ul>
14.	Writing a thesis is far more than choosing a topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 1</li> </ul>
15.	Thesis writing is a difficult and challenging task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
16.	Thesis writing is successfully done by putting effort to do our best accompanied by a mentor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
18.	Once you have a topic, the rest of the process is easy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 7</li> </ul>
20.	Thesis defence is a complicated stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 14</li> </ul>

Table 3c. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *thesis writing* but in this case in relation to *the writing and defence processes*. Twelve beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to four problems: 1) the hardest stage of thesis writing is the beginning; 2) the difficulty to write a thesis chapter; 3) the lack of expertise writing a thesis and 4) thesis defence is a complicated stage. The participants provided two solutions to the first problem, three to the second, two to the third and one to the fourth. They are shown on Table 3cps.

Table 3cps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>the thesis writing and defence processes</i> presented on Table 3c.
<p>First problem: <i>The hardest stage of thesis writing is the beginning.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose a topic (13, 18).</li> <li>2. Keep on working (14).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Difficulty to write a thesis chapter.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a draft of the chapter with your heart and then a second one with your head (4, 9).</li> <li>2. Design an outline and organize your information, especially when writing Chapter 2 (6, 7).</li> <li>3. Use reliable sources (12).</li> </ol> <p>Third problem: <i>Lack of expertise writing a thesis.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be prepared to putt effort to face the difficulties and challenges that thesis writing entails (15, 16).</li> <li>2. Work with a mentor (16).</li> </ol> <p>Fourth problem: <i>Thesis defence is a complicated stage</i> (20).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is important to share your work with other people (2).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 3cps.

Participants' beliefs show four problems in this topic. They seem to be related to the stages in writing a thesis. Some of these concerns appeared on the First Research Seminar, but others did it on the second course. These problems seem to have arisen due to the fact that it is the first time these students are writing a thesis. As Marisol mentioned,



*Marisol (1) 1: Most of us are afraid of it,...not only to write a thesis, but to write a good one,...*

The problems and their solutions presented by the participants are discussed next. The first problem was that *the hardest stage of thesis writing was the beginning*. It seems that participants believe that this stage was the most difficult for them. In the words of Marisol

*Marisol (1) 3: The hardest point of doing a thesis is how to start.*

Criollo (2003) includes in the first chapter of his book the solutions provided by the participants. They are discussed next.

#### 1. Choose a topic.

This is the first step to write a thesis signalled by Criollo (2003). He actually marks this step as one of the most difficult steps in developing a thesis. He also suggests selecting it based on one's interests and concerns (p. 7).

Nancy said that once you have made this decision, the rest is not difficult.

*Nancy (2) 7: ...but once you have the topic then everything goes easily.*

#### 2. Keep on working, it is a long process.

Choosing a topic is just the beginning. Then the student needs to read in order to keep on writing his/her thesis as pointed out by Mercado (2001, p. 23).

Julian describes this by saying,

*Julian (1) 1: However, choosing the topic is not what all the thesis is about, I am aware of the long process...*

Second problem: Difficulty to write a thesis chapter.

Participants found difficulties in writing a thesis chapter. However, they also found solutions to it. They are discussed next.

1. Write a first draft with your heart and the last with your head.

This solution was suggested to them by the movie 'Finding Forrester'. I think that this solution refers to the fact that it is important to write the ideas as they come to your head without hesitating too much. As Suárez-Lñíguez (2000) mentions, one of the reasons why students do not write their thesis is the lack of confidence in their ideas (p. 23). It is also important to support these ideas with authors' ideas and edit the work. As Ibañez (1995, p. 150) mentions, the literature referring to previous research conducted in the field is crucial since Chapter 1.

Marisol's words describe this belief.

*Marisol (1) 5: For our thesis, we also learned that we should write the first draft with our heart and the final work with our head...*

2. Design an outline, especially when writing Chapter 2.

Ibañez (1995, pp. 127-129) describes a suggested outline to write a thesis and the content of its chapters. Criollo (2003, p. 105) suggests the thesis writer to design an outline to write Chapter 2. When Marisol, one of the participants reviewed her classmates' drafts of Chapter 2, she said that having an outline and using it to organize and write the information in it was crucial to have a good chapter.

*Marisol (1) 12: The first time I reviewed his work, I like it and I learned a bit..., but I think it needed more information, its outline was missing and it was not very well organized. The second time I reviewed other work I was impressed...It was very well linked, one topic with another, very well organized....*

3. Use reliable sources.

The type of information that should be used to write a thesis comes from academic sources. Ibañez (1995, p. 62) suggests the use of academic books and journals. Criollo (2003, pp. 12-13) adds electronic journals and theses to this list.

Paula explains this by saying,

*Paula (1) 2: ...internet is a big source of information for us, well in our case. ...We know that we should look for educational sites so they are reliable...*

Third problem: Lack of expertise writing a thesis.

As mentioned before, as participants were BA students it was the first time they were writing a thesis. Suárez-Iñiguez (2000) mentions that BA students are not prepared to write a thesis and that learning to conduct research is a continuous work not a task that can be achieved in one or two terms (p. 16).

Participants provided two solutions to this problem.

1. Be prepared to face difficulties and challenges that thesis writing entails.

Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 25) argues that the most important type of reasons why students do not finish their thesis is personal. He goes on saying that the lack of motivation, discipline and writing skills are three important reasons why students do not accomplish this goal.

Julian describes these issues when analysing thesis writing.

*Julian (1) 4: I accept that it is true the fact that writing is a difficult, even challenging task...*

2. Work with a mentor and put effort to do your work.

As participants were novice researchers, they needed a guide. Suárez-Iñiguez (2000) mentions that finding a good thesis supervisor is not an easy task because not all professors are well trained and experienced researchers. Besides, thesis writing is a challenging task that requires effort to be completed (Criollo, 2003, p. 3).

Julian describes successful thesis writing when working with a mentor and putting effort to succeed.

*Julian (1) 5 ...it is not just having that great mentor in front of us and stare at him..., but also doing our best to improve more and more in our tasks.*

Fourth problem: Thesis defence is a difficult stage.

Participants as novice researchers seemed to be scared of thesis writing due to its complexity. Most of them did not have to defend their thesis. Though they had been told that the last step in writing was sharing it through publication as stated by Hedge (1988, p. 21). Some of them were not eager to defend it. In the words of Yasmin,

*Yasmin (2) 14: I felt comfortable in the class with the explanation that you give us how to defend our thesis, I consider that it is a complicated stage.*

Another participant provided a solution to this problem; it was given on Table 3b.

1. It is important to share your work with other people.

If the participants were aware of the importance of this belief, they were more willing to defend their thesis. Criollo (2003, p. 253) sees thesis defence as a natural step that follows after finishing writing the thesis.

The words of Marisol explain this solution.

*Marisol (1) 1: We should show our work to the rest of the people and not keep it hidden.*

It seems that these were the beliefs identified about *thesis writing*, the problems that they contained and the solutions to them provided by the participants in their diary entries. Now the beliefs about *professional* issues will be presented and discussed.

Table 4. Beliefs about professional issues.

One subcategory was found about this topic: professional practice. Its table is shown next.

Table 4a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>professional</i> issues in relation to <i>professional practice</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	It is very important to establish a nice environment between teacher and students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paula (1) 1</li> </ul>

Only one belief was found in relation to professional practice. It seems to be related to the problem of the *difficulty to have a good relationship between teacher and learners*. Participants suggested a solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 4aps.

Table 4aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>professional practice</i> presented on Table 4a.	
First problem: <i>Difficulty to have a good relationship between teacher and learners</i> .	
Solution:	
1. It is very important to establish a nice environment between teacher and students (1).	

Discussion Table 4aps.

Participants were pre-service teachers and they were beginning to do their teaching practice. This fact seems to have made them aware of the importance of having a good relationship between teacher and students. Gower and Walters (1983, p. 30) highlights the importance of creating a nice environment to foster learning. "...let each class develop its own atmosphere and encourage its own positive characteristics".

Paula explains this by saying,

*Paula (1) 1: I felt comfortable in class. Thank you! I consider that it's a very important aspect establishing a nice environment between teacher and students.*

It seems that these were the beliefs identified about *professional issues*, the problems that they contained and the solutions to them provided by the participants in their diary entries. Now the beliefs about *personal issues* will be presented and discussed.

#### Tables 5. Beliefs about personal issues.

Seven subcategories seem to have arisen about this topic: life truths, family and friends, graduation requirements, teacher-students relationships, learning success, personal growth, and personal history in academic writing. Their tables are shown next.

Table 5a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>personal issues</i> in relation to <i>life truths</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
5.	There is a solution for all problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 3</li> </ul>
22.	Problems can make people stronger.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 10</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 11</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 12</li> </ul>
25.	A good day passes as you expect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3</li> </ul>
26.	Strong persons do not cry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 14</li> </ul>
29.	Life usually has problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 10</li> </ul>
30.	Nothing happens by chance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 12</li> </ul>
31.	When a person faces a difficult situation (s) he needs the help of other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 12</li> </ul>
32.	Sooner or later a person will experience a difficult situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>
35.	It is good to live good and bad experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 10</li> </ul>
42.	Problems make me sad, especially when I do not find a solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 3; (2) 3</li> </ul>

43.	Everything I imagine never becomes true.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 6</li> </ul>
49.	We need to have objectives in our life in order to improve it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 10</li> </ul>
56.	We will receive as much as we give. It is something difficult to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 3</li> </ul>
58.	We can do things better if we have good attitude and we give an extra effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
80.	We can change the world in our imagination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 9</li> </ul>
85.	If we cannot solve our problems we need to be patient and wait for a solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 12</li> </ul>
86.	We have to face problems because we cannot avoid them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>
98.	I can solve my problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (2) 6</li> </ul>
99.	Life does not please all our wishes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 2</li> </ul>
100.	Sometimes I forget that all problems have a solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 4</li> </ul>
103.	You need to make a big effort to continue after experiencing a problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 6</li> </ul>
106.	We can achieve our goals with enthusiasm and effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 9</li> </ul>
107.	It is good to do things with love.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 11</li> </ul>
109.	Life has a beginning and an end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 11</li> </ul>
110.	When we want to change, people try to discourage us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>

Table 5a. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *personal issues* but in this case in relation to *life truths*. Twenty five beliefs were identified about this topic. They seem to be related to three problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 5aps.

<p>Table 5aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>life truths</i> presented on Table 5a.</p>
<p>First problem: <i>Life usually has problems and they make me sad when I do not find a solution</i> (29, 32, 42, 99).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a solution for all problems and they make people stronger (5, 22, 25, 30, 35, 100).</li> <li>2. When having a problem it is good to receive other people's help (31).</li> <li>4. Have a good attitude and give extra effort (58).</li> <li>5. If you do not find a quick solution, be patient; you need to face problems in order to solve them (86, 98).</li> <li>6. Continue living and enjoying life after experiencing a problem (103).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Everything I imagine never becomes true</i> (43).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We can change the world in our imagination, but it is good to set objectives in your life to improve it (49, 80).</li> <li>2. Have a good attitude, enthusiasm and give an extra effort (58, 106).</li> </ol> <p>Third problem: <i>It is difficult to give time and help to other people</i> (56).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will receive as much as we give (56).</li> <li>2. Do things with love and love people (107).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 5 aps.

Participant's beliefs show three problems in this topic. They seem to be related to problems that most adult people face. As students were asked to reflect, they did it not only about their thesis writing process, but also about their lives.

First problem: Life usually has problems and they make me sad when I do not find a solution.



Participants were young adults and they had experienced problems in their life.

“Experiences...all have some effect on our lives and learning” (Jaatinen, 2007, p. 26).

They presented five solutions to these issues.

1. There is a solution for all problems and they make people stronger.

It is important to be aware of the fact that problems can be solved. Jaatinen (2007) used problem solving tasks to make students learn a foreign language through team work (pp. 89-90). Through these tasks she helped learners to activate their existing knowledge, to express their opinions and to negotiate in order to reach an agreement. This kind of tasks may help learners to be prepared when looking for solutions to real life problems and reflect on their values (Díaz-Barriga & Hernández, 2002, p. 59). Experiencing problems and finding solutions to them can make people stronger that were the case of Hellen Keller. In the words of Nancy,

*Nancy (1) 10: Through all our life we have experienced things that have made us stronger.*

2. When having a problem it is good to receive other people's help.

Participants experienced cooperative work in class. They helped each other and they learned that sharing their thesis problems with other students created a positive interdependence as stated by Díaz- Barriga & Hernández (2002, p. 115). When they saw other people experiencing problems on their lives, they seem to be aware of the importance of accompanying them in those difficult moments. Nancy expresses this solution by saying,

*Nancy (1) 12: It is now when that person needs me more than ever...*

### 3. Have a good attitude and give extra effort.

This solution is related to affective and social strategies for learning (Oxford, 2002, p. 125). These strategies help learners to control their emotions, to be motivated, to cooperate and to get help (Dansereau, 1985; Mc Combs, 1988 cited in Oxford, 2002, p. 125).

Julian explains this by saying,

*Julian (1) 4: ...we can make things different if just we include some good attitude and we give an extra effort.*

### 4. If you do not find a quick solution, be patient; you need to face problems in order to solve them.

Reflection can help us solve problems. Zeichner & Liston (1996, p. 47) propose five dimensions of teacher reflection. The third one is called *review*, and it refers to reflection *on action*. Reflection on action is a term proposed by Schön (1983, pp. 26-31) that means reflecting about past actions. By reflecting about our lives, we can find ways to face and solve problems. Pedro's words illustrate this solution.

*Pedro (1) 12: ... but I learned that we have to live and face the problems because we can't avoid them.*

### 5. Continue living and enjoying life after experiencing a problem.

It is not pleasant to experience problems, but we should continue living and enjoying life. This solution is related to positive attitude that allows persons to be open to change (Larsen- Freeman, 1983, p. 266). Yasmin illustrates this by saying,

*Yasmin (2) 6: ... from this horrible experience I learnt that we have to continue with our lives, not to suffer all the time.*

Second problem: Everything I imagine never becomes true.

This belief seems to have emerged after analysing Castañeda's ideas about the importance of dreams to set goals in life and reach them (Castañeda, 1991, pp. 54-55).

Participants suggested two solutions that are discussed next.

1. We can change the world in our imagination, but it is good to set objectives in your life to improve it.

Student teachers are expected to "reflect critically on their own teaching and professional development" (Haughe, 2000, p. 159). Reflection allows persons to discover areas that need to be changed. Becoming aware of them can help persons to set goals for development. Teacher development is a term that refers to cognitive and personal growth in teachers (Lange, 1990, p. 250).

Yasmin's thoughts about this issue are presented next,

*Yasmin (1) 10: I think that is true, because sometimes I have imagined things and I have done them. ...We always need to have objectives in our life in order to improve it.*

2. Have a good attitude, enthusiasm and give extra effort.

Reaching goals in life requires attitude, enthusiasm and effort; pursuing development also. Lange (1990, p. 250) uses the term development to refer to continual growth before and throughout a career. Development occurs as a result of work. Yasmin's words illustrate this solution,

*Yasmin (2) 9: I think that we can achieve our goals working with enthusiasm and effort.*

Third problem: It is difficult to give time and help to other people.

This belief seems to have emerged after analysing Castañeda's ideas about generosity (Castañeda, 1991, pp. 22).

Participants seem to have suggested two solutions that are discussed next.

1. We will receive as much as we give.

This idea was presented with the quotation of Castañeda (1991, pp. 22). He says that the person who is generous will get more than others. Julian describes this solution by saying,

*Julian (1) 3: That phrase was really moving for me because it made me reflect on how selfish I am sometimes and I do not care much about the others. It is very true that we will receive as much as we give.*

2. Do things with love and love people.

Love can change the world. Mother Theresa (1984, p. 9) says that we must love with our time; our hands and heart; that we need to share all we have.

Yasmin explains this by saying,

*Yasmin (2) 11: ...we believe that if we do things with love they will be very good. Also is important to love all people around us.*

Table 5b. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>personal</i> topics in relation to <i>family and friends</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
7.	My family is very important for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carmen (1) 6, 7; (2) 5</li><li>• Pedro (1) 12</li></ul>
8.	The support of my family is very important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carmen (1) 7</li></ul>
24.	It is good to keep friends over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nancy (1) 3</li></ul>

46.	Seeing familiar faces in a school group makes me feel good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 1; (2) 1</li> </ul>
75.	We cannot live without friends and family. They make our life different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
76.	Friends make us feel better; they ease our lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 10</li> </ul>
90.	Being with my family makes me happy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 6</li> </ul>

Table 5b. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *personal issues* but in this case in relation to *family and friends*. Seven beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 5bps.

Table 5bps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>family and friends</i> presented on Table 5b.	
<p>First problem: <i>Life is difficult.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The support of the family is very important. It eases our life (7, 8, 75, and 90).</li> <li>2. Keep friends over time, they make life easier and different (24, 75).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>It is difficult to learn.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make and keep friends at school. They can ease your life at school (24, 46, 75, and 76).</li> </ol>	

Discussion Table 5 bps.

Participant's beliefs show two problems in this topic. They deal with the importance of family and friends in our lives.

First problem: Life is difficult.

Participants' own experience seems to have taught them this truth. They seem to have suggested two solutions to this problem.

1. The support of the family is very important. It eases our life.

Our family is the group of people that receives and nurtures us when we are new-born babies. It is until we are five years old according to Erikson (cited in Linn et al, 2007, p. 35) that our family is our social network in which meaningful relationships are built in. Rugarcía (1999, p.p. 57-58) mentions family as one of the important values that should be fostered at school and college. Carmen's words illustrate this point.

*Carmen (1) 6: I felt good because instead of the old man I saw my mom standing on the top of it and helping me.*

2. Keep friends over time, they make life easier and different.

When we are six years old, our meaningful relations begin to be built with our friends either neighbours or school friends and this continues to be true until we are young adults according to Erikson (cited in Linn et al, 2007, po. 35). Rugarcía (1999, pp. 57-58) also mentions friendship as an important value that should be fostered at school and college. Nancy's explanation highlights this belief.

*Nancy (1) 3: She has been my friend during the whole major and it is just great that even at the end we are still working together.*

Second problem: It is difficult to learn.

Learning is a complex process. This is why Díaz-Barriga & Hernández (2002) suggest teachers to make it meaningful through the use of constructivism.

Participant's beliefs seem to have also discussed this issue and provided a solution.

1. Make and keep friends at school. They can ease your life at school.

Smith (1996, p. 209) points out that teachers have reported that their most successful classes have been those in which “there was a social gathering atmosphere in which students were friends as classmates”. Pedro explains this solution by saying,

*Pedro (1) 5: In many cases friends are like the ingredient we need to cook something delicious, if we know we can count on certain people we feel better and things seem to be simple.*

Table 5c. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>personal</i> topics in relation to <i>graduation requirements</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
3.	My most important current goal is to finish school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carmen (1) 2</li><li>• Nancy (1) 9</li></ul>
6.	Taking the TOEFL is a difficult experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carmen (1) 5</li><li>• Paula (1) 4</li><li>• Julian (1) 6</li></ul>
9.	It was a good decision to take this course and start doing my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carmen (1) 13</li></ul>
18.	It is important to finish my Social Service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marisol (1) 4</li></ul>
19.	Personal factors affect our performance when taking the TOEFL test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sandy (1) 4</li><li>• Marisol (1) 7</li></ul>
41.	It is difficult for me to do my Social Service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sandy (1) 2</li></ul>

83.	I want to finish school well, with good grades in all the subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> <li>• Carmen (2) 2</li> </ul>
84.	We need to face problems to finish our coursework and the thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 12</li> </ul>
112.	Finishing my Social Service reduces my stress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 7</li> </ul>

Table 5c. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *personal issues* but in this case in relation to *graduation requirements*. Nine beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to relate to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 5cps.

Table 5cps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>graduation requirements</i> presented on Table 5c.
<p>First problem: <i>It is difficult to finish school, but that is my current goal</i> (3, 83, and 84).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It was a good decision to take this course and start doing my thesis (9).</li> <li>2. It is important to finish my social service (18, 41, and 112).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Taking the TOEFL is a difficult experience</i> (6).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is important to concentrate fully on the test or this may affect our performance when taking it (19).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 5 cps.

This table presents two problems and their solutions.

First problem: It is difficult to finish school, but it is my current goal.



Participants knew this was their current goal, but they seemed to be experiencing difficulties to finish their coursework. However, they seem to have suggested two solutions which are presented next.

1. It was a good decision to take this course and start doing our thesis.

Participants seemed to be aware of the fact that a graduation requirement was finishing their course work, including the Research Seminars. Criollo (2003) states that writing a thesis is usually rewarded with an academic degree. Carmen's words illustrate this point.

*Carmen (1) 13: ... my most important strength, as well as my classmates I think, was the decision of taking the course and start the project of our thesis.*

2. It is important to finish our social service.

Another graduation requirement was finishing their social service. The function of the social service in the new model implemented at the BUAP in 2008 (Minerva Model), is to use the social service as part of the social integration of the university with the society (BUAP, 2007, p. 63). Marisol's comment reflects this belief.

*Marisol (1) 5: Between taking other subjects and doing my social service we don't have time to work during the week.*

Second problem: Taking the TOEFL is a difficult experience.

Participants were asked to take the TOEFL at the beginning of the Research Seminars. Most of them had never taken it, but they knew this could be a graduation requirement if they wanted to graduate using their good average avoiding thesis defence. However, taking the TOEFL seemed to be a difficult experience for them. This test is an international test designed to measure overall English proficiency

(Brown, 1996, p. 5). The solution that seems to be provided by the participants is included below.

1. It is important to concentrate fully while taking the test, or this may affect your performance when taking it.

Taking the TOEFL requires the tested to concentrate as much as possible due to the fact that is a norm-referenced test, that is, the scores of the participants are compared with the rest of the population taking the test (Brown, 1996, p. 5).

However, as it was the first time most participants were taking it, some of them were not aware of this and it had a negative effect on their score.

*Sandy (1) 4: ... in this test I didn't answer like 25 or 30 questions because I didn't have enough time, well I spent the time talking with a friend and when I realized the time has already past...*

Table 5d. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>personal</i> topics in relation to <i>teacher-student relationships</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	It is important to deliver homework on time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1, 2; (2) 6</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 1, 4</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 2, 4, 7</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4, 5; (2) 8</li> <li>• Paula (1) 9, 10, 13; (2) 8</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 1, 4</li> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>
2.	It is important to be polite with teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most entries</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 3</li> </ul>
11.	It is good to be thankful to teachers when being aware of the help received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 13; (2) 1, 6-7</li> <li>• Paula (1) 12;(2) 5</li> </ul>

12.	It is important to attend all the sessions in a course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1,4</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 8</li> </ul>
21.	I can share personal issues because I can trust the teacher and she cares.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 12</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 8; (2) 3</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 3, 4, 6, 7; (2) 6</li> <li>• Paula (1) 12; (2) 6</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 4, 8, 12</li> <li>• Carmen (2) 1</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 4</li> </ul>
28.	It is good to tell the truth to the teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6; (2) 3</li> </ul>
36.	It is important to fulfil the teacher expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 1</li> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> </ul>
39.	A teacher can be proud of their students when witnessing their progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> </ul>
44.	I can comfort my teacher because I understand the experience she is passing through.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 8</li> <li>• Pedro (2) 4</li> </ul>
45.	It is good to care about my teacher's personal situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 8</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 1,4</li> </ul>
48.	It is very important for me the teacher's approval on my work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 2</li> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>
74.	It is important to follow the teacher's directions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 3</li> </ul>
96.	My teacher is busy, thus I should write short diary entries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 6</li> </ul>
101.	It is good to take decisions with our head.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 5</li> </ul>
102.	We are responsible of our acts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 5</li> </ul>

Table 5d. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *personal issues* but in this case in relation to *teacher- students relationships*. Fifteen beliefs were found

about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem. Participants provided solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 5dps.

<p>Table 5dps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>teacher – students relationships</i> presented on Table 5d.</p>
<p>First problem: <i>Not fulfilling the expectations of the teacher may affect my relationship with the teacher and lower my course score.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is important to fulfil the teacher expectations about the course, among them to deliver homework on time (1, 36, and 74).</li> <li>2. It is important to be polite and kind with the teacher and thankful when being aware of the help received (2, 11, 44, 45, and 96).</li> <li>3. Sharing personal issues can produce care and trust (21).</li> <li>4. It is good to tell the truth to the teacher (28).</li> <li>5. It is important to follow the teacher's directions and to have the teacher's approval on my work (48).</li> <li>6. It is important to attend all the sessions in a course and to be responsible of our own acts (12, 101, and 102).</li> <li>7. The teacher can be proud of his/her students when being aware of students' progress (39).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 5 dps.

This table presents the problem that seemed to arise from this data as well as the solutions for it.

First problem: Not fulfilling the teacher expectations may affect my relation with the teacher and lower my score.

Participants were aware of the importance of having a good relationship with the teacher and fulfilling her expectations. Expectations are defined as a “belief that something should happen in a particular way or that something should have particular qualities or behaviour (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2002, p. 476). Blum

(1984 cited in Richards, 2002, p. 21) mentions that effective teachers have high expectations for student learning.

Participants provided seven solutions to this problem.

1. It is important to fulfil the teacher expectations about the course, among them to deliver homework on time.

The culture of the classroom is asymmetrical. “Teachers and learners are very familiar with the experience of gradually establishing the precise degree of asymmetry which enables to maintain a relatively harmonious working group” (Breen, 2001, p. 131). Thus, learners are aware of the fact that it is important to fulfil teacher’s expectations, as mentioned by Paula and Carmen.

*Paula (1) 1: Hi teacher! This is my first page of the diary so I hope I cover what you expect.*

*Carmen (1) 1: First of all I want to apologize myself because I thought we should send the mail since this week.*

2. It is important to be polite and kind with the teacher. I should also be grateful when being aware of the help received.

Dialogue does not frequently occur in schools due to role expectations and power differentials (Breen, 2001; Sorensen & Christophel, 1992). However, dialogue journals opened this possibility with the participants, though the participants were aware of the importance of politeness when writing to the teacher. The following extracts illustrate this point.

*Pedro (1) 3: Hi teacher, I hate to be a nuisance...*

*Nancy (1) 7: Thank you teacher for your help.*

3. Sharing personal issues can produce care and trust.

This belief supports Moskowitz’s (1978) ideas. She asserts that language teachers need to create a classroom where caring and sharing occurs. I tried to be a caring

teacher. I shared some personal issues with students. Thus, students shared sometimes personal issues in their diaries. Marisol's words are an example of it.

*Marisol (2) 3: I missed Tuesday class cause I was sick and I had to hand in a paper, so I just did it and went back home.*

4. It is good to tell the teacher the truth.

Having good teacher- student relationships is important for language learning (Crookes, 2003, p. 161). Part of this endeavour is the maintenance of communication, care and trust. Participants were aware of this and sometimes told the truth to the teacher. Nancy's comment shows this belief.

*Nancy (2) 3: To be sincere we haven't worked on it.*

5. It is important to follow the teacher's directions and to have the teacher's approval on my work.

Part of the asymmetrical culture discussed by Breen (2001, p. 131), is to follow the teacher's directions on the work to receive his/her approval on it. Yasmin's thoughts reveal this belief.

*Yasmin (1) 2: Wednesday I was a little afraid of presenting my working title because I thought that it will be wrong but when you said it was OK I feel good.*

6. It is important to attend all the sessions in a course and to be responsible of our own acts.

Students know there are rules to obtain good scores. Crookes (2003, p. 146) suggests that classrooms have implicit and explicit rules. Attendance was part of the students score and they knew it is a requirement that is part of the university academic regulations. Thus, participants tried to attend most sessions and when they

did not attend, some of them sent an apology message to the teacher. Marisol's words illustrate this.

*Marisol (1) 1: Hi teacher, I couldn't arrive on Monday, I had some things to do for my scholarship. I'm sorry I missed the beginning of the course.*

7. The teacher can be proud of his/her students when being aware of student's progress.

Another feature of effective teachers mentioned by Blum (1984 cited in Richards, 2002, p. 21) is to monitor closely learning progress. Some participants were aware of their progress and congratulated the teacher about it. Paula points this out.

*Paula (2) 3: Have a nice day and be proud of what you have developed on your thesis students.*

Table 5e. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>personal</i> topics in relation to <i>learning success</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	It is important to deliver homework on time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1, 2</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 1, 4</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 2; (2) 3</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 2, 4, 7</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4, 5</li> <li>• Paula (1) 9, 10, 13</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 1, 4</li> </ul>
12.	It is important to attend all the sessions in a course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1,4</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 9</li> </ul>
15.	It is good to listen to music when studying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> </ul>
16.	Baroque music may help me study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> </ul>
23.	I learn easily with metaphors and I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 2</li> </ul>

	remember them over time.	
33.	It is good to receive comments from other people to improve one's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> </ul>
34.	Every day I learn something different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 8</li> </ul>
38.	It is difficult to work in teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> </ul>
40.	It is difficult for me to receive feedback on my papers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 1</li> </ul>
53.	I have used learning strategies that I was not aware of.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>
57.	I am not used to concentrating too much.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
59.	My TOEFL results pointed out my weak areas of English proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 6</li> </ul>
60.	I have a low reading speed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
61.	Most of us were not satisfied with our TOEFL scores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
62.	I have to continue working to improve my weak points on language proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
63.	Stress may affect my mood and willingness to work at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
69.	Our affective side of learning is important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 11</li> </ul>
70.	The cognitive side of learning is also very important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 11</li> </ul>
77.	We can learn from people that have different perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
78.	Not finding information to do my homework made me feel nervous.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>
79.	I am open to receive critics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 8</li> </ul>
82.	Finding information to do my homework makes me happy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 10</li> </ul>
83.	Mexican culture teaches us to have poor time management, thus, we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> </ul>



	not do tasks until the deadline is close.	
87.	It is necessary to organize my time to do all the school tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 2</li> </ul>
92.	Holidays made me lose my working rhythm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1</li> </ul>
93.	I usually forget parts of the movies I have seen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1</li> </ul>
94.	We are still learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 4</li> </ul>
95.	We will never stop learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 4</li> </ul>
97.	My previous subjects about research were difficult for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 7</li> </ul>
110.	Having a lot of school work makes me stressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> <li>• Pedro (2) 1</li> </ul>
111.	I need to improve my time management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 4, 5</li> </ul>

Table 5e. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *personal issues* but in this case in relation to *learning success*. Thirty one beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to relate to six problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 5eps.

Table 5eps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>learning success</i> presented on Table 5e.
<p>First problem: <i>Not delivering homework on time may have a negative effect on my learning.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is important to deliver homework on time (1).</li> <li>2. It is important to find information on time to do my homework (78, 82).</li> <li>3. It is important to have good time management (83, 87, 92, 110, and 111).</li> </ol>

Second problem: It is difficult to learn how to conduct research (97).

Solutions:

1. It is important to attend all the sessions in a course, because every day I learn something different (12, 34, 94, and 95).

Third problem: It is difficult to study and remember information over time

Especially when being stressed (57, 93, 63).

Solutions:

1. Music can help me study (15, 16).
2. Metaphors can help me learn and remember information over time (23).
3. It is good to raise awareness of learning strategies used (53).
4. Taking care of the affective and cognitive sides of learning is important (69, 70).

Fourth problem: It is difficult to improve one's work.

Solution:

1. Receiving comments from other people may improve one's work. We can learn from people that have different perspectives (33, 40, 77, and 79).

Fifth problem: It is difficult to work in teams (38).

Solution:

1. We can learn from people that have different perspectives (77).

Sixth problem: It is difficult to improve our language proficiency (61).

Solutions:

1. Receiving my TOEFL results pointed out weak areas (59, 60).
2. I need to work to improve these weak points (62).

Discussion Table 5 eps.

Table 5eps presents six problems related with difficulties to achieve learning success. They are discussed next together with the solutions that seem to have been suggested by the participants.

First problem: Not delivering homework on time may have a negative effect on my learning.

Participants were asked to do various types of homework. Dialogue diaries were one of them. Another one was thesis chapters or part of them and finally the whole thesis. These types of homework required participants to think and concentrate, similar to the type of homework suggested by Janzen (2002, p. 292).

It seems that participants gave three solutions to this problem.

### 1. It is important to deliver homework on time.

This was the first belief identified on the diary entries. Participants who sent their diary entries late, aware of the importance of this explicit classroom rule (Crookes, 2003, p. 146) apologised for delivering homework after the deadline. Nancy's comments relates to this issue.

*Nancy (1) 1: This is the first electronic diary I write and I do apologize for that.*

### 2. It is important to find information on time to do my homework.

In order to deliver parts of their thesis, participants had to look for academic texts to support their ideas (Ibañez, 1995, pp. 27-28). Finding it when needed was valued by participants. Pedro expresses his satisfaction after finding useful literature for his thesis.

*Pedro (1) 10: ...I am happy because I found a book that gives the most usual teaching techniques..*

### 3. It is important to have good time management.

Time organization can help learners do and deliver their tasks by the deadlines. As students were finishing their course work and writing their thesis, they had to work with a calendar to plan their activities. Schmelkes (1998, pp. 57-62) explains how to organize a thesis calendar to have timely completion of thesis tasks. Marisol's words show this belief.

*Marisol (2) 2: I just hope to organize my time in order to do all the activities that I have to do.*

Second problem: It is difficult to learn how to conduct research.

This belief is supported with the ideas of Suárez-Iniguez (2000, p. 5) who claims that in Mexico writing a thesis has become an obstacle to obtain a degree. Participants aware of the difficulty that learning to write their thesis and conducting research entailed, suggested a solution.

1. It is important to attend all the sessions in a course because every day we learn something different.

The Research Seminars were designed to help students learn how to conduct research and write their thesis. Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 15) stresses the importance of teaching students to conduct research through practicing this activity and having a close supervision of a mentor. Attending regularly to the course sessions allowed participants to learn how to pursue this goal, and I acted as their thesis mentor. Their comments about these issues are included below.

*Sandy (1) 9: At the beginning of the course I felt nervous, anxious and stressful because I didn't come on time to the course and I had to present my prospect of the thesis title and, in fact, I did not have any idea about what could I do. ...now I feel good because I did something that I thought never could be done..*

*Nancy (2) 4: We are still learning. We'll never stop learning...*

Third problem: It is difficult to study and remember information over time especially when being stressed.

Participants seemed to be stressed not only because they were writing their thesis, but also because they were finishing their course work and some of them were also

doing their Social Service. They reflected upon these issues and provided four solutions to it. They are discussed next.

### 1. Music can help me study.

Background music was part of the methodology used in the Research Seminars. The music used was mainly classical and instrumental, though some pop music from the seventies was also used. Background music may help learners to relax and be ready to learn as suggested by Lozanov as part of the methodology of Suggestopedia (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 102). Also participants reported using music to study. Marisol's words illustrate this point.

*Marisol (1) 2: I usually listen some music when I'm studying.*

### 2. Metaphors can help me learn and remember information over time.

Metaphors provide a way of carrying ideas and understandings from one context to another (Cole, 1990 cited in Jaatinen, 2007, p. 27) they also "create colourful and persisting images..." (Jaatinen, 2007, p. 27). Nancy's narration describes her learning experience with metaphors.

*Nancy (1) 2: I still remember my target language 1 when I started learning English and you told us that learning a language was like swimming... This is why I'm telling you that it's true, that using metaphors are useful, in this way we compare and make our work easier.*

### 3. It is good to raise awareness of learning strategies used.

Oxford (2002, p. 125) mentions that researchers have found that conducting studies with clear instructions in non threatening circumstances have made that may or most

L2 learners remember their learning strategies and describe them when asked.

Julian describes this type of experience in the following extract.

*Julian (1) 2: I discovered that I knew many of these strategies, I even used some of them unconsciously...*

4. Taking care of affective and cognitive sides of learning is important.

Hedge (2000, pp. 18-22) signals the importance of addressing cognitive or learning styles and affective factors when teaching a foreign language. Participants also mentioned the relevance of these two types of factors in the words of Julian.

*Julian (1) 11: I do believe that our affective side of learning is important... but I also consider the cognitive aspect as important.*

Fourth problem: It is difficult to improve one's work.

Few non-native writers at the ESL writing clinic have ever reflected on their writing as a process, either in their native language or in English (Benson & Heidish, 1995, p. 322). I think this may also be true for LEMO students. It seems that few teachers encourage learners to reflect on their writing. Reflection leads to awareness and awakening should be the beginning of attainment (Kumaradivelu, 2006, p. 76). It seems that participants mentioned a solution to this problem.

1. Receiving comments from other people may improve one's work. We can learn from people that have different perspectives.

What participants suggested is to reflect on one's work with the help of feedback.

They received feedback from the teachers and peers. "Peer feedback is a technique in which students comment on and offer suggestions for improvement of their peer's compositions" (González & Roux, 2007, p. 54). Participants expressed this belief as follows.

*Nancy (1) 7: It is always good to receive comments from other people.*

Fifth problem: It is difficult to work in teams.

Participants worked in teams and they seem to have witnessed both the advantages and disadvantages of this technique. They seem to have proposed a solution for it.

1. We can learn from people that have different perspectives.

“Classroom activities can also facilitate the development of positive student- student relations” (Crookes, 2003, p. 169). But in order to learn from peers, students need to trust the value of their peers comments (Mangelsdor, 1992, cited in González, & Roux, 2007, p. 55). It seems that it was not easy for students to accept comments from their peers, especially if they had different perspectives, but students learned to listen to each other. Pedro’s words illustrate this point.

*Pedro (1) 5: Sometimes we may be surprised when we hear or when we talk with those people they have different perspectives and we can learn a lot from them.*

Sixth problem: It is difficult to improve our language proficiency.

Students seemed to be aware of the importance of their language proficiency. They seem to have become even more aware through the reception of their TOEFL score. They suggested a solution for this problem.

1. Receiving my TOEFL results pointed out my weak areas I need to work on.

When the participants received their TOEFL results, they learned their score and also their strong and weak areas of their English proficiency and reflected on this.

According to Zeichner & Liston (1996, p. 11) a reflective teacher takes responsibility for his or her professional development, and as future English teachers, having a good command of English is crucial. Thus, through reflecting on their TOEFL results,

they became aware of the aspects of their proficiency that they needed to work on.

The words of Julian illustrate these issues.

*Julian (1) 7: Most of us were not satisfied with the results. ...I have to continue working in order to learn and improve my weak points.*

Table 5f. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>personal</i> topics in relation to <i>personal growth/success</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
4.	Our teacher is a good personal model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 2</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 1, 2</li> </ul>
10.	I feel proud of myself when I reach goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 13</li> </ul>
17.	We need to value ourselves as important beings and act accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 3</li> </ul>
20.	We need to put effort in every goal we want to accomplish in life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 7</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 6</li> </ul>
47.	The winner says is difficult but possible, I am going to apply this philosophy to my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 1</li> </ul>
54.	Having dreams help me achieve my goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>
55.	This seminar is a signal for me that dreams can become true.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>
58.	We can do things better if we have a good attitude and give an extra effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
64.	I discovered that my goal in life is to help others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
67.	Sometimes we can do what we imagine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 10</li> </ul>
71.	I can achieve my set goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>
81.	We can reach goals if we imagine them and become aware of what we need to change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 9</li> </ul>



86.	We are selfish. We need to help other people, not just our loved ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 1</li> </ul>
88.	It is difficult to admit we have fears because we do not like people to know it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 3</li> </ul>
89.	Being able to leave my fears behind can make me a better person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 3</li> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>
104.	Planning our activities will help us finish them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 7</li> </ul>
113.	Pursuing a goal requires commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>
114.	I can solve my problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>

Table 5f. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *personal issues* but in this case in relation to *personal growth*. Eighteen beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem. Participants provided solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 5fps.

Table 5fps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>personal growth</i> presented on Table 5f.
<p>First problem: <i>It is difficult to achieve our goals.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is good to leave our fears behind and change. Our teacher is a good model for personal growth (4, 81, 88, and 89).</li> <li>2. It is necessary to value ourselves and help other people (17, 86).</li> <li>3. It is good to reach our goals after setting them (10, 64, and 71).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 5 fps.

This table presents one problem related to the process of personal growth of the participants and three solutions to it.

First problem: it is difficult to become better persons.

As mentioned before, students had the chance to reflect not only on their thesis, but also on their personal professional and personal growth. By doing it so, they seem to have identified this problem and their solutions.

1. It is good to change and leave our fears behind. Our teacher can be considered as a model for growth.

Reflecting on our past action, our thinking may serve to modify our future behaviour (Schön, 1983, pp. 26-31). Becoming aware of our fears can help us to leave them behind. It is desirable to face them with optimism and courage (Hernández, 1991, p. 55). Karavas & Dukas (1995 cited in Hedge, 2000, p. 29) point out that one of the roles that teachers play is to be an example of behaviour and hard work. Participants' comments illustrate this.

*Pedro (1) 9: We can do whatever we want... if we are conscious about what we need to change.*

*Marisol (2) 3: First of all, we should admit we are afraid of something... But personally, I will try to leave them and become a better person.*

*Carmen (1) 2: Thanks for everything teacher...you are a clear example of what you tell us, that we can do everything we want.*

2. It is necessary to value ourselves and help other people.

In order to foster self- esteem in the classroom, it is necessary to give positive feedback to learners; this fosters students' growth (Molinar & Vázquez, 2001, p. 75). Once we value and love ourselves we can value and help other people (Hernández, 1991, p. 37). Marisol's thoughts seem to describe these beliefs.

*Marisol (1) 3: ... most of the times we forget about ourselves...*

*Marisol (2) 1: We are only concerned about us. ...if we can, we should help everyone, not just our loved ones.*

3. It is good to set goals and reach them.

Molinar & Vázquez (2001, pp. 75-76) highlight the importance of helping learners to commit themselves with valuable goals. Thus, the teacher should teach the students to set their own goals and then to have the will and perseverance needed to reach them. Julian expresses his thoughts about this in the following way.

*Julian (1) 7: I discovered that my goal in life is to help others. ... I did not know what I wanted to do in life but now I think I know what I want to do. ...Carrying out that activity... made me feel capable of doing that.*

Table 5g. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>personal</i> topics in relation to <i>personal history in academic writing</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
13.	Academic writing has been difficult for me since the beginning of my major.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1</li> </ul>
14.	Academic writing is difficult for me because I do not know what to write about and it is time consuming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1</li> </ul>
50.	I am not prepared to do research and this makes me feel afraid of writing a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 1</li> </ul>
51.	I would like to overcome this fear and learn how to work on my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 1</li> </ul>
52.	The more I learned about research in the major, the less I wanted to do research because of its complexity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 1</li> </ul>
65.	I am not a good writer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
66.	I am not as bad writer as I thought.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 10</li> </ul>

Table 5g. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *personal issues* but in this case in relation to *personal history in academic writing*. Seven beliefs were found

about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem. Participants provided solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 5gps.

Table 5gps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>personal history in academic writing</i> presented on Table 5g.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to write academic texts (13, 14, 52, 65).</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning how to do it may reduce my fears (51).</li> <li>2. Practice and evaluate my work with the help of the teacher's feedback (66).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 5 gps.

This table presents a problem that participants considered important.

First problem: Difficulty to write academic texts.

Participants pointed out that this task had been difficult for them since the beginning of their major. Marisol illustrates this by saying,

*Marisol (1) 1: I personally feel afraid of this process, mostly because Academic Writing has been a problem to me since the beginning...*

The solutions to this problem are presented below.

1. Learning how to do it may reduce my fears.

It is necessary to teach learners how to conduct research and how to write their thesis (Ibañez, 1995, p. 19). Often students are afraid of this process because they don't know how to do it. Showing them step by step the thesis writing process can facilitate them doing successfully this work (Criollo, 2003).

Julian's words show these issues.

*Julian (1) 1: As I expressed in the first class I am afraid of writing a thesis... I would like to overcome this fear and learn how to work on my thesis.*

2. Practice and evaluate my work with the help of the teacher's feedback.

Practice is an excellent way to learn. Wallace (1991) points out the importance of practice linked to reflection. A good way to learn how to self-evaluate is by giving peer feedback (González & Roux, 2007, p. 55). But students seem to be used to value teacher's feedback more than peer feedback. Julian's reflections seem to summarize this belief.

*Julian (1) 10: It was more meaningful to hear from the teacher what my weaknesses and strengths are. Now I clearly know what I have to improve. I also know that not everything is wrong and that I am not as bad as I thought...*

It seems that these were the beliefs identified about *personal issues*, the problems that they contained and the solutions to them provided by the participants in their diary entries. Now the beliefs about *thesis writing and professional issues* will be presented and discussed.

Table 6. Beliefs about thesis writing and professional issues.

Table 6a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>thesis writing + professional issues</i> in relation to <i>research opportunities</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	There should be a parallel thesis in the translation area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carmen (1) 12</li></ul>

Table 6a. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *thesis writing and professional issues* but in this case in relation to *research opportunities*. It seems that one belief was found about this topic and it is related to one problem. Participants provided a solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 6aps.

Table 6aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>research opportunities</i> presented on Table 6a.
<p>First problem: <i>There is a similar research opportunity in the translation area.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There should be a parallel thesis in the translation area (1).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 6a.

First problem: *There is a similar research opportunity in the translation area.*

Borg (2006a, p. 26) mentions that it is advisable to have opportunities to collaborate with other teacher researchers and to discuss the research with others. Participants seem to have identified the need to conduct research about the importance of including more practical training as part of the curriculum of a major in languages, both for teaching and translation. Wallace (1991, p. 15) refers to practice using the term 'experiential knowledge'.

The words of Carmen illustrate this point.

*Carmen (1) 12: They read our thesis and they were very interested in the topic. They told me that, in fact, there should be a paper like this (claiming for more practice) for translators.*

It seems that these were the beliefs identified about *thesis and professional issues*, the problems that they contained and the solutions to them provided by the participants in their diary entries. Now the beliefs about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* will be presented and discussed.

Tables 7. Beliefs about the personal experience of writing a thesis.

Eleven subcategories seemed to be present about this topic: the role of the teacher, choosing a research topic, writing a thesis chapter, thesis writing process, writing the

literature review, the role of peers, personal/attitudinal requirements, writing a thesis in pairs, editing process, importance of the thesis, foreign language in which the thesis is written. Their tables are shown next.

Table 7a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>the role of the teachers in the process</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
2.	The guidance of the teacher helped me to make decisions and answer questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 1, 10</li> <li>• Paula (1) 2, 5; (2) 6, 7</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 3; (2) 4</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 4</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 8, 9</li> <li>• Julian (2) 6, 13</li> </ul>
6.	Other teachers apart from the teacher of the thesis course can help us write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 2, 8</li> <li>• Julian (1) 2, 3; (2) 8</li> </ul>
10.	It is necessary to receive the support from the teacher and other people to write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1, 2</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 7</li> </ul>
20.	The help of the teacher is crucial when writing a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 12; (2) 6</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 1; (2) 4</li> </ul>
73.	The teacher's advice helped me to choose a topic based on my previous experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> </ul>
91.	The teacher guided and motivated me to write Chapters 1 and 2; I am grateful for that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> </ul>
97.	It is good to have a supervisor you know you can work well with him/her.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> </ul>
108.	I needed more guidance and feedback because I did not know how to improve my topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 9</li> </ul>
109.	The way the teacher gave me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 9</li> </ul>

	feedback was good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 10</li> </ul>
118.	It is very important the teacher's evaluation and approval of my work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4, 13</li> <li>• Carmen (2) 5</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 9, 11, 14</li> <li>• Paula (2) 4, 5</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 3</li> </ul>
122.	It is important to ask for the support of experts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 5, 9, 12</li> </ul>
157.	I hope the teacher can help me to make indirect quotations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 10</li> </ul>
168.	The help of the teacher allowed me to improve my instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 5</li> </ul>
169.	It is good to receive the teachers' recognition of our work and effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 6</li> </ul>
170.	It is important to follow our supervisor's advice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 6</li> <li>• Julian (2) 8</li> </ul>
171	The teacher established deadlines to deliver parts of the thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1</li> </ul>
190.	We need the permission of teachers to apply our instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (2) 1</li> </ul>

Table 7a. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to *the role of the teacher*. Seventeen beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to four problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 7aps.

Table 7aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>the role of the teachers</i> presented on Table 7a.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of expertise in thesis writing</i> (108).</p> <p>Solutions:</p>



1. The teacher of the course guidance and feedback helped me to make decisions, answer questions and write my thesis (2, 20, 73, 91, 97, 109, and 157).
2. Other teachers can help us write our thesis (6, 168).
3. It is important to follow our supervisor's advice and receive his/her approval of my work (118, 170, and 171).

Second problem: *Lack of support to write our thesis.*

Solutions:

1. It is necessary to receive support from the teacher and other people to write our thesis (10).
2. It is important to look for the support of experts (122).

Third problem: *Lack of recognition of our work and effort.*

Solutions:

1. It is good to receive the teacher's recognition of our work and effort (169).

Fourth problem: *Lack of authorization to conduct research in classrooms.*

Solutions:

1. The permission of the teacher of the group that is going to be researched is needed to conduct classroom research (190).

Discussion Table 7aps.

Participant's beliefs seem to deal with four problems about the role of the teacher in the thesis writing process. They provided solutions to them.

First problem: Lack of expertise in thesis writing.

Participants did not know how to do their thesis and they were aware of that.

However, they seem to have looked for ways to solve this problem.

1. The teacher of the course guidance and feedback helped me to make decisions, answer questions and write my thesis.

Participants were asked to write a thesis for the first time in their lives. They had never experienced this. As Dewey (1938) Mentioned “all genuine education comes about through experience” (p. 25). So, they needed the guidance from the teacher to write their thesis. An example is provided in the words of Paula,

*Paula(1) 2: Now related to the introduction I have a question. Can I start my introduction by describing an experience??? And then relate that with the formal aspects.*

## 2. Other teachers can help us write our thesis.

Participants knew that not only the teacher of the course could guide them; there were other teachers that had taught them previous courses and were experienced researchers. So, they also looked for their help to do their thesis. As Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall (1998, p. 126) remark “successful mentoring and supervision in all its various forms involves a unique kind of relationship between two or more persons”. This relationship existed not only with the teacher of the course, but with other teachers as well. Julian explains this by saying,

*Julian (1) 2: I have been so lucky because I am going to work with one professor whose research is focused on the area of pragmatics.*

## 3. It is important to follow our supervisor’s advice and his/her approval of my work.

In any classroom there is an asymmetrical relationship (Breen, 2001, p. 131). Thus, the approval of the teacher on his/her work becomes an important issue for any student. Besides, the lack of expertise in thesis writing created a need for support and approval. Carmen’s words illustrate this.

*Carmen (2) 5: However, when you checked our instruments I could see that what we had was good.*

Second problem: Lack of support to write our thesis.

It seems that participants mentioned this problem and their solutions.

1. It is necessary to receive support from the teacher and other people to write our thesis.

When facing a challenging task, the support of other people becomes an important issue. Showing empathy to student's means that we as their teachers understand the emotions they are experiencing (Reiman & Thies- Sprinthall, 1998, p. 128). That was needed by the participants as expressed by Carmen.

*Carmen (1) 7: I know we have many people, who can help us to make this big step, specially teachers and people related to our environment...*

3. It is important to look for the support of experts.

It is important to look for the support of experts, especially if one is a novice in any activity. The thesis student can learn how to write their thesis through critical reflection and having a conversation with experts (Pearson & Brew, 2002, p. 140). Students were advised to learn from authors of books and articles that were using to write their thesis. Julian's words illustrate this point.

*Julian (1) 9: I have been told to learn from professional writers.*

Third problem: Lack of recognition of our work and effort.

Human beings need recognition of their work. This applies to any human activity, including thesis writing.

1. It is good to receive the teacher's recognition of our work and effort.

It is important to note that "the affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure" (Oxford, 1990, p. 140). This is also true for learning how to write a thesis in a foreign language. Thesis supervisors need to provide feedback to their students (Aspland et al, 1999). By

recognising students effort, teachers can motivate learners to continue working and learning. Carmen's words illustrate this,

*Carmen (2) 6: Well, I just want to thank you, your motivation toward us, I mean, you have always told us that what we are doing is a very good piece of research...It is hyper good that an expert like you recognizes our job and effort.*

Fourth problem: Lack of authorization to conduct research in classrooms.

Álvarez Gayou (2003, p. 209) highlights the importance of ethics when conducting research. Doing research in the classroom requires authorization. It seems that participants mentioned this solution.

1. The permission of the teacher of the group that is going to be researched is needed to conduct classroom research.

Bell (1993, p. 119) mentions that an important element of observation studies is to obtain permission to conduct this type of research and that is necessary to get this authorization through official channels and discuss what is involved with the individuals concerned. More information about ethical issues in classroom research is presented in the conclusions of this thesis. Marisol explains this,

*Marisol (1) 3: ... I realized that there is a teacher who is applying some techniques with her students, I wanted to ask her to do my work with her....*

Table 7b. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>choosing and defining the research topic</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
4.	Choosing a topic to research is the first step. Then you need to narrow it down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 1</li> </ul>
5.	The activities of the course helped me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 2</li> </ul>

	to define better my research topic.	
26.	It is not easy to choose a topic to do our thesis, especially if we are interested in many topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1</li> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> <li>• Julian (1) 1</li> </ul>
28.	I selected a topic that helped me in my development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> </ul>
41.	The most important point to begin writing a thesis is to be in love with your topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> </ul>
55.	Our thesis topic should be as clear as possible to have a clear focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 4</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 5</li> </ul>
73.	The teacher's advice helped me to choose a thesis topic based on my previous experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 2</li> </ul>
47.	I chose a research topic linked to my future professional interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 2</li> </ul>
48.	The teacher's approval of my working title is very important for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 2</li> </ul>
149.	I selected a topic that was not my first idea, but I like it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 2</li> </ul>
150.	Other teachers helped me to choose my topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 2</li> </ul>

Table 7b. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to *choosing a research topic*. Eleven beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 7bps.

<p>Table 7bps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about  <i>choosing a research topic</i> presented on  Table 7b.</p>
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of experience in starting the thesis writing process.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choosing a topic to research is the first step. Then you need to narrow it down (4).</li> <li>2. The most important point to begin writing a thesis is to be in love with your topic (41, 149).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Difficulty to choose and define a research topic (26).</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I selected a topic that helped me in my development (28).</li> <li>2. I chose a research topic linked to my future professional interests (47).</li> <li>3. It is very important for me the teacher's approval of my working title (48).</li> <li>4. The teacher's advice helped me to choose a topic based on my previous experiences (73).</li> <li>5. Other teachers helped me to choose my topic (150).</li> <li>6. Our thesis topic should be as clear as possible to have a clear focus. The activities of the course helped me to define better my research topic (5, 55).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 7bps.

It seems that participants found two problems when choosing their research topic.

They are discussed next.

First problem: Lack of experience in starting the thesis writing process.

Starting the process was not an easy task for some participants, but they found ways to do it and they reported them in their narratives.

1. Choosing a topic to research is the first step. Then you need to narrow it down.

Criollo (2003, pp. 7-8) explains the steps needed to select a topic. These are: "define your interests, think of a possible topic, review the literature, identify specific

researchable problems, decide on one of them and focus on it". Choosing a topic to research is the first step in thesis writing. Carmen's words illustrate this,

*Carmen (1) 1: Last week I felt kind of frustrated because I didn't know exactly what to do as my thesis. Now I have more clear ideas about it... I have many doubts yet about narrowing down my topic.*

2. The most important point to begin writing a thesis is to be in love with your topic. The selection of the topic by the thesis student is a key element to get a successful completion. Suarez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 42) remarks that the topic selection should be done with the students head, heart and stomach. He says that students should like the topic and if possible be passionate about it. This is explained by Nancy.

*Nancy (1) 1: Indeed I'm in love with my topic, which is the most important point to begin with.*

Second problem: Difficulty to choose and define a research topic.

Beginning the thesis is a difficult task for many students due to the fact that they do not know which topic would be suitable to do their research (Ibañez, 1995, p. 24). Participants narrated this process on their diary entries and they seem to have provided solutions to it.

1. I selected a topic that helped me in my development. The teacher's advice helped me to choose a topic based on my previous experiences.

When selecting a research topic Ibañez (1995, p. 25) indicates that a possible source to find a topic should be the student's own academic or professional experiences.

Marisol expresses this belief as follows.

*Marisol (1) 2: I had decided to work on a topic that helped me...*

2. I chose a research topic linked to my future professional interests.

The thesis is an opportunity to complete the student preparation for his/her future teaching practice. Teachers can construct knowledge of their own by researching on classrooms (Tillema & Imants, 1995, p. 147). Yasmin's words illustrate this.

*Yasmin (1) 2: ...I was worried because I still did not have my working title... I went to the library and I start looking for something until I found something about materials for teenagers because in the future I am interested in working with these kind of students.*

3. It is very important for me the teacher's approval of my working title.

The thesis topic should be approved by the supervisor (Mercado, 2001, p. 36). The supervisor should be an experienced teacher and researcher (Suárez-Iñiguez, 2000, p. 74). Then, the student would benefit from this and is more likely to have a successful and timely completion of his/her thesis. Yasmin's words illustrate this point.

*Yasmin (1) 2: ...I was a little afraid of presenting my working title because I thought that it will be wrong but when you said that it was OK I feel good.*

4. Other teachers and readings helped me to choose my topic.

"Research problems need to be pertinent, meaningful and feasible (Schmelkes, 1998, p. 21). As participants were facing the challenge of choosing a research topic, they looked for the help of their professors. At the LEMO, other teachers apart from the teacher of the Research Seminars had experience as researchers so; they could guide learners to choose their topic. Pedro explains this.

*Pedro (1) 2: At the beginning I was confused with the topic that I wanted but through reading a lot and of course with the other's teacher help and you.*



4. Our thesis topic should be as clear as possible to have a clear focus. The activities of the course helped me to define better my research topic.

It is important for the student writing a thesis to have a clear definition of the problem (s) he wants to conduct research about (Schmelkes, 1998, p. 21). Having a clear focus will facilitate the conduction of the research. Having experience about research facilitates supervision (Suárez-Iñiguez, 2000, p. 74). Based on my supervision experience I designed the activities of the course to help learners write their thesis. Nancy and Carmen seem to explain these issues.

*Nancy (1) 5: Our topic as you said must be as clear as possible...*

*Carmen (1) 2: Today's session helped me too much to define better the topic.*

Table 7c. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>writing a thesis chapter</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
7.	It is necessary to have clear ideas in order to write a thesis chapter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 3</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 4; (2) 1</li> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> <li>• Marisol (2) 5</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 2</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 10</li> </ul>
11.	It is important to have an outline to write a section of your thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 7, 8</li> <li>• Julian (1) 6</li> </ul>
13.	It is difficult to start writing a section of your thesis, especially Chapter 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 3, 4, 7</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4; (2) 10; 12</li> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 7, 8</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4,12</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 4</li> </ul>
34.	Writing a thesis chapter is a process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 7; (2) 3</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 4</li> <li>• Paula (2) 6</li> </ul>
58.	Writing a thesis chapter implied a lot of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 5</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 7</li> </ul>
60.	To write Chapters 1 and 2 we need to read a lot, and then we selected the quotations to support what we wanted to say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> </ul>
63.	Thesis chapters are first produced as drafts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> <li>• Julian (1) 13; (2) 6</li> </ul>
78.	Writing an introductory chapter is important to have a basis to do my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3</li> </ul>
79.	I learned that in the definition of key terms I need to write the reference next to each term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 3</li> </ul>
85.	The experience of writing a chapter of our thesis can help us write another one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3, 6</li> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 1, 7</li> </ul>
89.	Writing Chapter 2 made me learn how to organize my ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 8</li> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>
101.	Writing the Literature Review of my thesis would help me improve my writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 5</li> </ul>
104.	It is necessary to obtain the expected results in a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 8</li> <li>• Paula (2) 2, 8</li> </ul>
105.	If I do not find the expected results I need to find a solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 8</li> </ul>
106.	The first step to write Chapter 1 is to choose my thesis topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7</li> </ul>
110.	Criollo's book helped me to write Chapters 1 and 4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7; (2) 10</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
111.	Writing a thesis chapter can be done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 12</li> </ul>

	with enthusiasm + effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1</li> </ul>
127.	When writing Chapter 2, it was difficult for me to express my point of view together with the authors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
131.	I am finding my way to approach writing Chapter 2 of my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 12</li> </ul>
132.	Writing Chapter 2 required a lot of reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 12</li> </ul>
135.	It is important to start writing a chapter of your thesis as soon as possible to avoid getting stressed and time problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 12</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 2, 3</li> </ul>
136.	I think that it is a good strategy to set as a goal to write a certain number of pages every day to finish writing a thesis chapter, and to stick to this goal in spite of the problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>
139.	I wrote Chapter 2 including first key ideas, then I developed them and finally I wrote the introduction to it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>
140.	We can write an introduction of a chapter when we know what we have in every section of our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>
145.	A mind map can help us relate the concepts included on Chapter 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
153.	After reading, I put all the information together to write the first part of my chapter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>
161.	It takes a lot of time to get the instruments answered back.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 6, 7</li> <li>• Carmen (2) 7</li> <li>• Julian (2) 7</li> </ul>
162.	We have to be polite and patient with participants to get the instruments answered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 6</li> </ul>

163.	It is annoying to witness participants lack of interest to get the instruments answered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 7</li> </ul>
166.	When designing questionnaires, we have to avoid giving leading information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 4, 5</li> </ul>
167.	Having a clear idea about your instruments' objective can be risky; it can make you produce leading questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 5</li> </ul>
176.	Writing our instruments was a process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 5</li> <li>• Paula (2) 7</li> </ul>
177.	It is good to have your research objective clear to be able to write your instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 5</li> </ul>
182.	In order to answer my research questions I have to design a good instrument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 2</li> </ul>
183.	It is not easy to choose/design a good instrument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 2, 4</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 3, 5, 8, 9</li> </ul>
184.	Finding information about my instrument made me aware of the different things that I have to take into account to design/apply it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 2</li> </ul>
185.	I may adapt an existing instrument related to my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 4</li> </ul>
186.	Having an existing instrument related to my thesis topic as starting point reliefs my nervousness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 4</li> </ul>
187.	Having different instruments to do my thesis ensures reliability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 5</li> </ul>
192.	I can have my instruments on time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 4</li> </ul>
194.	I had to face problems when writing Chapter 4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 11</li> </ul>

196.	Processing data required detailed work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 8</li> </ul>
197.	It is necessary to have all the data to finish processing it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 8</li> </ul>
198.	A good way to report our findings/results is through the use of tables.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>
201.	It is good to present the data in an integrated way because we can compare group results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>
202.	Having good instruments will allow us to interpret the findings and answer our research questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (2) 2</li> </ul>
203.	I am not satisfied with the way I presented the results on Chapter 4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (2) 4</li> </ul>

Table 7c. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to *writing a thesis chapter*. Forty seven beliefs seem to be found about this topic. They seem to be related to three problems. It seems that participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 7cps.

Table 7cps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>writing a thesis chapter</i> presented on Table 7c.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to write a thesis chapter/section</i> (13).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To start writing any chapter, you need to have chosen your thesis topic, have clear ideas and design an outline (7, 11, and 106).</li> <li>2. Writing a thesis chapter is a process, so you write it first as a draft. Find your way to do it, reflect (34, 63, 131, and 132).</li> <li>3. Writing a thesis chapter requires a lot of work thus, you need to have enthusiasm, devote effort and organize your time (58, 111, 135, and 136).</li> </ol>

4. You need to read a lot and select information (60).
5. Criollo's book helped me to write some chapters of my thesis (110).
6. To develop a chapter, write first key ideas, then develop them and finally write the introduction (139).

Second problem: *Lack of awareness of the usefulness of thesis chapters to facilitate thesis writing.*

Solutions:

1. Writing an introductory chapter is important to have because it is a basis to do my thesis (78).
2. The experience of writing a chapter can help us write another one (85, 89).
3. Writing the Literature Review would help me improve my writing (101).

Third problem: *Difficulty to design and apply instruments and to write the Methodology and Results chapters (161, 163, 167).*

Solutions:

1. Read and select information (60).
2. Avoid giving leading information when being aware of the instrument's objective (166, 167).
3. Be patient and polite with participants to get your instruments answered (162).

Discussion Table 7cps.

First problem: Difficulty to write a thesis chapter/section.

Thesis is written in sections called chapters. According to Criollo (2003, pp. 35-36) BA and MA thesis in TESOL or Applied Linguistics usually have five chapters. They are listed next. 1. Introduction; 2. Literature Review; 3. Method; 4. Results and 5. Conclusions. Writing each chapter is a challenging task. Participants seem to have provided eight solutions to this problem.

1. To start writing any chapter you need to have chosen your thesis topic, have clear ideas and design an outline.

Choosing the research topic is the first step to write a thesis (Ibañez, 1995, p. 24).

Then you need to read and reflect in order to have a clearer idea of what you want to research and design a thesis outline and a calendar to write your thesis (ib.)

Carmen's and Julian's words narrate this process.

*Carmen (1) 2: I have to start writing the first chapter of my thesis...I don't feel frightened with my topic. My ideas are clear.*

*Julian (1) 6: By Friday I will start using some books to start developing my outline.*

2. Writing a thesis chapter is a process, so you write it first as a draft. You need to find your way to write it. Reflect.

Schmelkes (1998) suggests thesis students to write their first thesis draft without hesitating and correcting spelling. She mentions that later on, the student can polish that draft to write a definite version of that text (p. 12). Hyland (2000, p. 51) states that it is important to remind teachers that "drafts are developmental and do not represent a finished product, but are a part of the writing process". Participants were aware of this. Yasmin points this out in her diary entry.

*Yasmin (1) 4: The works of my classmates were ok, one of them more elaborated than others but I think that it was the first draft.*

3. Writing a thesis chapter requires a lot of work, thus, you need to have enthusiasm, devote effort and organize your time.

Writing a thesis chapter is a challenging task. It is necessary to be motivated to do it as Hedge (1988, p. 21) emphasizes. However, being motivated is not enough that enthusiasm has to be translated into action. A key strategy to write a thesis chapter or the whole thesis is to organize your time. Bell (1993, p. 152-153) provides seven suggestions to do it. They are mentioned next. Set deadlines; write regularly; create

a rhythm of work; write up a section as soon as it is ready; stop at a point from which is easy to resume writing; leave space for revisions; publicize your plans. Julian expresses this belief by saying,

*Julian (1)13: I had set the goal of writing two pages everyday so that I could complete the development of chapter 2. I had told myself that I had to do that no matter by which means but I had to do it.*

4. You need to read a lot and select information.

Extensive reading is necessary to write a thesis. Ibañez (1995, p. 24) remarks this when describing the steps to write a thesis. She suggests reading research articles to learn what has been done, where, when and how (p. 27). After reading, thesis students need to select information related to their thesis topic. Criollo (2003, pp. 9-10) recommends students to make photocopies of selected articles or book chapters and bind them together to facilitate reading this valuable information to write the thesis. Nancy's words refer to this.

*Nancy (1) 6: In order to write chapter 1 we read a lot!!! And we just select the info that was necessary for our topic....*

5. Criollo's book helped me to write some chapters of my thesis.

Criollo (2003) was mentioned by the participants as a useful guide to write their thesis chapters. Julian highlights this by saying,

*Julian (1) 4: Whenever I had doubts I used Criollo's book as a reference to write the sections in which I needed some help.*

6. To develop a chapter, write first key ideas, then develop them and write the introduction at the end.

Mercado (2001, pp. 104-105) indicates that in order to write a section of a thesis is necessary to identify key ideas from readings, to develop them and write the



conclusion of that part and the introduction at the end. Julian's words explain this process.

*Julian (1) 13: When I finally had something written down I started to try to include related topics to the points I had already developed. Then when I had finally my information I wrote the introduction. I think we can write an introduction when we finally know what we have in every section of our work.*

Second problem: Lack of awareness of the usefulness of thesis chapters to facilitate thesis writing.

We learn by experience as Dewey (1938) points out. Participants experienced thesis writing process and had the opportunity to reflect on it. So, they seem to have been discovering the usefulness of each chapter as they were writing them. They provided three solutions to this problem.

1. Writing an introductory chapter is important to have a basis to do my thesis.

Writing the introductory chapter allows the thesis writer to have a clear orientation to the thesis. "In it, you describe the problem you plan to investigate, state the purpose of your study, indicate the questions and hypotheses you will address and tell why the study is important" (Criollo, 2003, p. 37). Paula's words illustrate this belief.

*Paula (1) 3: ...I also think that we can't go further if we don't feel sure of our bases (chapter 1).*

2. The experience of writing a chapter can help us write another one.

It seems that student's experience of writing a chapter allowed them to ease the writing process of the following chapters. As Dewey (1938) states, experience fosters learning. Paula's words illustrate this.

*Paula (1) 3: Now, in regards to the development of Chapter 1 we followed some little*

*steps that were really useful for us...Well teacher, that was all we did in chapter I and probably what we'll do in chapter II.*

### 3. Writing the Literature Review would help me improve my writing.

In order to write a Literature Review the thesis writer has to read. As stated by Hillocks (1995, p. 22) "to write well, one must become a reader". Participants reported the possibility of improvement on their writing after doing the Review of Literature in the words of Yasmin.

*Yasmin (1) 5: ...however I think that during the process of writing the literature review I would improve my writing.*

Third problem: Difficulty to design and apply instruments and to write the Methodology and Results chapters.

Participants mentioned having difficulties in the design and application of instruments and to write their Methods and Results chapters. The words of Marisol describe some of these concerns.

*Marisol (2) 7: About our research project---we are worried because we haven't started analyzing the data because we haven't got all the questionnaires yet. It's kind of annoying being asking for the questionnaires over and over and just get answers like 'I forgot it' 'I haven't answered it yet' and there were one person who told me 'I lost it'.*

However, participants seem to have suggested solutions to issues related with writing the Methodology and Results chapters. They are discussed next.

#### 1. Read and select information.

Similar to the writing process of any other chapter, participants were aware of the need to read in order to write these chapters and design their instruments. Criollo

(2003, pp. 37-39) suggests students to read and start thinking about the methodology instruments since Chapter 1. Paula comments on this process.

*Paula (2) 2: Thanks again for helping us to find information about our instruments!!!*

## 2. Avoid giving participants leading information.

Designing research instruments represents a challenge for most researchers. Bell (1993, p. 87) recommends the researcher to decide what they need to know when designing a questionnaire. Then she suggests to write questions and to check them to avoid double, leading, hypothetical or offensive questions. Carmen's words show this belief.

*Carmen (2) 5: ... we had the chance to show you what we had as instruments. I think we had a clear idea of what we want to obtain, but it can be a threat for us... our desire of getting the results we want can takes us to create some leading questions.*

## 3. Be patient and polite with participants to get instruments answered.

Although you may tell the subjects participating in your research when you want the questionnaire back as suggested by Bell (1993, p. 89), they may take longer or even lose it as reported by Marisol (2) 7 above. She reflected on this problem and proposed the solution of politeness and patience which is described next.

*Marisol (2) 6: ... the subjects could not answer the questionnaires at the moment, they wanted time and they asked us for a couple of days, which of course we agreed because we cannot pressure them.*

Table 7d. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>the thesis writing process</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	At the beginning of the process there is frustration and confusion, but as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 1</li> <li>• Julian (1) 3</li> </ul>

	time passes ideas become clearer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 1, 2</li> </ul>
3.	After choosing a topic area you should look for a method of study and preview possible problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 1</li> </ul>
4.	Choosing a topic to research is the first step. Then you need to narrow it down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 1</li> </ul>
16.	As you progress writing your thesis you may feel satisfied and proud of yourself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 8, 10</li> </ul>
17.	When finishing a part of your thesis, it is advisable to review and edit yourself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 2</li> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 11</li> </ul>
18.	It is important to write the number of pages required per thesis section.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 7</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 11</li> </ul>
24.	It is important to write the ideas as they occur to you, otherwise you can lose them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 4</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 5, 7</li> </ul>
30.	Getting involved in the topic makes the writing easier.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 4</li> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
41.	The most important point to begin writing a thesis is to be in love with your topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> </ul>
42.	Starting my thesis makes me feel excited but afraid at the same time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> </ul>
52.	Thesis writing implies revision and correction of a draft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3, 7, 8, 11</li> <li>• Paula (1) 7</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 9</li> </ul>
70.	After choosing a working title I need to get information to do a good thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 2</li> </ul>
84.	We are training ourselves to be good writers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4</li> </ul>
87.	It is important to have a clear focus in order to select information and avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 5</li> <li>• Paula (1) 7</li> </ul>

	getting lost.	
92.	Being in the middle of the process makes me feel satisfied, confident and willing to finish it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (1) 13, 15</li> </ul>
93.	Writing half of my thesis made me a better reader and writer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 13</li> </ul>
94.	Developing my thesis taught me that reading can be interesting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 13</li> </ul>
98.	Knowing the size of each chapter makes it more difficult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 1</li> </ul>
102.	Writing a thesis requires clear objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 6</li> </ul>
112.	I am learning to write a thesis using APA style.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 14</li> </ul>
113.	The beginning of the course was difficult because I did not do what I had to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 14</li> </ul>
116.	Though I do not want to do my thesis, I hope I can do an excellent work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 1</li> </ul>
119.	Starting the thesis is a big step. Now I must continue till the end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 7</li> </ul>
121.	We barely write what we are required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
128.	It is difficult for me to write the main idea of a paragraph and develop more ideas from it. However, I did it to write Chapter 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 9, 13</li> </ul>
130.	During the thesis writing process I have had different thoughts. Some of them have been influenced by my mood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 11</li> </ul>
141.	The formula to be a successful thesis writer is effort + enthusiasm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13, 15; (2) 1</li> </ul>
144.	I will complete my entire thesis when I finish the Second Research Seminar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 15; (2) 1, 9</li> </ul>

146.	It has been difficult for me to choose my writing style.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 9</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 10</li> </ul>
148.	We need to know how to write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 1</li> </ul>
152.	You can retake parts of previous papers to write your thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>
164.	It is good to work continuously on the thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 3</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 6</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 5</li> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>
165.	It is good to finish your thesis soon and defend it right away.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 3</li> <li>• Julian (2) 1</li> </ul>
180.	Writing our thesis has been a good experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 7</li> </ul>
188.	Having a good thesis is a requisite to defend it afterwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 8</li> </ul>
189.	Having predictable results in a thesis lowers its value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (2) 1</li> </ul>
191.	Writing my thesis and making decisions about it requires reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (2) 2, 3</li> </ul>

Table 7d. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to the *thesis writing process*.

Thirty seven beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to four problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 7dps.

Table 7dps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about the <i>thesis writing process</i> presented on Table 7d.
First problem: <i>Lack of expertise writing a thesis</i> .(1, 42, 98, 113, 116, 119, 121, 146, 148).

Solutions:

1. Choose a topic, narrow it down, look for a method of study and preview possible problems (3, 4).
2. When finishing part of your thesis, review and edit yourself (17, 52).
3. Write the number of pages required per section (18).
4. Write the ideas as they occur to you, so you do not lose them. Write main ideas and develop them (24, 128).
5. Get involved in the topic, it makes writing easier. You need to be in love with your topic (30, 41).
6. After choosing your working title, read (70).
7. Learn to be a good writer. Attend all the sessions of the course (84, 144).
8. Have a clear focus to select information and avoid getting lost. Reflect to make wise decisions in your thesis (87, 102, and 191).

Second problem: *Lack of satisfaction writing a thesis* (130).

Solutions:

1. As you progress you may feel satisfied and proud of yourself (16, 92).
2. Writing your thesis can make you a better reader and writer (93, 94, and 112).
3. Make effort and be enthusiastic. Enjoy the process (141, 180).

Third problem: *Fear to defend the thesis in an examination*.

Solutions:

1. Defend it as soon as you finish it (165).
2. Make a good thesis (188, 189).

Fourth problem: *Making thesis writing an extremely long process*.

Solutions:

1. Retake previous papers to write your thesis (152).
2. Work continuously to finish faster (164, 165).

Discussion Table 7dps.

First problem: Lack of expertise writing a thesis.

Bell (1993) wrote her book about how to do a research project especially for first time researchers in education and social science. She argues that both novice and experienced researchers face similar challenges when conducting research. “You will need to select a topic, identify the objectives of your study, plan and design a suitable methodology, devise research instruments, negotiate access to institutions, materials and people, collect, analyse and present information and finally produce a well-written report or dissertation” (p. 1). This section addresses issues related to these processes. Participants analysed their experience and seem to have provided eight solutions to this lack of expertise.

1. Choose a topic, narrow it down, look for a method of study and preview possible problems.

Research starts with the selection of a topic for investigation (Mercado, 2001, p. 35). Bell (1993, p. 23) considers important to draw up an initial project outline after narrowing down the topic. She suggests to list aims, questions, possible methods of investigation and literature to be consulted. Participants seem to have proposed this solution.

*Carmen (1) 1: ...right now I am thinking about the research methods and the possible problems I am going to face...*

2. When finishing part of your thesis, review and edit yourself.

Editing is a crucial process to ensure quality in thesis writing. Bell (1993, p. 160) proposes the writer to “work through your first draft section by section to ensure its sense, accuracy, logical sequencing and soundness of expression”. Participants



experienced this editing process and seem to have expressed their beliefs about this in the words of Paula.

*Paula (1) 6: We finished the whole worked at night; we were so tired that we didn't check it. We left it so we could check it later and see what could be wrong.*

3. Write the number of pages required per section.

It is important to write the number of pages suggested per section (Bell, 1993, p. 163). Participants described their concern about this issue as follows.

*Carmen (1) 11: ...I consider that we have covered the necessary information and specially the most important points but we have just about 13 pages...*

4. Write the ideas as they occur to you, so you do not lose them. Write main ideas and develop them.

In Schmelkes' opinion, the thesis writer should write ideas as they occur to him/her, in this way (s) he can get them easily (Schmelkes, 1998, p. 12). Sandy explains this in her entry.

*Sandy (1) 4: I always write the main ideas that come to my mind and later I start explaining them with examples.*

5. Get involved in the topic, it makes writing easier. You need to be in love with your topic.

Ibañez (1995, p. 25) suggests the thesis writer to 'be in love' with the thesis topic. She recommends thesis writers to choose a topic that is really interesting for them. If you like your thesis topic you will get easily involved in it and this will make thesis writing easier and more pleasant. Nancy's and Marisol's words seem to illustrate this belief.

*Nancy (1) 1: Indeed I'm in love with my topic, which is the most important point to begin with.*

*Marisol (1) 4: But then, we got involved in the topic, and things got easier.*

6. After choosing your working title, read.

According to Ibañez (1995, p. 24) the following step after choosing the thesis topic as mentioned earlier, is reading literature related to it, if possible published research about it. Participants seemed to be aware of this step and explained it in the words of Yasmin.

*Yasmin (1) 2: ...I was afraid of presenting my working title...when you said it was OK I feel good because now I am going to start looking for information for doing a good thesis.*

7. Learn to be a good writer. Attend all the sessions of the course.

Novice researchers need to learn how to conduct research. They can prepare through reading specialized texts such as Bell (1993) or Criollo (2003); through listening to explanations and/or by participating in discussions about the thesis writing process while writing their thesis. All these activities were implemented in the Research Seminars, thus, it was very important for the students to attend most sessions and to do the tasks suggested by the teacher in order to learn how to do their thesis. As Yasmin expressed, they were being trained to be effective thesis writers.

*Yasmin (1) 4: ...we are training ourselves in order to be good writers.*

8. Have a clear focus to select information and avoid getting lost. Reflect to make wise decisions in your thesis.

“Reference to prior literature is a defining feature of scholarly and research writing” (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 114). In order to make reference to prior literature, thesis writers need to reflect and have a clear focus, this will allow them to be able to select information and avoid getting lost in the process. Sandy comments on this.

*Sandy (1) 5: I'm happy today because I have found my way. I know what I want to know about my topic and my main purpose.*

Second problem: Lack of satisfaction writing a thesis.

Some students seemed not to have enjoyed the thesis writing process. Tsui (1996, p. 100) mentions that students often do not enjoy the activity of writing and that it is usually an anxiety generating activity. It seems that participants provided solutions for this problem.

1. As you progress you may feel satisfied and proud of yourself.

Students of the Research Seminars developed a sense of text ownership (Hyland, 2000, p. 34) due to the fact that they chose their thesis topics. Besides, they were guided step by step by the teacher and the activities of the course. Thus, they were able to produce their thesis chapters on time and were then satisfied when experiencing this progress. Carmen's words show this.

*Carmen(1) 8: I really feel good with the advanced we are having.*

2. Writing your thesis can make you a better reader and writer.

Making a Review of Literature is essential when writing a thesis. Writing a Review of Literature requires students to read and write (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 118).

Practicing these skills can make students better readers and writers. Paula expresses this belief by saying,

*Paula (1) 13: I could say that I become a better reader and I improve my writing. Writing a thesis helped me to reinforce these two skills.*

### 3. Make effort and be enthusiastic. Enjoy the process.

Thesis writing is a project that requires the writer to be motivated and work hard (Ibañez, 1995, p. 25); in this way, the process becomes easier and more pleasant. Julian's words illustrate this.

*Julian (1) 13: I think the formula effort plus enthusiasm really works.*

Third problem: Fear to defend the thesis in an examination.

Criollo (2003, p. 257) mentions that students often consider the thesis defence a frightening experience. Participants seemed to have suggested solutions to this problem.

#### 1. Defend it as soon as you finish it.

According to Criollo (2003, p. 253) thesis writers should start getting ready for their thesis defence just right after finishing the thesis. Participants also expressed this belief in the words of Carmen.

*Carmen (2) 3: Both of us think of finishing and defending the thesis this term.*

#### 2. Make a good thesis.

Various scholars agree on the fact that a thesis should meet quality standards following conventions required for academic writing texts (Bell, 1993, Criollo, 2003; Ibañez, 1995; Swales & Feak, 2000). Having produced a good thesis gives the writer a sense of achievement and pride that allows him /her to be motivated to share it in a thesis defence or in a conference. Paula expresses her concerns about the quality of her thesis and its defence.

*Paula (2) 8: I've been thinking if the way I'm developing my thesis is correct in order to defend it? I mean, the info I'm using is enough, correct or even concrete???*

Fourth problem: Making thesis writing an extremely long process.

Writing a thesis is a process that takes a long period of time (Barras, 1996, p. 126), but this process can take more or less time depending on the motivation and strategies used by the writer. It seems that participants suggested some solutions to this problem. They are presented next.

#### 1. Retake previous papers to write your thesis.

Participants recommended this to save time. It seems to be a problem-solving strategy as suggested by Oxford (1990, p. 2). This strategy is related to the fact that participants chose a topic to research in which they were already interested as suggested by Barras (1996, p. 127). Pedro narrates his experience about this solution.

*Pedro (1) 6: Besides, I took some information that I had in my previous essay about basic aspects of teaching English that I did in Meta VIII.*

#### 2. Work continuously to finish faster.

According to Schmelkes (1998, p. 5) the most effective way to organize your time to write a thesis is to work daily on it. This continuous work allows you to remember easily what you did the previous day and progress. Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 24) argues that many thesis students fail to finish their thesis due to the fact that they believe that writing it can be done in a few months. It is important then to note that thesis writing is a process that requires disciplined dedication and hard work for a long period of time (Schmelkes, 1998, p. 5). Carmen's words illustrate this issue.

*Carmen (2) 3: Right now Nancy and I haven't worked on the thesis too much but we are going to start without stopping I guess.*

Table 7e. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>writing the literature review</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
8.	Extensive reading is needed to write a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 2, 7</li> <li>• Paula (1) 2, 5-8, 10</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 2, 4</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 3, 5, 6</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 3, 14</li> <li>• Julian (1) 3, 4, 7</li> </ul>
9.	You can enjoy reading about your thesis topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 4</li> </ul>
12.	It is advisable to make a connection between texts and topics when writing a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 7</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 12</li> </ul>
36.	After reading you need to select information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 7</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
50.	It is not easy to link ideas using references.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3</li> </ul>
53.	When writing a thesis you copy words and then you add your own words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 4</li> </ul>
57.	It was necessary to read and learn how to do a Literature Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 5</li> </ul>
60.	To write Chapters 1 and 2 we need to read a lot, and then we selected the quotations to support what we wanted to say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
61.	To write chapter 1 it was necessary to read and organize the information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> </ul>
62.	Writing a Literature Review takes more time than writing the introductory chapter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> </ul>
75.	It was difficult to find information about our topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 3, 4, 10</li> </ul>
76.	It is good to find information about our	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 2</li> </ul>

	topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 3</li> </ul>
80.	Reading the literature made me feel confused because I see more topics involved in my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 4</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 10</li> </ul>
81.	It was good to find a thesis related to our thesis topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> </ul>
82.	Evaluating the relationship of the readings to our thesis topic was a useful strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6, 7, 10</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 4</li> </ul>
83.	To write an introduction was good to follow steps and read authors that explain this process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> </ul>
87.	It is important to have a clear focus in order to select information and avoid getting lost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 5</li> <li>• Paula (1) 7</li> </ul>
95.	It is still hard for me to paraphrase authors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 13</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 10,12</li> </ul>
96.	Not all sections of a theory may be relevant to our thesis project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 7</li> </ul>
117.	It is good to provide enough information so support our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 3, 13</li> <li>• Paula (2) 6</li> </ul>
123.	I must not plagiarise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
124.	It is difficult for me to interpret and comprehend the information; the questions provided by the teacher will facilitate these tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 6</li> </ul>
125.	I spend too much time reading because my reading speed is low.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
133.	Note taking is a good strategy to extract the thesis statements of articles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 12,15</li> </ul>
134.	It was difficult to recover information from sources if they were just underlined. Note taking has helped	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 12, 15</li> </ul>

	me to do it easily.	
137.	It is good to read and then connect these ideas with previous information from other sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>
138.	Reading different sources that analyzed the same original sources helped me to better understand the original author's ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>
145.	Some articles were easier to read than others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 15</li> </ul>
156.	I did not make assumptions; I just paraphrased the text and gave credit to the author.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 8</li> </ul>
174.	It was not easy to find information about our instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 5</li> </ul>
175.	It was good to find information about our instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 5</li> <li>• Paula (2) 3</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 5</li> </ul>
193.	Reading other thesis can help us write ours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 10</li> </ul>

Table 7e. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to *writing the literature review*. Thirty two beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 7eps.



Table 7eps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>writing the literature review</i> presented on Table 7e.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of knowledge about the methodology to construct a Literature Review in a thesis</i> (50, 75, 80, and 95).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Extensive reading is needed to write a thesis. Learn how to do a Literature Review: read theory and examples (8, 57, 61, 81, 83, 124, and 193).</li> <li>2. Look for sources, read, select and organize information by connecting texts with topics (36, 60, 61, 76, 82, 87, 174, and 175).</li> <li>3. Copy, paraphrase and link ideas using references to support your work. Avoid plagiarism (12, 37, 53, 95, 117, 123, and 156).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Negative attitude towards writing a Literature Review in a thesis</i>.</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You can enjoy reading about your thesis topic. Devote enough time (9, 62).</li> <li>2. Improve your reading skills. Use reading strategies to process information (125, 133, 134, 138, and 145).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 7eps.

First problem: Lack of knowledge about the methodology to construct a Literature Review in a thesis.

As Swales & Feak (2000, p. 114) point out “reference to prior literature is a defining feature of scholarly and research writing”. Participants were novice thesis writers so they did not know how to construct a Review of Literature. They seem to be aware of that and proposed various solutions to this problem which are explained next.

1. Extensive reading is needed to write a thesis. Learn how to do a Literature Review: read theory and examples.

Ibañez (1995, p. 24) emphasizes that extensive reading is necessary to write a thesis. Participants were able to learn how to write it through the teacher explanations and from books as Criollo's (2003) that includes both theory and examples. Nancy's words illustrate this belief.

*Nancy (1) 5: We have a more or less big idea of literature review. We have read how to do it, however, the more I think about it, the more I feel we miss much reading.*

2. Look for sources, read, select and organize information by connecting texts with topics.

It is crucial to find adequate sources to write a Literature Review (Bell, 1993, p. 51). To write a good literature review you need to read academic books, journals and electronic journals (Criollo, 2003, pp. 12-13). But once you have got information related to your thesis topic you need to select it according to your chapter outline (Criollo, 2003, p. 107). Paula's words express this idea.

*Paula (1) 6: Marisol and I got many books that seemed to be useful for us. We divided the books and took them home in order to check them and see if they were really related to our topic..*

3. Copy, paraphrase and link ideas using references to support your work. Avoid plagiarism.

When processing the information from sources, it is advisable to underline, take notes and use cards to record important information. Criollo (2003, p. 14) explains there are two ways to take notes and use them in the Literature Review: copying directly (quotation) or summarizing or paraphrasing (citation). When processing the

information to do your Literature Review you need to pay attention to the following issues: accuracy, fairness, plagiarism, selection and style (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 128). Participants seemed to be aware of these issues. They expressed them as follows.

*Nancy (1) 4: This is how we have to sit and try to write our thesis, copying and then our own words will come out...*

*Julian (1) 5: And also, I will take into account the fact that I must ask support from experts and that they must not plagiarize.*

Second problem: Negative attitude towards writing a Literature Review in a thesis.

“Positive thinking means maintaining a positive attitude toward the class, the teacher and the subject matter (Leaver, 1997, p. 144). Having a positive attitude helps learners to be successful. It seems that participants reflected on this problem and suggested two solutions to it.

1. You can enjoy reading about your thesis topic. Devote enough time.

If you are highly interested in your research topic and you ‘love it’ as suggested by Ibañez (1995, p. 25) reading about it can be a pleasant activity. However, as thesis writing requires extensive reading, you need to allocate enough time to do this task (p. 24). Participants expressed this belief in the words of Carmen.

*Carmen (1) 4: We have to read a lot and we really enjoyed what we did.*

2. Improve your reading skills. Use reading strategies to process information.

González (2003) argues that training students to use reading strategies can help them to be successful readers. Participants learned about strategies and became aware of the importance of identifying main ideas and taking notes to extract

important information from sources as suggested by Barras (1996, p. 109). Julian comments this by saying,

*Julian (1) 12: ...I finally decided to start revising material I had not revised and taking notes, which I think is a good strategy because it helped me extract thesis statements of the author's articles: I find it useful also because I do not get lost when I look for the information as it had happened previously because I only underlined the information...*

Table 7f. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the personal experience of writing a thesis in relation to <i>the role of peers in the process</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
14.	Students writing their thesis can learn from each other's experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 8</li> </ul>
15.	Receiving peer feedback is useful, but in order to benefit from it you have to be willing to receive it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 8</li> </ul>
19.	Peer feedback can be contradictory at times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
69.	Our thesis defence started when we presented our work to our classmates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 10</li> </ul>
71.	Through reading my classmates work I learned that every person has his/her own writing style.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 11</li> </ul>
72.	I may not like my classmates' work because my writing style is different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 11</li> </ul>
115.	Reading our peer chapters may confuse us due to the different styles of academic writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 11</li> </ul>
126.	I agree with the feedback given by my peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
172.	I disagree with the feedback given by my peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 8</li> </ul>

Table 7f. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to *the role of peers*. Nine beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to three problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 7fps.

Table 7fps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>the role of peers</i> presented on Table 7f.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of expertise in thesis writing</i> (115).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students can learn from each other's experience (14)</li> <li>2. Reading my classmates' work can show me different writing styles (71, 72).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Not benefiting from peer feedback</i> (19).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be willing to receive it (15, 126).</li> <li>2. Be critical about contradictory peer feedback (19, 172).</li> </ol> <p>Third problem: <i>Lack of preparation for thesis defence</i>.</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Presenting our work to our classmates can prepare us for thesis defence (69).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 7fps.

First problem: Lack of expertise in thesis writing.

Participants had the opportunity to experience learning how to write their thesis taking two courses together with a group of students that could help them in this challenging process. Writing a thesis required them to demonstrate understanding of relevant publications, to communicate their ideas in writing incorporating sources, to process data and to communicate the findings in tables or diagrams and to have a timely completion of the work (Barras, 1996, p. 126).

It seems that participants proposed two solutions involving their peers which are discussed next.

1. Students can learn from each other's experience.

Group work allowed the participants to learn from each other's experience. Similar to the findings reported by Bailey (1996, p. 276) students could explore their thesis writing problems without the pressure of the teacher. Carmen's words illustrate this point.

*Carmen (1) 8: We find that at least 2 of our classmates are not feeling good with their topic...and actually they did not did their paper. We tried to helped them by telling them what we did or how we started and some techniques we used such as the outline.*

2. Reading my classmates' work can show me different writing styles.

Process writing suggests the production of drafts and to foster peer revision (Tsui, 2003, p. 230). Participants were asked to read their peers work in order to give them feedback. By reading each other works they could see different writing styles.

Nancy's words explain this.

*Nancy (1) 11: What I learned is that everyone has its own style of writing.*

Second problem: Not benefiting from peer feedback.

Participants mentioned having faced some problems that prevented them to benefit from peer feedback. When reflecting on their diaries they suggested two solutions to this problem.

### 1. Be willing to receive it.

“With the developments in writing research and pedagogy, different types of feedback which allow for more student participation such as peer feedback and feedback through conferences, are now more widely used” (Hyland, 2000, p. 33). Participants were asked to give and receive peer feedback, but not all of them liked giving or receiving feedback. However, they were aware of the importance of being willing to receive it in order to benefit from it. Pedro’s words show this.

*Pedro (1) 8: Personally, I got some observations that did not like me, and it is not because I am not open-minded in order to receive critics...*

### 2. Be critical about contradictory peer feedback.

Peer feedback allows the learners to take a more active role in the writing process and to decide whether or not to use their peer’s comments (Hyland, 2000, p. 35). However, if two groups of peers revise the same draft and give different feedback, the writers receiving this feedback have to be critical about it and learn to make decisions. Carmen’s words illustrate these issues.

*Carmen (1) 12: ...they told them that the part of the language teaching history is very important... I do not know what to think, because the first time or peer reading some classmates told us that that specific part was not so relevant.*

### Third problem: Lack of preparation for thesis defence.

Participants were afraid of defending their thesis in an examination, as many students are (Criollo, 2003, p. 257). However, through experiencing their thesis writing process, they found out a solution for this problem.

1. Presenting our work to our classmates can prepare us for thesis defence.

Participants were asked to give peer feedback. They put it in writing and gave it to the author(s) of the paper. When they gave it to them, the author(s) and the readers engaged in what Hyland (2000, p. 42) calls peer talk. Hyland notes that peer talk has proven to be an excellent strategy to improve each other's papers. Participants' peer talk allowed them to begin practicing thesis defence. Paula witnessed this process and reflected about it in her diary entry.

*Paula (1) 3: I also realized that since this moment we are starting defending our works.*

*Every time we gave a comment to other classmates they defended their work...*

Table 7g. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>personal and attitudinal issues in the process</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
21.	Writing a thesis requires enthusiasm and motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3</li> <li>• Julian (1) 14</li> </ul>
22.	Writing a thesis requires hard work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 8-10</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>
25.	Most of us are afraid of writing a thesis because it takes a lot of time and effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1</li> <li>• Julian (1) 3</li> </ul>
27.	It is necessary to organize my time to do a good thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 1, 4</li> <li>• Julian (2) 4, 5, 6</li> </ul>
31.	It is worth sacrificing our weekends or even a night of sleep to do our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 2, 3, 7; (2) 6</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 4</li> </ul>
33.	Thesis writing involves decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 6</li> <li>• Paula (1) 7</li> <li>• Julian (1) 3; (2) 5, 9</li> </ul>
38.	Writing a thesis is the most difficult research we have to do when finishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>



	school.	
39.	You can enjoy while researching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1, 3, 6, 9; (2) 7</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 7</li> </ul>
40.	Thesis writing represents a challenge for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
43.	Thesis writing is a formal piece of research thus; it needs to be conducted carefully.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> </ul>
44.	Writing a thesis is a previous step to a thesis defence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> <li>• Julian (2) 8</li> </ul>
46.	Writing a thesis requires a positive attitude and a winner thought.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 1</li> </ul>
49.	Writing a thesis requires reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 5</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
51.	Writing a thesis makes you learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3</li> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
54.	Thesis writing requires constant dedication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3; (2) 7</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4, 5, 15; (2) 6</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 7</li> </ul>
56.	Having deadlines exerts pressure on students writing a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 2; (2) 4</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 3, 13; (2) 1, 4, 6, 9</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 5, 10; (2) 5</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 6</li> <li>• Julian (2) 5, 6, 8</li> </ul>
59.	Though writing a thesis is not easy, at the end you feel satisfied.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 11, 12</li> </ul>
65.	Writing our thesis generated questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6, 7; (2) 5</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 7; (2) 6</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 7</li> </ul>

66.	Writing a thesis requires patience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> </ul>
67.	We could write our thesis and survived the experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> </ul>
77.	Every step I am giving to do my thesis is correct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3</li> </ul>
90.	At the beginning of the course I was afraid of writing my thesis because I did not know I was capable of doing it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 1</li> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (1) 15</li> </ul>
98.	Knowing the size of each chapter makes it more difficult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 1</li> </ul>
99.	It has been very difficult to write my thesis, even though I knew what I had to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 4, 9</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
106.	Writing a thesis was a stressful experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 9</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4; (2) 8</li> </ul>
107.	I thought I could never write a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 9</li> </ul>
120.	Getting stressed does not help you to write your thesis; it is better to work and forget this stress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
122.	I could manage to work in spite of having tough days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
129.	I can write my thesis, I think it is possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 10</li> </ul>
142.	It is difficult for me to maintain the enthusiasm to write my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 14; (2) 5, 6</li> </ul>
143.	The goal of finishing our three first chapters of the thesis motivated us throughout the course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 15</li> </ul>
154.	We need to be relaxed to write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>
155.	Problems may stop us from writing, but we must continue until we achieve our goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>
173.	Due to poor time organization we are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 5</li> </ul>

	doing thesis tasks when the deadline is close.	
181.	After putting effort on your thesis you see results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 1</li> </ul>
191.	Sometimes I think I am not going to be able to finish my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 3</li> <li>• Julian (2) 6</li> </ul>
195.	Writing my thesis is teaching me to be an independent learner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 5</li> </ul>
199.	Being confident and interested on my thesis helps me write it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 8, 9</li> </ul>
200.	Losing my information saved on my USB delayed my work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>

Table 7g. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to *personal/attitudinal requirements*. Thirty nine beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 7gps.

Table 7gps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>personal/attitudinal issues</i> presented on Table 7g.
<p>First problem: <i>Not having the right attitude to write a thesis</i> (25, 98, 99, 106, 107, 120, 142, and 191).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You need to be positive, confident, enthusiastic and motivated. You can enjoy research (21, 39, 46, 51, 77, 195, and 199).</li> <li>2. Be prepared to reflect, make decisions and solve problems. Be patient and relax (33, 49, 65, 66, 120, 154, 155, and 200).</li> <li>3. It is possible to write your thesis. When you finish it you will be satisfied. Be willing to share your work by defending your thesis (44, 59, 67, 90, 129, 143, and 181).</li> </ol>

Second problem: *Lack of awareness of the work/activities needed to write a thesis* (38, 40, 43, 173).

Solutions:

1. Writing a thesis requires hard work, that is time and effort (22, 25, 54).
2. Organize your time to do a good thesis and deliver work by the deadlines. Be willing to devote your free time in order to finish it (27, 31, 56, 122).

Discussion Table 7gps.

First problem: Not having the right attitude to write a thesis.

Affective factors play a very important role in learning. As stated by Immordino-Yand & Damasio (2007, p. 3) “recent advances in the neuroscience of emotions are highlighting connections between cognitive and emotional functions”. Thus, having a positive attitude can facilitate the thesis writing process. It seems that participants found out three solutions to this problem.

1. You need to be positive, confident, enthusiastic and motivated. You can enjoy research.

As Leaver (1997, p. 144) highlights “positive thinking means maintaining a positive attitude toward the class, the teacher and the subject matter”. So, having this positive attitude helps thesis writers to be able to do this task. The teacher plays an important role in shaping this attitude because (s) he can help learner’s to trust themselves and to build their self-esteem (Molinar & Vázquez, 2001, p. 75). Also, by acting as a supporting guide, the teacher can make learners view the thesis writing process as a doable task that can even be enjoyed (Suárez-Iñiguez, 2001, p. 74). Julian’s and Nancy’s words illustrate these beliefs.

*Julian (1) 14: I think the formula of effort plus enthusiasm really works...*

*Nancy (1) 3: While we were working we had lots of fun, even though we had to think a*

*lot.*

2. Be prepared to reflect, make decisions and solve problems. Be patient and relax. As participants were novice researchers, they were unsure about the best way to conduct research. Furthermore, Bell (1993, p. 1) notes that conducting research is a challenging task both for novice and experienced researchers that requires them to face problems and make decisions. Marisol's and Pedro's comments illustrate these issues.

*Marisol (1) 6: ...we saw that we should start from the most general point. In our case, we are still thinking about what would be our starting point. If Second Language Acquisition or Language Learning.*

*Pedro (1) 6: ...we need to be relaxed in order to write...we may find a lot of barriers that might stop us writing but we must continue with our path until we achieve the goals.*

3. It is possible to write your thesis. When you finish it you will be satisfied. Be willing to share your work by defending your thesis.

There is a social responsibility when conducting research due to the fact that sharing our results or findings can benefit other language teachers facing similar problems. As Ibañez (1995, p. 25) points out, the results of a research can be used to generate further research. Also conducting research gives the pre-service teachers the opportunity to act as problem solvers who construct their own knowledge (Borko & Putnam, 1995, p. 42). Yasmin's and Nancy's words show these beliefs.

*Yasmin (2) 12: In the chapters I feel happy and at the same time nervous because I almost finish this research...*

*Nancy (1) 1: ...now I am thinking that is something serious, that I have to be more careful especially it will be something I will defend in a very near future ...*

Second problem: Lack of awareness of the work/activities needed to write a thesis. Suárez-Iñiguez (2001, p. 24) notes that one of the reasons why students do not succeed writing their thesis is because they believe that is an easy task similar to the one of producing a term paper. Thus, he signals the importance of teaching learners how to conduct research explaining them the amount of work and effort needed to do their thesis (p. 21). Participants provided two solutions to this problem.

1. Writing a thesis requires hard work, that is, time and effort.

Suárez-Iñiguez (2001, p. 25) remarks the importance of discipline, dedication and continuous work to be successful thesis writers. Julian's words describe this belief.

*Julian (1) 2: ...but I am also aware that my thesis will not be done by itself but I will have to work really hard in order to accomplish my target: writing my thesis.*

2. Organize your time to do a good thesis and deliver work by the deadlines. Be willing to devote your free time in order to finish it.

Writing a thesis is goal that requires students to organize their time. It is useful to set a thesis calendar with deadlines to organize the work (Ibañez, 1995, p. 39). Marisol's words express her concern about this.

*Marisol (1) 4: What we are still dealing is with time organization...what we decided is to 'sacrifice' Sundays and come to Puebla.*

Table 7h. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>writing a thesis in pairs</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
23.	Writing a thesis in pairs is difficult but amazing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 4</li> </ul>
29.	You can write a thesis with a classmate if she has had similar learning experiences and both like the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> </ul>

	topic.	
32.	Writing a thesis in teams requires task and time organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 2</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 4</li> </ul>
35.	Writing a thesis in teams implies sharing ideas, discussing them and agreeing on how to put them together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 5</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 7</li> </ul>
45.	To write a thesis with a partner you need to make a good team. It is advisable to do it with a friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1, 7</li> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> </ul>

Table 7h. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to *writing a thesis in pairs*. Five beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem. Participants provided solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 7hps.

Table 7hps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>writing a thesis in pairs</i> presented on Table 7h.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to write a thesis in pairs</i> (23).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with a classmate that has had similar learning experiences and likes the same topic. If possible work with a friend (29, 45).</li> <li>2. Organize your time and tasks that need to be done (32).</li> <li>3. Share ideas, discuss them and agree on how to put them together (35).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 7hps.

According to Fullan (1995, p. 261) teacher education should foster collaborative skills and continuous learning. Thesis writing is commonly considered an individual task. In the Research Seminars I encouraged learners to work in pairs.

First problem: Difficulty to write a thesis in pairs.

Most students do their thesis individually; however, two pairs of participants chose to do it in pairs: Carmen worked with Nancy and Marisol with Paula. First, they found difficult to do their thesis in pairs, but they looked for ways to do it. They share these ideas next.

1. Work with a classmate that has had similar learning experiences and likes the same topic. If possible work with a friend.

Experiential autobiographical knowledge is stored in our memory as feelings or sensations. These experiences “can be the basis for accepting or rejecting a certain practice in teaching and learning situations” (Jaatinen, 2007, p. 27). The participants who chose to work in pairs had lived similar experiences and were friends. This allowed them to work together successfully. Marisol explains this.

*Marisol (1) 2: I decided to work on a topic that helped me, and to work with one of my classmates that has the same experience that I do.*

2. Organize your time and tasks that need to be done.

A thesis writer needs to organize his/her time and be disciplined taking into consideration his/her learning styles and schedule preferences (Schmelkes, 1998, p. 5). This is also true when writing a thesis in pairs. Participants were finishing their course work so, during weekdays they had little free time. Nancy explains how they managed to organize their time to work together.

*Nancy (1) 2: I've already decided to work hard on Fridays during the class to work in the library an also on Saturdays all ay... I still thinking it's a challenge and if I do it together my partner Carmen I'll be proud of me and her Especially because both of us have the same time problem.*



3. Share ideas, discuss them and agree on how to put them together.

Working together required these pairs to share ideas, discuss them and reach agreements. Bailey (1996, p. 277) highlights the importance of the creation of a voice for each group member to have a successful collaborative dialogue. Marisol's words illustrate this.

*Marisol (1)7: I'm doing my thesis in team. So first we share some ideas about the topic, we discuss about it and had an agreement of the way we want to do it.*

Table 7i. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>the editing process</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
17.	When finishing a part of your thesis, it is advisable to review and edit yourself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 2; (2) 5</li> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 11; (2) 4</li> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 12</li> </ul>
52.	Thesis writing implies revision and correction of a draft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 3, 7, 8, 11</li> <li>• Paula (1) 7</li> <li>• Sandy (1) 9</li> </ul>
64.	We used to consider drafts as a very rough piece of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> </ul>
86.	A first draft can be improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4</li> <li>• Julian (1) 3, 4, 13, 14</li> <li>• Paula (2) 8</li> </ul>
88.	The title can be modified as you progress in your thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 7</li> </ul>
100.	It is good to write the main ideas and then start developing them and then revise the text to make it coherent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 4</li> </ul>
103.	I am aware that I need to improve my spelling on my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (1) 8</li> </ul>
147.	There is a format to write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 9</li> </ul>
158.	I am not satisfied with my work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 13</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> </ul>
159.	When I finished my draft I did not edit it because I was tired and I felt frustration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> </ul>
160.	It is good to design your instruments, test and edit them before its application.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 6</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 5</li> </ul>

Table 7i. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to the *editing process*. Eleven beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem. Participants provided solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 7ips.

Table 7ips. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>the editing process</i> presented on Table 7i.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of awareness of the way to edit one's work and the benefits of it</i> (158, 159).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When finishing a part of your thesis, review and edit yourself (17, 52, 100, 103, 160).</li> <li>2. Get used to the idea of drafting when writing a thesis (64, 86, 88).</li> <li>3. Follow the format provided by the teacher when editing your thesis (147).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 7ips.

First problem: Lack of awareness of the way to edit one's work and the benefits of it. I implemented a combination of process writing with product writing approaches. That is, I told students that thesis writing was a process that was going to help them to produce drafts of chapters but at the end they had to finish a thesis as a product of the Research Seminars. But students were not used to do self-editing and had little

or no experience giving peer feedback. I tried to make them develop text ownership as suggested by Hyland (2000, p. 34) by trying to reduce the amount and frequency of teacher feedback. Participants faced difficulties in their editing process but they suggested solutions which are discussed next.

1. When finishing a part of your thesis, review and edit yourself.

I encouraged them to self-edit their own work before delivering to the teacher, Thus, I tried to make them *be in charge* of their own text and learning as suggested by Leaver (1997, p. 144). As Leaver mentions, it is often difficult for teachers to allow students to take charge of their learning and students often prefer the teacher to take charge of it (Ib.). However, students became aware of the importance of self-edition to improve their thesis. Sandy's words illustrate this point.

*Sandy (2) 5: I read again my chapter three and I know I need to improve it, to change some parts, add a missing one and that is what I'm doing.*

2. Get used to the idea of drafting when writing a thesis.

Process writing is an approach that views writing as recursive, that is, "writers constantly review and modify their texts as they write and often produce several drafts to achieve a finished product" (Hyland, 2000, p. 88). Participants as Mexican students had the conception of draft as a very rough piece of work. The Research Seminars taught them a different conception to make them experience the process writing approach. Nancy explains this change.

*Nancy (1) 7: This week we worked on our first draft about the second chapter. As you said we conceive different the concept of draft. But I want to think of it as the more positive and academic concept.*

3. Every writer has his/he own writing style (Barras, 1996, p. 69). However writing academic texts require learners to follow certain conventions (Ib.) When revising their

works they need to check them with that information in mind. Participants were aware of these issues and narrated their writing experience in the words of Julian.

*Julian (1) 9: I think that what I have to do is to do it in my way, but of course following the format we must follow in writing the thesis.*

Table 7j. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>the importance of the thesis for the student</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
37.	It is important for me to have a very good thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 1</li> </ul>
168.	Our thesis should be shared through publication, because it is an important piece of research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 6</li> </ul>
178.	It is worth to register our thesis to get a scholarship. In this way we can share it with other people in Spanish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 6</li> </ul>

Table 7j. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to the *importance of the thesis*. Three beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem. Participants provided solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 7jps.

Table 7jps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about the <i>importance of the thesis</i> presented on Table 7j.	
First problem: <i>Lack of awareness of the value of the thesis.</i>	
Solutions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do a good work (37).</li> <li>2. If you can, get a scholarship to do your thesis (178).</li> <li>3. Publish your thesis (168).</li> </ol>	

Discussion Table 7jps.

First problem: Lack of awareness of the value of the thesis.

Johnston (2003, p. 1) argues that “the essence of language teaching like the essence of all teaching, lies in values”. Participants were writing a thesis for the first time and they did not know the value of this academic work. Rugarcia (1999, p. 56) mentions that our attitudes show our personal values and they become visible when we make decisions. So, as I wanted my students to value their thesis, I tried to make them aware of the potential that writing a thesis had to make them grow as professionals and as persons. Participants suggested three solutions to this problem which are discussed next.

#### 1. Do a good work.

Producing a good thesis can give students a sense of achievement and can help them value their work. Criollo (2003, p. 3) mentions that thesis are written to obtain a degree and students value this. Yasmin explains this by saying,

*Yasmin (1) 1: The first class I didn't come, but the next classes I am going to be there, because is important for me to have a very good thesis.*

#### 2. If you can, get a scholarship to do your thesis.

BA students sometimes have financial problems and have to work. This does not allow them to devote enough time to do their thesis as pointed out by Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 24). Thus, getting a scholarship to do their thesis can alleviate their economical problems. Nancy comments her experience preparing her thesis to apply for a scholarship.

*Nancy (1) 6: Lately we have been kind of busy writing and getting everything ready for our second project. We are nearly done there is just one step which is the registration of the project in Internet and that's it.*

Nancy (2) 6: ...we want to participate for the scholarship...

### 3. Publish your thesis.

Hedge (1988, p. 21) highlights the importance of publication to finish a writing process. Participants became aware of the importance of making their research public to benefit other colleagues. Carmen comments this.

Carmen (2) 6: ...we are going to do whatever is possible to publish our paper.

Table 7k. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>personal experience of writing a thesis</i> in relation to <i>the importance of the foreign language in which the thesis is written</i>		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
68.	Writing effectively our thesis in English requires that we think and write in English, not in Spanish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nancy (1) 8</li> </ul>
151.	We need to follow the conventions of English to write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
179.	Writing a second version of our thesis in Spanish was a good exercise that required us to do Contrastive Analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nancy (2) 6</li> </ul>

Table 7k. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the personal experience of writing a thesis* but in this case in relation to the *foreign language in which the thesis is written*. Three beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem. Participants provided solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 7kps.

Table 7kps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>the foreign language in which the thesis is written</i> presented on Table 7k.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of awareness of the issues involved in writing a thesis in English.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You need to think and write in English, not in Spanish. Thus, you need to follow the conventions of that language (68, 151).</li> <li>2. When writing your application for a scholarship you may have to write a version of your thesis in Spanish. If this is the case, use contrastive analysis to be aware of the differences between English and Spanish (179).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 7kps.

First problem: Lack of awareness of the issues involved in writing a thesis in English.

Participants were pre-service teachers in an EFL context. They were required to write their thesis in English. This made the thesis writing more challenging. Participants reflected and proposed three solutions. They are shown next.

1. You need to think and write in English, not in Spanish. Thus, you need to follow the conventions of that language.

The participants of this study were native speakers of Spanish by they were aware of some strategies needed to write a text in English due to the fact that they had already taken seven or eight EFL courses. However, learners in spite of their level of proficiency found difficult to write an academic text, similar to what Hyland (2000, p. 141) mentions. Though these learners were supposed to have received both knowledge and skills through their course work to write English texts, some of them still found difficult to write their thesis. Some of them looked for strategies to overcome this difficulty and used translation from Spanish to write parts of their

thesis. Translation is a strategy that can be used to link already known material with new one as stated by Oxford (1990, p. 137). Also, when writing a text it is necessary to follow the conventions and rules of that language. That is what most common writing courses teach (Dudley-Evans, 1995, cited in Hewings & Hewings, 2001, p. 81).

Nancy's and Pedro's comments illustrate this.

*Nancy (1) 8: The session of today was the same, checking our classmates work ...it seems that this classmate has writing problems. It seemed a literal translation from Spanish to English... That is something Carmen and me have tried to avoid.*

*Pedro (1) 5: Another important point was that we must not start a paper with a conjunction or use it at the beginning of a paragraph.*

2. When writing your application for a scholarship you may have to write a version of your thesis in Spanish. If this is the case, use contrastive analysis to be aware of the differences between English and Spanish.

Translating a text to another language allows the translator to read it carefully, review it and reflect upon what was written. Besides, this experience makes the learners to learn about the differences between the structure and conventions of both languages. This awareness may be useful for them on further academic work. As Dewey (1938) notes, educational experiences should "live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 28). Nancy explains this process by saying,

*Nancy (2) 6: Writing a second version of our thesis but now in Spanish has been a really good experience. It's funny start remembering some structures in Spanish... Phrases are longer, this is important, because in English the phrases commonly are short and a full stop after it.*



## Tables 8. Beliefs about professional and personal issues.

Four subcategories were found about this topic: career development, future professional life, program evaluation and personal growth as professionals. Their tables are shown next.

Table 8a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>professional + personal issues</i> in relation to <i>career development</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	Finishing my major is achieving a goal/dream that I have had for years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nancy (1) 9</li> </ul>
6.	Finishing my major is the last step of this stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Julian (1) 9</li> </ul>
9.	We are finishing our major and we are prepared to improve our professional practice. We can be excellent professionals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carmen (2) 1</li> </ul>
10.	In this last stage of our major we are beginning to teach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marisol (2) 2</li> </ul>

Table 8a. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *professional and personal issues* but in this case in relation to *career development*. Four beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to one problem: the difficulty to be a good professional. Participants provided two solutions to this problem. They are shown on Table 8aps.

Table 8aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>career development</i> presented on Table 8a.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to be a good professional</i>.</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finish my major (1, 6).</li> <li>2. Reflect and improve your teaching practice (9, 10).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 8aps.

First problem: Difficulty to be a good professional.

Participants were pre-service teachers and they were finishing their preparation to become professionals. They reflected on this problem and suggested two solutions which are discussed next.

#### 1. Finish my major.

Participants mentioned in their diary entries this solution. Mexican society believes that when a university student finishes his/her major (s) he becomes a professional. Wallace (1991, p. 147) notes that teacher education courses need to prepare trainees for the profession by making them competent to assume their responsibilities. By finishing their course work trainees were preparing for his future professional performance. Julian's comment mentioned his awareness of finishing this important stage.

*Julian (1) 9: ...I know I am about to finish and that this is almost the last step of this stage.*

#### 2. Reflect and improve your teaching practice.

Wallace (1991, p. 147) also points out that teacher education courses need to prepare trainees for the profession and to foster the development of its graduates as autonomous professionals and reflective practitioners. Reflection leads to development and improvement (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001). Carmen's comment shows her reflection on these issues.

*Carmen (2) 1: We are almost at the end and we can improve whatever we want.*

Table 8b. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>professional + personal</i> issues in relation to <i>future professional life</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
2.	I am interested in working with teenagers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 2</li> </ul>
5.	I do not know where to go after finishing my major.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 9</li> </ul>
7.	Time organization would be crucial in my future professional life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 12</li> </ul>
8.	I'm interested in working but I want to finish my major first.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 1</li> </ul>

Table 8b. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *professional and personal issues* but in this case in relation to *future professional life*. Four beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems: the difficulty to decide where to work after finishing their major and the difficulty to be a good professional in the future. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 8bps.

Table 8bps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>future professional life</i> presented on Table 8b.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to decide where to work after finishing my major</i> (5). Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decide with which age level you would like to work (2).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Difficulty to be a good professional in the future</i>. Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learn to organize your time (7).</li> <li>2. Get some practice, but finish your major first (8).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 8bps.

First problem: Difficulty to decide where to work after finishing my major.

As participants were pre-service teachers they did not know where they were going to work after finishing their major. They reflected on this problem and proposed a solution that is presented next.

1. Decide with which age level you would like to work.

Wallace (1991, p. 90) mentions that observation should be structured to benefit more the trainee. It is through observation that pre-service teachers can choose with which age level they would like to work in their future professional practice. Yasmin's words illustrate this point.

*Yasmin (1) 2: ... teenagers, because in the future I am interested in working with these kind of students.*

Second problem: Difficulty to be a good professional in the future.

Participants were concerned about their future performance as professionals. They suggested two solutions which are discussed next.

1. Learn to organize your time.

Eraut (1995, p. 232) mentions that being a professional implies commitment with students. In order to arrive on time, plan the lessons and be an effective teacher, teachers need to learn how to organize their time. Participants were beginning to practice and they were becoming aware of this need. Julian explains this by saying,

*Julian (1) 12: If I had learned that I have to do things earlier I would not be overwhelmed now... Now I think I have to take things more seriously otherwise it will cause me troubles in my professional life.*

2. Get some practice, but finish your major first.

Wallace (1991, p. 17) defines *experiential knowledge* as knowledge related to the professional's ongoing experience. It is important for pre-service teachers to get this practical knowledge. However, they were also aware of the importance of finishing their major before accepting a formal job. Carmen's comment refers to these issues when commenting about a job offer that required her to teach in the mornings.

*Carmen (2) 1: ... I have classes during the whole week in the morning...*

*As I am in the last part of the major of course I want to get experience in teaching but I would prefer something in the afternoon...*

Table 8c. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>professional + personal issues</i> in relation to <i>program evaluation</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
3.	We have learned vocabulary of our area (Language teaching), but not from other areas and this affects our TOEFL score.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Julian (1) 6</li></ul>

Table 8c. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *professional and personal issues* but in this case in relation to *program evaluation*. One belief was found about this topic. It relates to one problem: the difficulty to obtain a good TOEFL score. Participants provided one solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 8cps.

Table 8cps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>program evaluation</i> presented on Table 8c.	
First problem: <i>Difficulty to obtain a good TOEFL scores (3).</i>	
Solutions:	
1. Include general vocabulary in English courses to prepare us for the TOEFL test (3).	

Discussion Table 8cps.

First problem: Difficulty to obtain a good TOEFL score.

An important feature of a good English language teacher is him/her fluent competence in speaking, writing, listening and reading English (Brown, 1994, p. 434). Participants were aware of this issue and suggested a solution which is discussed next.

1. Include general vocabulary in English courses to prepare us for the TOEFL test. *Professional competence* or *initial competence* according to Wallace (1991, p. 58) means that someone has met the “minimum requirements for the exercise of his or her profession”. Among these requirements there is a need to have a minimum level of English proficiency as stated by Pasternak & Bailey (2004, p. 158). Participants were not satisfied with their TOEFL results and they provided a solution to this problem in the words of Julian.

*Julian (1) 6: But I have a comment for the TOEFL test. I think we have been trained to know things related to our area and have been less trained in other areas, specifically knowing, for example, vocabulary of other areas.*

Table 8d. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>professional + personal</i> issues in relation to <i>personal growth as professionals</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
4.	Teaching will make me a full human being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Julian (1) 7</li></ul>

Table 8d. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *professional and personal issues* but in this case in relation to *personal growth as professional*. One belief was found about this topic. It seems to be related to one problem: the difficulty to become a full human being and professional. Participants provided one solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 8dps.

Table 8dps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>personal growth as professionals</i> presented on Table 8d.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to become a full human being and professional.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teaching can make me a full human being (4).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 8dps.

First problem: Difficulty to become a full human being and professional.

A professional in the view of Wallace (1991, p. 5) is a person who has acquired scientific knowledge in a period of study and it has been formally assessed; who has a sense of public service, has high standards of professional conduct and is competent performing specific tasks according to his/her profession. But human beings need to apply their values to feel satisfied on their professions and their life's. As Johnston (2003, p. ix) mentions, English language teaching is profoundly full of values. Participants were finishing their professional preparation and reflected on these issues. They mentioned this problem and provided a solution to it.

1. Teaching can make me a full human being.

Participants were about to finish their course work. The quotations of the course together with the humanistic activity and the dialogue diaries allowed them to reflect about their life and their profession. Reflection is crucial to teacher development and an effective tool for teacher empowerment (Bailey et al, 2001). Thus, they began to analyze the potential of their profession in relation to their personal growth. Julian's words illustrate this.

*Julian (1) 7: ...I discovered that my goal in life is to help others. Now what I want to do is to teach something to people because I think that will make me a full human*

*being.*

It is worth nothing that a full human being according to Frankl (1996, p. 107) is a person that has found his/her own mission in life. Mother Theresa (1984, p. 22) on the other hand notes that God has created us to love and to be loved. In any professional practice we can find our mission and have the opportunity to love and to be loved.

Tables 9. Beliefs about thesis, professional and personal issues.

Three subcategories seemed to be found about this topic: career development, future professional practice and social responsibility. Their tables are shown next.

Table 9a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>thesis, professional and personal issues</i> in relation to <i>career development</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	It is very important for me to finish school, my thesis and graduate with honours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carmen (1) 2</li></ul>

Table 9a. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *thesis, professional and personal issues* but in this case in relation to *career development*. One belief was found about this topic. It relates to one problem: the difficulty to finish school. Participants provided one solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 9aps.

Table 9aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>career development</i> presented on Table 9a.	
First problem: <i>Difficulty to finish school</i> . Solutions: 1.Finish course work and do a good thesis to graduate with honours (1).	



Discussion Table 9aps.

First problem: Difficulty to finish school.

Students found difficult to finish their course work due to the fact that they were doing their practicum, some of them worked and some others were also doing their social service. They reflected on these issues and provided a solution.

1. Finish course work and do a good thesis to graduate with honours.

Participants were aware of the requirements to graduate: 1) finish their course work; 2) do their social service and depending on the score average they had, if below 8.5, defend their thesis or if above 8.5 present the TOEFL with 550 and graduate. Thus, students with a score average above 8.5 did not have to defend their thesis in an examination. However, if they chose to defend it and had an average of 9 or more, they could graduate with honours. As stated by Guskey (1995, p. 121), “successful actions are reinforcing”. That is, their good scores may motivate learners to graduate with honours when writing a good thesis and choosing to defend it in an examination. Carmen explains this by saying,

*Carmen (1) 2: ... the most important for me is to finish school, do my thesis and be graduated with honours.*

Table 9b. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>thesis, professional and personal issues</i> in relation to <i>future professional practice</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
2.	I would like to write a thesis related to my future professional interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yasmin (1) 2</li></ul>

Table 9b. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *thesis, professional and personal issues* but in this case in relation to *future professional practice*. One belief was found about this topic. It seems to be related to one problem: the difficulty

to link their thesis to their future professional practice. Participants provided one solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 9bps.

Table 9bps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>future professional practice</i> presented on Table 9b.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty links their thesis with their future professional practice.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a thesis related to your future professional interests (2).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 9bps.

First problem: Difficulty to link their thesis with their future professional practice.

Participants did not know which topic to choose to write their thesis. They did not know whether to link their thesis with their future professional practice or not. They reflected on this and provided a solution which is discussed next.

1. Write a thesis related to your future professional interests.

Participants were free to choose their thesis topic based on their personal interests.

As Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 42) points out, students should like the topic and choose it with their head, heart and stomach. That is, students can think which topic may help them in their future teaching practice and then choose it for their thesis. Yasmin describes this belief next.

*Yasmin (1) 2: Monday, I was worried because still I did not have my working title, but after the class finished I went to the library... I found something about materials and try to connect this with teenagers because in the future I am interested in working with these kind of students.*

Table 9c. Beliefs found on the diary entries about <i>thesis, professional and personal issues</i> in relation to <i>social responsibility</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
3.	Our thesis proposal can be conducted with the help of the teacher and may help many students in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 12</li> </ul>

Table 9c. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *thesis, professional and personal issues* but in this case in relation to its *social responsibility*. One belief was found about this topic. It seems to be related to one problem: the difficulty to write a thesis that can have a positive impact in society. Participants provided one solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 9cps.

Table 9cps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>social responsibility</i> presented on Table 9c.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to write a thesis that can have a positive impact in society.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be guided by the teacher to write a good thesis that can help many students in the future (3).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 9cps.

First problem: Difficulty to write a thesis that can have a positive impact in society.

Participants were novice researchers and when they began writing their thesis they did not know that their thesis could have a positive impact in society.

1. Be guided by the teacher to write a good thesis that can help many students in the future.

The BUAP has a social responsibility which is to train students to generate societal development (BUAP, 2007, p. 59). Thus, students' thesis could serve to achieve this

purpose. But as participants were novice researchers, they needed their teacher's help and guidance to write their thesis. Carmen's reflection illustrates this.

*Carmen (1) 12: I was very glad at hearing that the proposal we are doing can become true with your help. ...it think it will help many students in the future...*

Tables 10. Beliefs about the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars.

Eleven subcategories seem to be found about this topic: oral presentations, peer feedback, movies, humanistic activity, metaphors, group work, and the role of the teacher in the course, electronic dialogue diaries, quotes, music and thesis writing. Their tables are shown next.

Table 10a. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>oral presentations</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
1.	Listening to the working titles of my classmates and their presentations allowed me to learn about their interests/plans for their thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 2</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> </ul>
2.	Poster sessions were interesting and helpful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 4</li> </ul>
26.	The presentation of Chapter 1 allowed me to see how my classmates' works were excellent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 4</li> </ul>
27.	Presenting our thesis chapters to our classmates allowed us to learn from them and identify our mistakes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 4</li> </ul>
64.	Speaking in front of the group was a good activity to gain confidence in public speaking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 10</li> </ul>
81.	Though presenting my first chapter to you and my classmates made me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4</li> </ul>

	nervous, the class made me feel confident.	
92.	Practicing oral presentations reduced my nervousness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 12</li> </ul>
122.	It was difficult for us to speak in front of our peers in spite of the fact that we have been classmates for four years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 1</li> </ul>
135.	Listening to the presentations of my classmates allowed me to learn about their instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 2</li> <li>• Marisol (2) 3,4</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 2</li> <li>• Julian (2) 3, 4</li> <li>• Pedro (2) 2</li> </ul>
137.	Listening to the presentation of my classmates about their instruments is helping us to clarify the objectives and instruments of our research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 3</li> <li>• Marisol (2) 4,5</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 2, 3, 4</li> </ul>
150.	The presentation of my instrument will allow me to share information about it and previous instruments used to research similar issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>
162.	Thinking about our group presentation made me nervous.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 3</li> </ul>
173.	Student presentations are time-consuming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3, 4</li> </ul>
174.	Student presentations raised questions about instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>
175.	I gave a good presentation of the quote that I felt identified and chose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>
176.	Presenting my quote made me feel great.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>
177.	Through presenting the quote I transmitted knowledge to my classmates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>
178.	Presentations about instruments gave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 4</li> </ul>

	us information to conduct research in the future.	
179.	Listening to my classmate's presentation I realised that it is good to combine instruments when conducting research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 4</li> </ul>
180.	Most presentations about our research instruments were good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 4</li> </ul>
181.	It is necessary to prepare a presentation before giving it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 4</li> </ul>
182.	I am responsible of my presentation, thus, I have to prepare it to give my best.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 4</li> </ul>

Table 10a. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars*, but in this case in relation to *oral presentations*. Twenty two beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10aps.

Table 10aps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>oral presentations</i> presented on Table 10a.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of expertise in thesis writing</i> (27).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learn from my classmate's presentations (1, 2, 26, 27, 135, 137, 174, 176, 178, 180).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Lack of expertise giving presentations</i> (81, 122, 162, 173).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Practice presenting content course and quotes (92, 64, 175, 176, 177).</li> <li>2. The teacher should create a relaxed atmosphere to enhance learners to</li> </ol>

- make effective presentations and receive feedback on their works (81).
3. Prepare a presentation before giving it (181, 182).

Discussion Table 10aps.

First problem: Lack of expertise in thesis writing.

Participants were novice researchers; they had to learn how to do their thesis. As I used a constructivist approach in my lessons, I tried to reduce my participation and encouraged them to speak in small group work and in oral presentations. As Van Huizen et al (2005, p. 272) note, students participating in a constructivist classroom participate in an *activity system*. Their participation “involves both the performance of action and the assignment of meaning”. Students gave and listened to oral presentations, this was the *performance of the action*. Regarding the *assignment of meaning*, they viewed oral presentations as a solution to the lack of expertise. This is explained below.

1. Learn from my classmates presentations.

Participants did not know neither how to conduct research nor how to write a thesis. However, when they listened to their classmates' presentations they learned from them. I think this was a learning opportunity. The term *learning opportunities* covers opportunities created by learners, teachers or by chance (Allwright, 2005, p. 17).

Nancy explains this by saying,

*Nancy (2) 2: As you said, the presentation will be helpful for some people like me that don't know some of the instruments proposed by others.*

Second problem: Lack of expertise giving presentations.

I have observed that LEMO students have difficulty giving oral presentations in English content courses (Tapia, 2003, p. 3). Thus, since 2003 I have trained my students to give effective presentations and also I have given them opportunities to

practice them in my courses. Participants realized they did not know how to give presentations and suggested three solutions to this problem.

1. Practice presenting content course and quotes.

Specific training is needed in order to improve student's skills to give oral presentations (Tapia, 2003, p. 6). After acquiring this received knowledge, experiential knowledge is needed. Participants had the chance to practice them when presenting content course and quotes. They realized these practices were useful. Yasmin's words illustrate this.

*Yasmin (1) 2: When I have to pass to the front of the class to explain it I do not what happen with me but I feel so nervous. After this I start feeling ok.*

2. The teacher should create a relaxed atmosphere to enhance learners to make effective presentations and receive feedback on their works.

It is important to create a relaxed atmosphere to motivate learners to learn a language (Moskowitz, 1978). I have also found that this is true for encouraging learners to make presentations in courses and learning from them. Even though participants were pre-service teachers almost finishing their major, they still got nervous when giving presentations in the Research Seminars. Yasmin explains this by saying,

*Yasmin (1) 4: I feel nervous of presenting my introduction but during the class I feel ok with the comments that my classmates gave me, the comments were really goof in order that I can improve a little more my introduction also with the comments that you gave me ....*

3. Prepare a presentation before giving it.

Lukey-Coutsocostas & Tanner-Borgia (1998, p. 34) suggest speakers to take action about the following areas when giving a presentation: fears, planning, title,



equipment, delivery, evaluation and feedback. Furthermore, Powell (2002, p. 2) recommends speakers to 'leave nothing to chance' in order to make a successful presentation. Julian's words illustrate this point.

*Julian (2) 4: This week I felt worried about my presentation because I had not devoted much time in preparing it. I began preparing it last night.*

Table 10b. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>giving and receiving peer feedback</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
3.	I can learn from my classmates work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 4</li> </ul>
8.	Reading our peers' work to identify their strengths and weaknesses can help us improve our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 9</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 9</li> </ul>
9.	It is risky to give our peers feedback of their work because they can get hurt especially if it is given rudely, you have to look for a polite way to give it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 8</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 9</li> <li>• Paula (1) 11</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (1) 4, 8</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 7</li> </ul>
11.	The process of thesis defence may start when discussing feedback with peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 12</li> </ul>
37.	We learned how to give positive feedback to our classmates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 8</li> </ul>
38.	We learned that in order to benefit from peer feedback we need to be open to criticism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 8</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 7</li> </ul>
43.	Giving peer feedback is important because we can help them to improve their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 9</li> <li>• Paula (1) 13</li> </ul>
50.	We learned how to give peer feedback analyzing strengths, weaknesses, questions, suggestions and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 12</li> </ul>

	comments.	
60.	Peer feedback allowed us to see our weak points and improve our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3, 13; (2) 7</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 7, 8</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4, 9; (2) 13</li> </ul>
61.	Peer feedback allowed me to see different writing styles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 11</li> </ul>
62.	Giving peer feedback allowed me to identify writing problems in my peers' work. This can be used to improve their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3, 11</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 9, 13</li> </ul>
63.	Reviewing my classmates work taught me writing skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3, 11</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 8</li> </ul>
65.	Reviewing my classmates work caused some confusion and questioned my beliefs about academic writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 8</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 11</li> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
70.	Not all students that reviewed my work gave me their feedback and I could not understand why.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3</li> </ul>
71.	Receiving peer feedback was good due to the fact that they either question or reinforce our beliefs about our works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3</li> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
77.	My classmate gave me feedback about the length of a section.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 10</li> </ul>
84.	Receiving positive feedback from my classmates gave me confidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 6</li> </ul>
85.	It is good to exchange e-mail addresses with my peers to increase peer feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 6</li> </ul>
94.	I enjoyed reading some classmates' work, especially when I liked their topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 13</li> </ul>
95.	By reviewing my classmates' work I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 13</li> </ul>

	was able to learn from well written papers.	
105.	It was difficult to give peer feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 7</li> </ul>
114.	Reading my classmates work raised my awareness about expressing my voice in the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
115.	Reflecting about giving feedback I realized that I did not like the activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
116.	It is wise to separate friendship when giving peer feedback to make the best of it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
127.	I don't like to receive comments at times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 7, 8</li> </ul>
128.	It was difficult to read my classmates' work due to the lack of knowledge about their topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 7</li> </ul>
129.	I doubt that my classmates read my work to give me feedback. I don't agree with their feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 8</li> </ul>
130.	Giving peer feedback was obligatory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> </ul>
131.	Through giving peer feedback I discovered that some works had just a collection of direct quotations due to bad time organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> </ul>
132.	The papers I reviewed lacked coherence and cohesion. They also had spelling, punctuation and minor grammatical errors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 11</li> </ul>

Table 10b. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars* but in this case in relation to *peer feedback*. Thirty beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to four

problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10bps.

Table 10bps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>giving and receiving peer feedback</i> presented on Table 10b.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of expertise in thesis writing</i> (27).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learn from my classmates' work (3, 61, 63, 95, 114).</li> <li>2. Read and give feedback to peers (8, 62, 94).</li> <li>3. It's good to receive peer feedback to improve our work (8, 11, 43, 60, 62, 71, 77, 131, 132).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Getting hurt when receiving peer feedback</i> (9, 127).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giving it politely (9).</li> <li>2. Giving positive and balanced feedback (9, 50, 81).</li> </ol> <p>Third problem: <i>Not benefiting from peer feedback; not agreeing with it</i> (115, 129, 130).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be open to criticism and separate friendship from peer feedback (38, 116).</li> </ol> <p>Fourth problem: <i>Lack of expertise giving feedback</i> (115, 130).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Practice revision. Also do it via e-mail (8, 85).</li> <li>2. Learn from the teacher (37, 38, 50).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 10bps.

First problem: Lack of expertise in thesis writing.

From my previous experience as thesis supervisor, I was aware of the fact that novice thesis writers want and need feedback as stated by Fathmen & Whalley,

(1990, p. 180). As a result, these scholars also point out that “teachers feel obliged to provide it”. However, reflecting on my previous experiences teaching the Research Seminars, I tried to see teaching and learning differently as suggested by Li (1991, p. 11). Thus, I decided to incorporate peer feedback as Tsui (1996, p. 105) proposes. Participants viewed this activity as useful to overcome their lack of expertise writing their thesis. They mentioned three solutions which are discussed next.

#### 1. Learn from my classmates’ work.

Hedge (1988, p. 156) suggests learners to reflect on their needs and problems in writing. One of these suggestions is to see other students writing. Participants reported having learned from reading their classmates’ work. Yasmin’s comment explains this.

*Yasmin(1) 13: I learn about self access center and the role of the facilitator. I enjoyed reading chapter II, it was well developed. It was well structured.*

#### 2. Read and give feedback to peers.

Chaudron (1984 cited in Hyland, 2000, p. 35) mentions that when students review each other’s work they can “perceive that other students experience the same difficulties in writing”. This can lead to foster confidence and facilitate learning. Besides, as pointed out by Leki (1990 cited in González & Roux, 2007, p. 55), students that provide feedback acquire the critical skills that they need to revise their own writing. Paula’s comment illustrates this point.

*Paula (1) 3: I also liked my classmates work, it was so interesting to see how they introduced their works, there were good works and there were works that need to be worked a little bit more.*

3. It's good to receive peer feedback to improve our work.

According to Tsui (1996, p. 113), peer feedback contributes to create a safe and supportive environment. She reports a study where students enjoyed getting peer feedback on their drafts. Some participants of this study also valued as positive receiving peer feedback. Nancy's words show this.

*Nancy (1) 7: Our work was reviewed by my classmates in class. It is always good to receive comments from other people. Especially if we consider those comments as good criticism in order to improve what we did.*

Second problem: Getting hurt when receiving peer feedback.

González & Roux (2007, p. 55) mention that is difficult to work with peer feedback in EFL classrooms. Participants noticed this problem and proposed two solutions. The problem is described by Marisol.

*Marisol (1) 12: I was told that some persons in the group did their review in a rude way, which I think, instead to motivate our classmates to improve their work, they feel bad about those comments.*

1. Giving it politely.

Frodesen (1995, p. 341) argues that peer reviews need to be carefully structured. I provided specific guidelines to my students to provide peer feedback. They were supposed to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the work reviewed and if they wanted they could ask questions, provide suggestions and make comments to their peer's work. However, some students provided feedback rudely. This is why Paula proposes this solution.

*Paula (1) 11: I think that we should help our classmates instead of making them feel bad.*

## 2. Giving positive and balanced feedback.

To avoid students to focus too much on surface aspects of writing as stated by González & Roux (2007, p. 55), I trained learners to give balanced feedback starting with positive comments. Marisol's words illustrate this.

*Marisol (1) 12: We did peer evaluation, focusing on strengths, weaknesses, questions and comments.*

Third problem: Not benefiting from peer feedback; not agreeing with it.

Participants reported some issues in receiving peer feedback. As mentioned before, González & Roux (2007, p. 55) note that "peer feedback faces challenges in its application". Participants provided a solution to this problem.

### 1. Be open to criticism and separate friendship from peer feedback.

Frodesen (1995, pp. 340-341) notes that peer response encourages students to "view their writing critically and to see how different perspectives can inform their work, even if they do not agree with their reviewers". Participants experienced this and reflected on these issues. Julian's thoughts relate to this.

*Julian (1) 8: I felt I could threat him with my comments and cause him being angry. The same happened with criticizing my other classmates' papers... She gave a wise comment, we have to separate friendship from work if we want our works to be improved.*

Fourth problem: Lack of expertise giving feedback.

Tang & Tihecott (cited in González & Roux, 2007, p. 55) note that students sometimes do not feel skilful enough to provide helpful comments to their peers. Participants provided two solutions to this problem that are explained next.

### 1. Practice revision. Also do it via e-mail.

Revising their own writing or their peers was not an easy task for learners. This can be facilitated by “giving students opportunities to exchange papers with peers and provide feedback” (González & Roux, 2007, p. 55). If this is done students will learn through experience (Dewey, 1938). Participants noted this and suggested also the use of e-mail to increase peer feedback. Yasmin’s words illustrate this.

*Yasmin (1) 6: ... I receive good comments of my classmates. They told me that it was good introduction... also we exchange e-mailto for exchanging info and receiving feedback.*

## 2. Learn from the teacher.

Feedback on students writing has traditionally been given by the teacher.

Responding to students writing is linked to the role the teacher is playing in the process (Leki, 1990, p. 59). Participants learned from the teacher to give feedback to their classmates by following a format provided by her that included a report of both positive and negative aspects of the work reviewed. This is explained by Marisol.

*Marisol (1) 12: We did peer evaluation, focusing on strengths, weaknesses, questions, suggestions and comments.*

Table 10c. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>the movies</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
4.	Movies related to the topic of the course can make students learn from them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 4</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 5</li> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
28.	The analysis of the movie in teams allowed us to see the application of its content to our lives, classroom work and our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 4</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 5</li> </ul>



29.	The movie taught us not to judge a person by his/her physical appearance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 5</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
30.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' taught us to take advantage of our skills and to consider them as a gift that has to be used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 5</li> </ul>
32.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' was excellent for the course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 4</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 5</li> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> <li>• Paula (1) 4</li> </ul>
73.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' taught us to write our first draft with the heart and the last one with our head.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 4</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 5</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
83.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' was a relaxing activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 5</li> </ul>
107.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' taught me that we need sometimes a mentor to guide us in the process to accomplish our goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
108.	The movies 'Finding Forrester' motivated and made me reflect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
109.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' taught me the importance of our work to achieve goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
124.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' will help us write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
125.	The movie 'Finding Forrester' highlighted the importance of friendship and the family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 5</li> </ul>
134.	The movie 'Pay it forward' has messages for our life, our thesis and our major.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 1</li> <li>• Paula (2) 1</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 1</li> </ul>
141.	The movie 'Pay it forward' was about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 1</li> </ul>

	helping people.	
142.	The movie 'Pay it forward' motivates us to help everyone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 1</li> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>
143.	The movie 'Pay it forward' had a sad and unexpected end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 2</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 2</li> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>
146.	It was a good idea to start the course with the movie 'Pay it forward'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1</li> </ul>
148.	The movie 'Pay it forward' was a good movie.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1</li> <li>• Paula (2) 1</li> </ul>
152.	The movie 'Pay it forward' made us reflect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 2</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 2</li> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>
153.	The movie 'Pay it forward' made me change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 2</li> </ul>
163.	The movie 'Pay it forward' made me learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 2</li> </ul>
164.	The movie 'Pay it forward' showed me that we need to help each other in order to make a good thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 2</li> </ul>
165.	The movie 'Pay it forward' showed me that we need to make a big effort to achieve our goals, such our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 2</li> </ul>
166.	The movie 'Pay it forward' showed me that we need to collaborate with our partners in order to help each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 2</li> </ul>
170.	Our group conclusion of the movie 'Pay it forward' was that we all have to do something to produce more knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>
171.	Reflecting about the movie 'Pay it forward' made me think that in our thesis we also have a working idea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>

Table 10c. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars* but in this case in relation to *movies*. Twenty six beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to three problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10cps.

Table 10cps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>movies</i> presented on Table 10c.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to use adequate teaching aids to foster learning.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Movies can relax and foster learning; they are good teaching aids (4, 32, 83, 148, 163).</li> <li>2. Movies are a good way to start a course; they motivate students (108, 146).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Courses are usually limited to have a curriculum focusing just on the content of the course.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Movies had applications to classroom work, our thesis and our lives (28, 29, 30, 109, 125, 134, 141, 142, 164, 166, 170).</li> <li>2. Movies made me reflect and made me change (108, 143, 152, 153 162).</li> </ol> <p>Third problem: <i>Lack of expertise in thesis writing.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Movies gave us suggestions to write our thesis; they showed me the importance of collaboration and effort in thesis writing (73, 124, 164, 165, 171).</li> <li>2. The movie 'Finding Forrester' highlighted the importance of having a mentor when learning to write (107).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 10cps.

First problem: Difficulty to use adequate teaching aids to foster learning.

Throughout my teaching career I have used films for various purposes. Similar to what Viñas (2008, p. 20) mentions, I have used them to enhance communication in the EFL classroom and to foster reflection about values. I used two movies in the Research Seminars, 'Finding Forrester' on the first and 'Pay it forward' on the second. Both of them are recommended to teach values by Sottit & Domene (2001, pp. 341, 271). Participants provided two solutions to this problem.

1. Movies can relax and foster learning, they are good teaching aids.

Crawford (2002, p. 87) mentions that materials in the language classroom need to be flexible to cater to the individual and contextual differences. Both movies used in the Research Seminars were chosen taking into consideration the needs of the learners in that specific context to foster learning in a relaxed way. Participants needed this type of teaching aids and they valued them. Paula's comment illustrates this.

*Paula (1) 4: I really liked the movie and I think I got many things from it.*

2. Movies are a good way to start a course; they motivate students.

Crawford (2002, p. 85) mentions that it is difficult to find authentic materials that can be used to scaffold the learning process. I have seen that the movies chosen fulfil those needs. Nancy's and Julian's comments show this belief.

*Nancy (2) 1: I think it was a good idea starting with the movie.*

*Julian (1) 5: What I watched in that movie motivated me even more but also made me reflect on the fact that we have to work by ourselves...*

Second problem: Courses are usually limited to have a curriculum focusing just on the content of the course.

Byram (1999) proposes a model for language teacher education that includes attitudes, knowledge and skills. Limiting courses just to transmit knowledge seems to be teaching an incomplete curriculum. Participants reflected on this problem and suggested two solutions which are described next.

1. Movies had applications to classroom work, our thesis and our lives.

Molinar & Vázquez (2001) argue that teachers need to foster growth on their learners on the following areas: physical, cognitive, spiritual, social and emotional (p. 70).

Movies fostered learning on students' cognitive, social and emotional areas.

Participants described this by saying,

*Yasmin (1) 6: We saw this interesting movie, and we did team work about different aspects of it. We saw things that can be used in our daily life as well as the classroom and our thesis.*

2. Movies made me reflect and made me change.

Reflection leads to change. As Schön (1983, p. 336) mentions, "A reflective teacher would require a learning system that conducts him to continual criticism and restructuring of organizational principles and values". Participants reported this in the words of Paula.

*Paula (2) 2: Well teacher this week was full of reflections because of the movie... The movie has changed some aspects in my daily life and I think they'll bring so much benefits to me very soon.*

Third problem: Lack of expertise in thesis writing.

Wisker (2005, p. 60) mentions that supervising undergraduate research is a challenging task because learners are not used to develop autonomy and also because they need effective scaffolding to develop good research and working habits for the future. Reflecting on these issues, I developed a teaching methodology that would help learners to be more autonomous and to do their thesis with adequate

scaffolding. As part of this methodology I included movies. Participants liked and valued this kind of teaching aids and mentioned two ways in which movies helped them to write their thesis. They are discussed below.

1. Movies gave us suggestions to write our thesis; they showed me the importance of collaboration and effort in thesis writing.

The movies were especially chosen to motivate students and help them reflect on their thesis writing process. This experience enabled them to construct meaning from experience (Sprinthall et al, 1996, p. 689). As a result, they could generate useful information to write their thesis, including suggestions to use social and affective strategies such as cooperation, risk taking and taking charge (Leaver, 1997, pp. 143-144). Participants reported this in the words of Yasmin.

*Yasmin (2) 2: I have learned so much with this movie. ... from this movie I considered 3 possible actions that could help us in this process.*  
*... we need to help each other in order to make a good work*  
*... we need to make a big effort in order to achieve our goals*  
*... we need to collaborate with our partners in order to help each other.*

2. The movie 'Finding Forrester' highlighted the importance of having a mentor when learning to write. The job of the writing teacher is to help learners express their ideas (Tsui, 2003, p. 243). In order to reach this goal especially when writing a thesis, students need a mentor who can design adequate scaffolding to develop a good piece of research and working habits (Wisker, 2005, p. 60). Participants became aware of the importance of a mentor in learning how to write after watching the movie 'Finding Forrester'. Julian's words illustrate this.

*Julian (1)5: The greatest lesson of this film for me was that we sometimes need someone that pushes us to the unknown and that guide us to accomplish what we are looking for.*

Table 10d. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>humanistic activities</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
5.	Humanistic activities can help learners to relax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 7</li> <li>• Carmen (1) 7</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>
57.	The humanistic activity taught me to have patience and control myself when being stressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> </ul>
74.	This activity made me feel confident; to trust myself I can write my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7</li> </ul>
75.	The humanistic activity encouraged us to keep on working in spite of the problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> </ul>
76.	This activity taught me that I cannot give up writing my thesis and that at the end it will be worthy, we will be proud of ourselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 6</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>
87.	The purpose of the activity was to relax in order to be in peace with ourselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7</li> </ul>
88.	The humanistic activity taught me that some things are difficult but not impossible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7</li> </ul>
111.	The humanistic activity made me feel good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
112.	Carrying out that activity was meaningful for me because it made me feel capable of reaching goals in life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 7</li> </ul>
126.	The aim of the activity was to help us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 6</li> </ul>

	do our thesis.	
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Table 10d. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars*, but in this case in relation to *humanistic activities*. Ten beliefs were found about this topic. They relate to three problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10dps.

Table 10dps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>humanistic activities</i> presented on Table 10d.
<p>First problem: <i>Thesis writing is a stressing activity.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Humanistic activities can help learners to relax and to have patience and control themselves when stressed (5, 57, 87, 111).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Lack of confidence to write a thesis.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Humanistic activities made me feel confident about writing my thesis. They taught me that writing my thesis is worthy (74, 76, 126).</li> </ol> <p>Third problem: <i>Getting discouraged when facing problems.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The humanistic activity encouraged us to keep on working in spite of problems. It taught me that some things are difficult but not impossible. Thus, it made me feel capable of reaching goals in life (75, 88, 112).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 10dps.

First problem: Thesis writing is a stressing activity.



Zorrilla & Torres (1992, pp. 7-8) mention that 95% of the responsibility of writing a BA thesis relies on the student, and the other 5% is the supervisor's. They also mention that most university students are terribly scared of writing a thesis and they try to avoid defending their thesis if the university allows them to graduate through other options (p. 5). Furthermore, undergraduate students, due to their lack of expertise in research and thesis writing may get stressed. Participants reflected on these issues and found humanistic activities useful to reduce this stress. They provided two solutions which are discussed next.

1. Humanistic activities can help learners to relax and to have patience and control themselves when stressed.

According to Christison (2002), the brain downshifts under threat. Thus, it is important to look for ways to relax learners. Humanistic activities are one way of achieving this. As Moskowitz (1978, p. 18) states "a principal purpose of education is to provide learning's and environment that facilitates the achievement of the full potential of students". Participants experienced a humanistic activity and then they reflected about it on their diaries. Their comments are presented below.

*Marisol (1)7: Then we did an activity that made us feel relaxed... I think it was the comparison between writing the thesis and climbing a mountain...*

*Nancy (1)6: I can tell that it is a good way of relax people when they're stressed. I learned that we must have patience and try not to lose control, when we think we are stressed.*

Second problem: Lack of confidence to write a thesis.

Due to the lack of expertise, students lacked confidence to write their thesis. They were encouraged to apply affective strategies such as risk taking (not being concerned about taking mistakes), keeping a diary (electronic dialogue diaries),

positive thinking (having a positive attitude) and taking charge (being responsible for one's own learning) as suggested by Leaver (1997, pp. 143-144). Participants found a solution to this problem.

1. Humanistic activities made me feel confident about writing my thesis. They taught me that writing my thesis is worthy.

Students had to take the risk and write their thesis. I tried to build a climate of acceptance and support as suggested by Moskowitz (1978, p. 30). I adapted an activity called 'The object is me' designed by Moskowitz (1978, pp. 189-191) to make students feel confident and to trust themselves they could write their thesis. That activity is a *fantasy journey* where students imagine a trip to other place. 'The object is me' takes learners to visit a castle where they choose an object, and the object represents the student. I modified it to take them to climb a mountain. In this activity they begin climbing the mountain and in the middle of the mountain they get lost and find an old man who shows them the way to the summit. When they get there, they are tired but satisfied and proud of themselves. Participants were asked to reflect on the purpose of the activity and answered the following.

*Paula (1)6: I think that the purpose of the activity was to make us feel confident and trust ourselves that we can do it. ... At the end of it, we'll be PROUD of ourselves.*

Third problem: Getting discouraged when facing problems.

Writing their thesis required learners to solve problems due to their lack of expertise in this task (Zorrilla & Torres, 1992, p. 8) Participants reflected on this and suggested one solution.

1. The humanistic activity encouraged us to keep on working in spite of problems. It taught me that some things are difficult but not impossible. Thus, it made me feel capable of reaching goals in life.

Undergraduate students find difficult to write a thesis. As they will face many problems they need adequate scaffolding (Whisker, 2005, p. 60). Participants experienced problems writing their thesis, eg. finding adequate sources. The humanistic activity encouraged them to keep on working on their thesis in spite of these problems. Yasmin's and Julian's comments illustrate this.

*Yasmin (1)7: I learn that sometimes things are difficult but not impossible.*

*Julian (1)5: Carrying out that activity was meaningful for me because just a day before I had learned what I wanted and that activity made me feel capable of doing that.*

Table 10e. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>metaphors</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
6.	Metaphors are useful teaching techniques to help learners understand the content of a subject.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 7</li> <li>• Paula (1) 8</li> </ul>
56.	The use of metaphors was interesting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 6</li> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>
68.	The teacher's explanation using metaphors clarified her expectations about the course and helped me to set clear expectations about my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> </ul>
99.	I learn easily with metaphors and I remember them over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 2</li> </ul>
103.	Metaphors were motivating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 2, 3</li> </ul>

Table 10e. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars*, but in this case in relation to *metaphors*. Five beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants' solutions to these problems are shown on Table 10eps.

Table 10eps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about metaphors presented on Table 10e.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty in understanding and learning the content of a school subject.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Metaphors are useful techniques to help students learn and remember information over time (6, 99).</li> <li>2. The teacher explanation with metaphors clarified her expectations about the course and helped me to set clear expectations about my thesis (68).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Lack of motivation when taking Research Seminars.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The use of metaphors was interesting and motivating (56, 103).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 10eps.

First problem: Difficulty in understanding and learning the content of a school subject. Helping pre-service teachers to write a thesis is a challenging task. Supervisors are looking for ways to improve their lessons and motivate their students. In that search I began using metaphors both in language courses as in Research Seminars. I have found that they are useful teaching techniques. Participants confirmed this belief.

1. Metaphors are useful techniques to help students learn and remember information over time.

“From the perspective of Vygotskian theory, individuals develop personal meanings through being engaged in social practices. ... Meanings can be clearly perceived when they are clearly and consistently presented” (Van Huizen et al, 2005, p. 281). Metaphors are one way to present meanings in a clear way. I used metaphors and students found them useful to understand course content. Paula’s words illustrate this.

*Paula (1)8: ... I like that you give many examples based on meals, places, etc. That make me realize or find out the way to keep working on my thesis... please bring more of those to class...*

2. The teacher explanation with metaphors clarified her expectations about the course and helped me to set clear expectations about my thesis.

“Expectations seem to emerge simultaneously from and give origin to social environments, a framework which in turn shapes and bind expectations together” (Méndez, 2008, p. 2). That is, teacher and students expectations arise in the same social context and their existence occurs simultaneously. The use of metaphors allowed the students to understand the teacher expectations and students also clarified their expectations in regards to their BA thesis. Paula explains this in her first diary entry.

*Paula (1)1: Later you explained what the thesis was about... I loved the ‘food’ and thesis comparison, it made me have in clear what you expect from me and what I want to get from my thesis.*

Second problem: Lack of motivation when taking Research Seminars.

Language learners and thesis writers need to be motivated to learn. Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 148) suggest that there are two types of motivation: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental relates to needing language as an instrument to achieve other purposes. Integrative refers to wishing to integrate into the activities or culture of another group of people. Participants seemed to lack both, especially regarding the Research Seminars. That is, they were not motivated to learn how to write their thesis because most of them did not have to defend it to obtain the degree, so, they lacked instrumental motivation. On the other hand, at the beginning of the course they were not aware of the fact that writing their thesis could be used to integrate

them in the professional field. I noticed that and explained this to them using metaphors. However, they suggested a solution to this problem that is explained next.

1. The use of metaphors was interesting and motivating.

Watters & Diezman (1998, p. 75) note that constructivist teachers need to explicate prior knowledge linking ideas and to scaffold learning. Metaphors are an effective way to link previous knowledge with the new one. As explained by Cole (1990 cited in Jaatinen, 2007, p. 27) “metaphors provide a way of carrying ideas and understandings from one context to the other...” When learners understand the meaning of metaphors they feel motivated. The words of Julian and Nancy illustrate this.

*Julian (1)2: ... the examples the teacher uses are motivating.*

*Nancy (1)6: ... it is really interesting how we can compare the situation we are living right now with the thesis with climbing a mountain.*

Table 10f. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>group work</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
7.	Working in groups can allow learners to become aware of the feelings and needs of other learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 8</li> </ul>
44.	Getting in groups of students with related topics allowed us to share readings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 9</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 10</li> <li>• Julian (1) 14</li> </ul>
45.	Group work allowed us to share what we have learned writing our thesis and learn from each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 9, 11; (2) 6</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 10</li> </ul>
48.	Sharing our points of view in group work was a good and thoughtful process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 7</li> <li>• Marisol (1) 11</li> </ul>

80.	Working in groups allowed me to learn course content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4</li> <li>• Marisol (2) 2</li> </ul>
89.	Group work made me feel comfortable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 8, 9, 11; (2) 3</li> </ul>
90.	Group work can help us to get more ideas than working alone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 1, 9; (2) 6, 10, 13</li> </ul>
144.	Group work allowed us to share our reflections about the movie.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 2</li> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>

Table 10f. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars* but in this case in relation to *group work*. Eight beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10fps.

Table 10fps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>group work</i> presented on Table 10f.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of awareness of the feelings and needs of other learners.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working in groups can allow learners to become aware of the feelings and needs of other learners. It made me feel comfortable (7, 89, 144).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Lack of expertise in thesis writing: difficulty to get readings and ideas for thesis.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Getting in groups of students with related thesis topics allowed students to share readings, ideas and to learn from each other (44, 45, 48, 90).</li> <li>2. Working in groups allowed me to learn course content (80).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 10fps.

First problem: Lack of awareness of the feelings and needs of other learners.

According to Moskowitz (1978, p. 14) “affective education is effective education”; that is, we as language teachers need to work with the affect of our students. Participants reflected on this and suggested a solution.

1. Working in groups can allow learners to become aware of the feelings and needs of other learners. It made me feel comfortable.

Moskowitz (1978, p. 14) argues that affective education relates to helping learners develop and maintain good relationships, show concern and support for others and receive this as well. Group work was an effective technique to foster affective education. Carmen’s comment illustrates this.

*Carmen (1)8: Well, during the last activity we share our feelings and attitudes with some classmates, we find that at least 2 of our classmates are not feeling good with their topic and they feel frustrated...*

Second problem: Lack of expertise in thesis writing: difficulty to get readings and ideas for thesis.

Borg (2006a, p. 24) notes that “most teachers have not had a sound research education”. If this is true for in-service teachers, pre-service teachers also lack this preparation. Participants found two solutions to this problem which are discussed next.

1. Getting in groups of students with related thesis topics allowed students to share readings, ideas and to learn from each other.

Borg (2006a, p. 26) mentions that it is advisable to have opportunities to collaborate with other teacher researchers and to discuss the research with others. Participants also found useful performing these activities as it can be seen on their comments.



*Paula (1)9: Well, the last class that we had last week, it was pretty cool. I found a classmate who I talked to had checked some books that talk about some aspects of my thesis. I also shared with her some books that could help her. I hope we can do it again so I help others and others help me.*

2. Working in groups allowed me to learn course content.

Group work is a recommended activity in a constructivist methodology. As Scholnik et al (2006, p. 17) mention, "In constructivist learning environments, group discussion is considered critical for understanding". Yasmin explains this by saying,

*Yasmin (1)4: I was a little worried about my first chapter because I haven't finished it, but during the class I feel ok working with my classmates about the steps that we have to follow in order to make a good introduction...*

Table 10g. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>the role of the teacher in the course</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
10.	The teacher of the course should provide guidance to his/her learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 11</li> </ul>
12.	Our course was well conducted with an adequate pace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3</li> <li>• Carmen (1)13</li> </ul>
13.	The teacher made a special effort to make the course successful in spite of the pressure of her doctoral studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 13</li> </ul>
14.	The teacher was always smiling and transmitting peace to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1)13</li> </ul>
16.	There were no weaknesses in this course because we had a very good teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 13</li> <li>• Paula (1) 13</li> </ul>
31.	To exploit our skills we may need a person to guide us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 5</li> </ul>
33.	The questions given by the teacher helped us to evaluate our research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 6</li> </ul>

34.	These questions can guide us to write Chapter 2 and to make our research different from others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 6</li> </ul>
36.	The teacher gave a good explanation of the factors involved in our TOEFL scores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 7</li> </ul>
40.	The teacher's welcome words made me feel great.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1</li> </ul>
41.	The teacher taught us the different ways to write a paragraph depending on the country where it is written.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 9</li> </ul>
53.	The teacher always made right and appropriate comments to bring me up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 1</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 3</li> </ul>
55.	The teacher asked us to write a specific number of pages per chapter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 5</li> </ul>
59.	The teacher of the course reminded us about deadlines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 3</li> </ul>
69.	The teacher guided us effectively to start from a general idea and then get to our focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 2</li> </ul>
82.	Teacher's feedback was very useful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 4</li> <li>• Julian (1) 10</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 6</li> </ul>
86.	Not all teacher explanations were clear for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 6; (2) 7</li> </ul>
93.	The teacher provided useful information to write the thesis chapters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 12; (2) 4</li> </ul>
97.	The teacher gave us help and motivation to finish the course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 14</li> <li>• Carmen (2) 6</li> </ul>
98.	This course taught me things that are going to be useful for me in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 14</li> </ul>
100.	The teacher assigned useful readings that made me aware of my learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 2, 11, 12</li> </ul>

	process and strategies.	
102.	The methodology used motivates me and makes me happy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>
110.	The questions provided by the teacher can help us analyze the information and help us do our Literature Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 6</li> </ul>
113.	The classroom atmosphere encouraged me to express my thoughts freely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 8</li> </ul>
120.	It is important to follow the teacher suggestions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 12</li> </ul>
123.	It was very important to have an experienced teacher and researcher to guide us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 1, 2</li> <li>• Nancy (2) 4</li> </ul>
132.	Listening to the difficulties you faced when writing your thesis showed me to be strong in spite of the problems that life presents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 12</li> </ul>
133.	I learned a lot from you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 12</li> </ul>
138.	The teacher recognised our effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 5, 6</li> </ul>
139.	I am pleased of having this teacher who is good as a person and as a guide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 5</li> </ul>
140.	The teacher asked us to give her our birthday and to describe our personal situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 1</li> </ul>
151.	I value the time the teacher has shared with us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 6</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 6</li> </ul>
154.	The teacher helped us to find information about our instrument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 2</li> </ul>
155.	The teacher gave us quotes. I expect them to be interesting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 2</li> </ul>
161.	The environment of the classroom is pleasant. I feel comfortable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 1, 4-10</li> </ul>

168.	The teacher's explanation was clear and useful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 12, 14</li> </ul>
183.	The teacher's explanation made me reflect about professional development and learner independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 5</li> </ul>

Table 10g. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars*, but in this case in relation to *the role of the teacher of the course*. Thirty seven beliefs were found about this topic. They relate to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10gps.

Table 10gps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>the role of the teacher in the course</i> presented on Table 10g.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of expertise in thesis writing.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher guidance and feedback is needed to exploit our skills, produce and evaluate our work. Thus, the teacher needs to be a good one: an experienced teacher and researcher (10, 16, 31, 33, 34, 41, 69, 82, 86, 93, 110, 120, 123, 132, 133, 139, 151, 154, 168).</li> <li>2. To help us write our thesis, a well prepared course with good time organization is needed (12, 13, 55, 59).</li> <li>3. The teacher of the course should have a positive attitude and should encourage learners and treat them kindly (14, 36, 40, 53, 97, 10, 138, 139).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Course content only concentrated on thesis writing, not promoting professional and personal growth.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The course content can be useful not only to write my thesis but also for</li> </ol>

my present and future academic, professional and personal development (98, 100, 102, 113, 140, 155, 161, 183).

Discussion Table 10gps.

First problem: Lack of expertise in thesis writing.

Zorrilla & Torres (1992, p. 8) note that 75% of the students that start writing a thesis do not finish it due to their lack of expertise. Participants were aware of this lack and looked for solutions. They found three that are described next.

1. Teacher guidance and feedback is needed to exploit our skills, produce and evaluate our work. Thus, the teacher needs to be a good one: an experienced teacher and researcher.

Participants provided this solution, which is discussed by Borg (2006a, p. 24). He points out that “teacher research, at least initially, will often need to be scaffolded by a more experienced and skilled individual”. Marisol’s and Pedro’s words mention this.

*Marisol (1)5: ... we should take advantage of our abilities and skills and consider them as a gift. But that gift is useless unless we use it. Sometimes we need someone who guide us.*

*Pedro (1)12: This is a hard process that I faced in this turn. Even though, I learned a lot from you...*

2. To help us write our thesis, a well prepared course with good time organization is needed.

It is necessary to have knowledge and skills to conduct research (Borg, 2006a, p. 24). But also time organization is crucial when writing a thesis (Muñoz, 1998, pp. 139-140). The research Seminars were especially designed to meet these learner needs. Paula’s comment describes this.

*Paula (1)3: I also want to tell you that today you said we are ‘walking slowly’ in relation to*

*the thesis but let me tell you that I think 'we are running' in comparison to other groups that are working in their thesis too.*

3. The teacher of the course should have a positive attitude and should encourage learners and treat them kindly.

Donato (1994, p. 37) argues that “the experienced individual is often observed to guide, support and shape actions of the novice who, in turn, internalizes the expert’s strategic process”. Learners need to be guided gently, so they feel that their guide is a full person, in this way they would be encouraged to learn. In other words ‘care about students and share our wisdom’ (Moskowitz, 1978). Nancy’s words illustrate this.

*Nancy (1)3: Something funny is that you always say the phrase just in the right moment to bring me up.*

Second problem: Course content only concentrated on thesis writing, not promoting professional and personal growth.

Teaching pre-service teachers how to write a thesis implies teaching them ‘research education’, that is, knowledge and skills to conduct educational research (Borg, 2006a, p. 24). But I have seen that Research Seminars can be used not only to teach *research education*, but also knowledge and skills that can enhance learners’ academic, professional and personal growth. Participants mentioned it as a solution to this problem. It is discussed next.

1. The course content can be useful not only to write my thesis but also for my present and future academic, professional and personal development.

The methodology used and the course content were aimed to generate academic, professional and personal growth. This was done through quotations, the humanistic

activity, movies and reflection about them in groups and individually through their electronic dialog diaries. As Molinar & Vázquez (2001, p. 70) mention, education should strive to generate learners' growth in academic, professional and personal aspects. Yasmin and Julian mentioned this.

*Yasmin (1)14: I really learned a lot of things that are going to help me in the future.*

*Julian (2)5: I think that an important element in writing our theses and in learning how to become and independent learner is the fact of knowing how to manage our time.*

Table 10h. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the *teaching methodology* in relation to *electronic dialogue diaries*.

No.	Belief	Diary entries
15.	The help of the teacher via e-mail was very important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 13</li> </ul>
149.	It's important to be in touch with the teacher via e-mail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1, 6</li> <li>• Paula (2) 8</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 1, 4</li> <li>• Julian (2) 1-7; 9</li> <li>• Pedro (2) 1</li> </ul>
158.	The e-mail was a good way to ask the teacher questions about my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 5, 8</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 8, 9, 13, 14</li> <li>• Pedro (2) 4</li> </ul>
159.	I appreciate the time the teacher spends reading my diary entries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (2) 3, 6</li> </ul>
160.	The e-mail was a good way to send part of my thesis to be reviewed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (2) 5</li> </ul>
184.	Diary enters were only aimed to report the progress of my thesis work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 7</li> </ul>
185.	It is good to confirm the teacher the reception of her mail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> </ul>
187.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be used to ask the teacher to help me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (2) 3</li> </ul>
188.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (2) 3</li> </ul>

	used to discuss student's plans for their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 7</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 6</li> </ul>
189.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be used to narrate the problems faced when writing a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 9</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 1</li> </ul>
190.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be used to narrate thesis writing progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 8</li> <li>• Pedro (2) 4</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 3-5</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 5, 11, 12, 14</li> <li>• Carmen (2) 3-5</li> <li>• Marisol (2) 3, 5-7</li> </ul>
191.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be used to report the product of group work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (2) 4</li> </ul>
192.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be used to analyse course organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy (2) 2</li> </ul>
193.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be used to express my concerns about the process of thesis writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 3-12, 14</li> </ul>
194.	Electronic dialogue diaries can be used to give my opinion about course methodology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most entries</li> </ul>

Table 10h. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars*, but in this case in relation to *electronic dialogue diaries*. Fifteen beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10hps.



Table 10hps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>electronic dialogue diaries</i> presented on Table 10h.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack or expertise in thesis writing.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The help of the teacher via e-mail was very important to ask questions about my thesis report my progress and send parts of my thesis to be reviewed (15, 149, 158, 159, 160, 184, 185, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191,193).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Difficulty to obtain feedback about the course.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diaries can be used to analyse course organization and methodology (192, 194).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 10hps.

First problem: Lack or expertise in thesis writing.

Similar to what Borg (2006a, p. 24) mentions, my participants would not “sustain research without initial and continued support from a mentor”. Using technology to receive this support was a reflection that participants explained in two solutions.

1. The help of the teacher via e-mail was very important to ask questions about my thesis report my progress and send parts of my thesis to be reviewed.

Students needed an experienced and skilled mentor to scaffold their research as suggested by Borg (2006a, p. 24). Having twenty three students to guide was a challenging task. Quite often I encouraged them in class to ask questions they had about the thesis writing process and they did not do them in class. But when I opened my e-mail, I could see that many of them used this mean to ask questions about the course and their thesis writing process. As Warschauer (1995, p. 33) notes, it is usually difficult for a student to consult a professor, but “giving your students your e-mail address and letting them know that questions and comments

are welcome is one way of giving them more power to express themselves and communicate with you”.

Carmen’s words point this out.

*Carmen (1)13: Finally, I consider that your personal help via mail is very important.*

Second problem: Difficulty to obtain feedback about the course.

Students are used to receive feedback on their written work (Leki, 1990, p. 59), but they are not used to give peer feedback or to give the teacher frequent feedback about the course. Participants had the chance to give feedback about the course and they explain it in the following solution.

1. Diaries can be used to analyse course organization and methodology.

As mentioned before, electronic dialogue diaries enhance communication between students and their teacher (Waschauer, 1995, p. 33). We learn about the world acting on it and we receive continuous feedback through this interaction. Thus, it is very important to receive feedback and connect it to our actions, give meaning to it in order to learn (Dewey, 1938, p. 68). Receiving continuous feedback from learners can help the teacher to reflect in his action and analyse it as suggested by Schön (1983, p. 26). Participants’ entries gave continuous feedback to the teacher about the course. Sandy’s, Paula’s and Yasmin’s comments are an example of this.

*Sandy (2)2: I feel that this time was to preview our research and continue again with it, but I haven’t had time to do it ...*

*Paula (1)1: ... The first day in your class, I was scared. ... I came to class and you made me feel great. Yes you did. By saying ‘welcome to Mexico’. I felt comfortable in class. Thank you!*

*Yasmin (1)6: I feel a little worried about my outline, but when we were having peer work I feel very nice because they help me to structured my outline. When you were explaining about the literature review I felt a little confused because still I do not*

*know how to begin to write. I hope to learn how to do it for handing a very good*

*Chapter 2.*

Table 10i. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>quotes</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
17.	Too much time was spent on quotes; part of this time should have been devoted to thesis writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (1) 13</li> </ul>
18.	The quotes of the course say only the truth and make us reflect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 3, 11</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 9</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 10</li> <li>• Julian (1) 2, 10</li> </ul>
23.	This course reminded us about the importance and procedure to make quotations in academic writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 3</li> </ul>
24.	This course taught us the importance of watching or listening to the news to learn how to make quotations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 3</li> <li>• Julian (1) 9</li> </ul>
42.	Quotes can be used to foster reflection, discussion and to practice citations in academic writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 9</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 10</li> </ul>
49.	Quotes taught us the importance of taking opportunities and working hard to be successful in life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 12</li> </ul>
52.	Quotes motivated and helped us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 2</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 3, 10</li> <li>• Julian (1) 2, 5, 9</li> </ul>
66.	The quotes of the course gave me confidence and motivated me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 1, 13</li> <li>• Nancy (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (1) 9</li> </ul>
79.	Quotes made me change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> </ul>
91.	The use of quotes to do reflective group work made me feel good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 12, 13</li> </ul>

104.	Quotes taught me to do things in spite of its difficulty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 4</li> </ul>
106.	Quotes have not told us to avoid a negative attitude.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
119.	Reflection from quotes enabled us to do our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (1) 9</li> <li>• Julian (1)10</li> </ul>
121.	Some quotes encouraged me, others were too idealist for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 15</li> </ul>
136.	It was good to involve learners in the presentation of the quotes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen (2) 2</li> <li>• Marisol (2) 3</li> <li>• Sandy (2) 2</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 3</li> </ul>
145.	Quotes made us reflect about life issues and our lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (2) 3, 6, 7</li> <li>• Yasmin (2) 4-7; 9-11</li> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> <li>• Pedro (2) 2</li> </ul>
156.	I chose a quote that was interesting and relevant for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 3</li> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>
166.	I agree with quotes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 5</li> </ul>
167.	I liked quotes, they make me feel good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (2) 11</li> </ul>
186.	Quotes were usually presented before starting the class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedro (2) 2</li> </ul>

Table 10i. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars* but in this case in relation to *quotes*.

Twenty beliefs were found about this topic. They relate to four problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10ips.

Table 10ips. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>quotes</i> presented on Table 10i.
First problem: <i>Lack of balance on time spent on quotes (17).</i>

Solutions:

1. Quotes can be used to reflect and teach course content simultaneously (42).

Second problem: *Course limited to transmitting knowledge mechanically, not attitudes or values.*

Solutions:

1. Quotes say the truth and made us reflect about life (18, 49, 145, 166).

Third problem: *Not being motivated or not having the right attitude to write my thesis.*

Solutions:

1. Quotes motivated and helped us, made us change. They taught us to have a positive attitude this is why they were presented at the beginning of the class (52, 66, 79, 104, 106, 119, 121, 167, 186).

Fourth problem: *Teacher-centred teaching in Research Seminars.*

Solutions:

1. It was good to involve learners in the presentation of the quotes. This allowed learners to choose the quotes that were relevant for them (136, 156).

Discussion Table 10ips.

First problem: Lack of balance on time spent on quotes.

According to Brown (1994, pp. 399-400) lesson plans need to have lessons with an adequate pace, that is the activities need to be neither too long nor too short.

However, he argues that timing is one of the most difficult aspects of lesson planning to control. Participants reported a problem in these aspects when working with quotes in the words of Carmen.

*Carmen (1)13: I have heard that some of my classmates think that sometimes us spend too much time about the phrases and less concerning the thesis (maybe because all of us are more worried about the thesis).*

Participants reflected on this and provided a solution which is shown next.

1. Quotes can be used to reflect and teach course content simultaneously.

Students had to learn how to cite authors in their text, especially to write Chapter 2 (Crillo, 2003, p. 108). I used quotes first to make them reflect and grow as professionals and persons, but I also used them to teach them how to quote author's ideas on their texts. However, I admit that I should have controlled a bit more the time devoted to this activity. Marisol's words explain this process.

*Carmen (1)9: We also discussed the phrases and wrote small paragraphs about them practicing quotations.*

Second problem: Course limited to transmitting knowledge mechanically, not attitudes or values.

The BUAP (2007) has proposed a new educational model with an integrative curriculum called Minerva model. The previous model called Fénix, required teachers to develop knowledge skills and attitudes, but it was not fully successful pursuing this goal. Thus, the new model proposes to have an integrated curriculum linking subjects to make students get knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed in his/her major (p. 47). Participants suggested the following solution.

1. Quotes say the truth and made us reflect about life.

What I implemented in the Research Seminars was an integrative approach, linking knowledge and skills with attitudes and values as suggested by the BUAP (2007, p. 47), but within a single subject. Participants mentioned the following solution in the words of Pedro.

*Pedro (2)2: Besides, we listened to some classmates that gave the explanation about the great phrases that we usually reviewed before starting the class... In conclusion these phrases in one way or another help us a lot in order to analyze what we are and what we are doing with our life.*

Third problem: Not being motivated or not having the right attitude to write my thesis.

An important condition to have successful teacher research is to have motivated teachers (Borg, 2006a, p. 23). This was also true for the participants. They found a solution to this problem. It is discussed below.

1. Quotes motivated and helped us, made us change. They taught us to have a positive attitude this is why they were presented at the beginning of the class.

Moscowitz (1978, p. 305) suggests language teachers to use quotes to enhance reflection in the language classroom. Furthermore, Sottit & Domene (2001, p. 10) note that quotes can be used to foster values in schools. Participants mentioned this as a way to motivate them and to have a positive attitude since the beginning of the class.

*Nancy (1)2: ... one more time we started this week with a motivating phrase as usual which really helped me a lot, because I was so tired. This phrase took me up.*

Fourth problem: Teacher-centred teaching in Research Seminars.

Though I was not implementing fully a learner-cantered curriculum my methodology had strong links with experiential learning, humanistic psychology and task based language teaching similar to what Nunan & Lamb (2001, p. 28) suggest about the learning centeredness philosophy. Participants provided a solution for this problem.

1. It was good to involve learners in the presentation of the quotes. This allowed learners to choose the quotes that were relevant for them.

One of the roles of learners in a learner cantered curriculum according to Nunan & Lamb (2001, p. 28) is to develop his/her language skills through the use of the language inside and outside the classroom. Participants not only practiced their oral skills presenting quotes, but also their teaching skills. Besides, they were also

involved in modifying this task, because they were able to choose which content they wanted to present and they selected a quote that they liked, so this was a way to make this activity centred on them. Carmen explains this by saying,

*Carmen (1)13: I also like the way we are going to present the phrases and especially today, I liked the way Julian presented it.*

Table 10j. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>music</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
20.	The course taught us how music can help us learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> </ul>
21.	There is a certain kind of music that has the rhythm of our heart beats and may facilitate learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 2</li> </ul>
101.	It is good to use music to write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 2</li> </ul>

Table 10j. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars* but in this case in relation to *music*. Three beliefs were found about this topic. They relate to one problem. Participants provided one solution to this problem. It is shown on Table 10jps.

Table 10jps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>music</i> presented on Table 10j.
<p>First problem: <i>Difficulty to learn and to write our thesis</i>.</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The course taught us how music can help us learn and to write our thesis, especially baroque music (20, 21, 101).</li> </ol>



Discussion Table 10jps.

First problem: Difficulty to learn and to write our thesis.

According to Dewey (1938) students learn from experience. However, not all experiences are equally educative (p. 25). Learning how to conduct research was a challenging activity for these novice researchers, thus I looked for ways to help them become better learners and as a result better teachers. Participants became aware of my effort and found a solution to this problem.

1. The course taught us how music can help us learn and to write our thesis, especially baroque music.

Suggestopedia is a method that highlights the use of music to facilitate language learning. Lozanov proposed the use of music to relax learners and structured, pace and punctuate the presentation of linguistic material (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 100). I used background music especially to relax learners and to facilitate the reading of academic texts in class. I also recommended them to use it to facilitate learning and thesis writing. Marisol and Julian made a comment about this.

*Marisol (1)2: What we saw on Monday was something I'm familiar with... how music can help us improve our studies.*

*Julian (1)2: In addition, she has provided us with some good advice when she told us to use music as a tool to write our thesis.*

Table 10k. Beliefs found on the diary entries about the <i>teaching methodology</i> in relation to <i>thesis writing</i> .		
No.	Belief	Diary entries
19.	The course taught us the importance of writing a thesis.	• Marisol (1) 1
20.	The course taught us how to write the introductory chapter using a specific format.	• Marisol (1) 2
35.	The course taught us to start the	• Marisol (1) 6

	Review of Literature from a general point.	
39.	In this course I learned that the length of a section is determined by the complexity of its content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 8</li> </ul>
46.	The course taught us the steps involved in the thesis writing process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 11</li> <li>• Yasmin (1) 14</li> <li>• Pedro (1) 10, 12</li> </ul>
47.	The course taught us the importance of motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisol (1) 11</li> <li>• Paula (1) 13</li> <li>• Julian (1) 5</li> </ul>
51.	The explanation of the teacher made us see the thesis from an academic perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 1</li> </ul>
58.	This course taught me a different concept of draft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 7</li> </ul>
67.	By the time we were about to finish the course, we were about to reach its objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (1) 12</li> <li>• Julian (1) 15</li> </ul>
72.	The teaching methodology used facilitated our work writing our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 3, 6</li> <li>• Julian (1) 7, 10, 13</li> </ul>
78.	The teacher taught me that thesis writing is love and commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (1) 12</li> </ul>
96.	I learned that with effort, enthusiasm and attitude we can reach goals such as writing a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin (1) 14</li> </ul>
117.	It is important to follow the conventions of a language when writing a thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 9</li> </ul>
118.	Not all the strategies suggested by the teacher helped me to write my thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (1) 9, 13, 15</li> </ul>
147.	I did not want to start the course with topics related to thesis writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 1</li> </ul>
151.	Finishing the course implies working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nancy (2) 7</li> </ul>

	harder to finish our work.	
157.	I hope that sharing information with my classmates make the writing process easier and faster.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paula (2) 3</li> </ul>
169.	Thinking about the content of this course made me aware of the great amount of work needed to finish our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 2</li> </ul>
172.	The course had tasks to help us write our thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian (2) 3</li> </ul>

Table 10k. presents the beliefs found on the diary entries about *the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars* but in this case in relation to *thesis writing*. Nineteen beliefs were found about this topic. They seem to be related to two problems. Participants provided solutions to these problems. They are shown on Table 10kps.

Table 10kps. A problem-solution approach analysing the beliefs about <i>thesis writing</i> presented on Table 10k.
<p>First problem: <i>Lack of awareness of the importance of thesis writing and lack of expertise to write it.</i></p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The course taught us the importance of writing our thesis and motivated us to do it (19, 47, 51, 78, 96).</li> <li>2. The course taught us the steps, conventions and guidelines to write drafts of thesis chapters, how to polish them and have a timely completion of our thesis (20, 35, 39, 46, 58, 67, 72, 117, 147, 151, 157, 169, 172).</li> </ol> <p>Second problem: <i>Not all the strategies suggested by the teacher helped me to write my thesis</i> (118).</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teaching methodology used facilitated thesis writing (72, 147, 157).</li> </ol>

Discussion Table 10kps.

First problem: Lack of awareness of the importance of thesis writing and lack of expertise to write it.

According to Suárez-Iñiguez (2000, p. 21) the main reason why students do not write their thesis is the fact that their programs do not prepare them to do this task.

Besides, many students choose another option to obtain the degree due to the fact that they are not aware of the value of writing their thesis (Muñoz, 1998, p. 21).

Participants found two solutions to solve this problem. They are presented next.

1. The course taught us the importance of writing our thesis and motivated us to do it.

Writing a thesis is writing a research report (Criollo, 2003). Borg (2006a, p. 23) argues that teacher research has the potential to benefit both teacher's professional growth and teaching practice. But in order to be successful when conducting research, pre-service teachers need to be motivated (Ib.). These issues were discussed in class and participants reflected on them in their diary entries. Marisol's entries illustrate this.

*Marisol (1)1, 11: On Wednesday, the most important thing I learned is the importance of writing a thesis.*

*We saw how important is to be motivated, not only for writing, but for everything we do in life.*

2. The course taught us the steps, conventions and guidelines to write drafts of thesis chapters, how to polish them and have a timely completion of our thesis.

Educational researchers need to have knowledge & skills to conduct research (Borg, 2006a, p. 24). The Research Seminars were aimed to educate students to acquire them using process writing and a constructivist orientation to teaching. As Scholnik,

et al (2006) mention, in a constructivist classroom, the main emphasis is placed “on the strategies employed to obtain the answer (process orientation)” (p. 15). Nancy’s and Pedro’s comments illustrate this.

*Nancy (1)7: This week we worked on our first draft about the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.*

*Pedro (1)10, 12: Well, in this week we just talked about the process of writing the thesis.*

*What I did during the whole course... was to learn to start writing the thesis, Something really complicated because of the little details...*

Second problem: Not all the strategies suggested by the teacher helped me to write my thesis.

Each learner is different. It has different needs, abilities, interests, goals and expectations. Thus, teachers need to look for teaching methods tailored to the needs of the learners (Altman, 1980 cited in Sarwar, 2001, p. 128). I designed a method taking this into consideration. However, this methodology was not successful with everyone, similar to what Kenny (1993, p. 227) reports when implementing investigative research with his students. However, participants found a solution to this problem.

1. The teaching methodology used facilitated thesis writing.

The methodology used was a *constructivist* one, with some elements of *individualization* and of the *learner centred curriculum*. So, I used an approach that had strong links with experiential learning, humanistic psychology and task based language teaching as mentioned by Nunan & Lamb (2001, p. 28). Also, I combined the *process approach* to teach writing which sees drafting as an important element in the writing process with the *product approach*, due to the fact that I asked learners to have a full draft of their thesis at the end of the process. Learners were encouraged to construct their own knowledge and this happened often through their interaction

with peers, experts (authors) and the teacher. In constructivist learning, meaning varies across learners (Schcolnik et al, 2006, p. 15), thus, each learner analysed the teaching methodology used and evaluated its value to help them write their thesis. For some learners the teaching methodology proved to be useful, for others it was partially adequate. Both positions are shown below in the words of Julian and Paula.

*Julian (1)9: Another point that my teacher has been pointing out is the fact that we have to watch the news to learn to report them but whenever I try to find the mechanics they follow I just can't. This is supposed to help us develop our writing in Chapter 2 but I am honest, I cannot analyze them.*

*Paula (1)3: Let me tell you that I think 'we are running' in comparison to other groups that are working their thesis too. I don't mean that it's bad. I just want to recognize your job and Thank you for making me see this work easier!*

This is the end of the discussion of the findings of this study using a problem-solution approach.

### **3.6 Conclusions**

After discussing the findings, the research questions posed at the beginning of this study will be answered through the following discussion.

From all this data it can be said that students experienced the following problems as they expressed them on their diary entries which expressed their beliefs: *lack of awareness of the value of the thesis and lack of expertise and strategies to write it.*

So, it seems that students did see the value of their BA theses neither for themselves nor for the society at the beginning of the process. In the Research Seminars, though, they were told about the value of their thesis as a tool to generate professional development and to generate improvement in the professional field (Ur, 2002). This lack of awareness linked to their lack of expertise in thesis writing generated, especially at the beginning of the course a negative attitude towards the

processes involved in thesis writing: conducting research and doing academic writing.

However, participants' beliefs seem to acknowledge the usefulness of the teaching methodology used to motivate them and to develop learning strategies and personal growth. The methodology was used to address both cognitive and affective needs of learners. The methodology chosen to address cognitive needs included the use of readings, teacher lectures, metaphors, group work, strategy training and scaffolding. Some participants seem to have developed more autonomy and strategies as learners. So, this methodology seemed to be useful to help learners write their theses. Regarding the methodology used to address the affective needs of learners, it can be said that it included the following techniques: reflection through quotes, movies, diaries, group work, humanistic activities and background music. Participant's beliefs seem to have been influenced positively with these activities. They report having experienced personal growth that also helped them to write a draft of their thesis.

#### *Directions for further research and final considerations*

There are two limitations in this study. The first one is that being a case study its findings cannot be generalized, though as it is classroom research it helped to have a generate a better understanding of how these participants learned in this particular subject and with this particular methodology. However, more research in other classrooms can be conducted. More research can be conducted in classrooms to identify strengths and weaknesses of supervisory practice. More case studies with pre-service teachers can be conducted with a similar method and with other methods to compare their findings with the ones of the present study. Also, other case studies

at master's level can be conducted with the same purpose. Another possibility is to follow up the participants of the study in a longitudinal research, in order to research their academic, professional and personal development through interviews, observations, focus groups or even diaries.

The second limitation of this study is the fact that the participants were sending their diaries to the teacher thus, they may be trying to please the teacher. Still, there are some diary entries that do not please the teacher, but they express the learners' beliefs and needs in spite of being sent to the teacher. Also diary studies could be used to identify learning strategies or supervisor's beliefs through dialogue diaries.

But, the objectives of this case study were met. The value of this study is that it describes strategies that can be used to improve both supervisory and thesis writing processes. It is a piece of research that seems to be initiating the research in this area at undergraduate level. It signals the need to conduct more research about supervisory practices by exploring supervisors and student's beliefs.

This study helps to have a better understanding of the process and the issues involved in thesis writing at undergraduate level. Although these findings cannot be generalized, they can serve as a point of departure to research cognitions in supervisory practice in pre-service teacher education programmes.



## **Chapter 4: Study 2**

### **Identification of teacher trainees' beliefs about thesis writing, professional and personal development: A case study with survey research**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to identify the beliefs that pre-service teachers in an EFL teacher education program hold about thesis writing, professional and personal development after finishing their BA theses. These trainees had written their thesis in two consecutive courses, the Research Seminars 1 and 2. The data collection was done through the application of a questionnaire, the Thesis and Professional Development Questionnaire (TAPDQ) that can be seen in Appendix B.

The content of the study is divided in five parts. The first discusses the literature about the use of questionnaires as instruments to collect data in teacher cognition in ELT. The second describes the problems experienced by thesis writers and methods confronting them in the two Research Seminars where the participants wrote their theses. The third describes the study and the fourth discusses its findings. Lastly, the fifth presents the conclusions of the study.

#### **4.2 Questionnaires as instruments in ELT teacher cognition studies**

“Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting among existing answers” (Brown, 2001). Questionnaires are one of the most common instruments to collect data. Nunan (1992) also thinks that graduate students prefer using questionnaires to collect data due to the fact that they believe

they are easy to apply and to score. However, it is important to design carefully the questionnaires that will be used to collect data to avoid confusing or leading questions (Dominguez, 2008, p. 32).

In the area of teacher cognition, questionnaires are considered as self-report instruments together with scenario ratings and tests. Borg (2006b) notes that questionnaires have been widely used to study teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching. Some of them will be discussed next. They were chosen due to their usefulness for the present study. Horwitz (1988) developed the BALLI – Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory-, and it is one of the best known questionnaires in this area of research. It has been widely used in various studies. However, some other studies in the field have used different questionnaires. Some of them are the Foreign Language Education Questionnaire (FLEQ) developed by Allen (2002), and the Teachers' Beliefs about Literacy Questionnaire (TBALQ) developed by Westwood et al (1997). Horwitz (1985, 1988) questionnaire, examines beliefs in 5 areas: difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning communication strategies, motivation and expectations. The BALLI is a Likert scale instrument to study learner beliefs. Both the Foreign Language Education Questionnaire (FLEQ) developed by Allen (2002), and the Teachers' Beliefs About Literacy Questionnaire (TBALQ) developed by Westwood et al (1997) use Likert Scale. Though these questionnaires study different topics than the one of the present research, they were used as key references to develop the Thesis and Professional Development Questionnaire (TAPDQ) for this research. This instrument was developed because no questionnaire was found about thesis writing and professional development in ELT.

### 4.3 An autobiographical reflexive approach

This section describes the problems found in pre-service students when writing their theses at the LEMO as well as the solutions designed to solve them, a major in Modern Languages at the BUAP through an autobiographical reflexive approach.

The approach used to guide the reflection for this section is an *autobiographical reflexive approach* that, as Jaatinen (2007, p. 12) suggests, can help to interpret and understand foreign language teaching-learning processes. This approach focuses on the meaning paradigm. Its purpose is “to describe the subjective world views and changes in them, both for the researcher and the ones to be researched” (Jaatinen, 2007, p. 50). This scholar narrates in her book part of her autobiography as academic that led her to conduct this type of research. In her narrative, she uses the first personal pronoun to narrate her academic life. The autobiographical reflexive approach analyzes lived experiences through language and narration. The following paragraphs include part of my academic autobiography to explain the origins of this study. I did it following Jaatinen’s (2007) model.

I am an experienced teacher -I have been a teacher educator for twenty years- thus, my beliefs about teaching have been shaped by three processes: first, by my ‘apprenticeship of observation’, that is all that I learned as a student observing my teachers (Lortie, 1975, p. 160 as cited in Allen, 2002, p. 519); second by my teacher education and thirdly by my teaching experience of what works best for my students as suggested by Richards & Lockhart (1996, p. 31). Regarding my apprenticeship of observation, I think I had had the chance to have excellent teachers who have treated me as a valuable student and person and these experiences have strongly influenced my beliefs about teaching and learning. Since pre-school, I have been

exposed to a variety of teaching practices and I do have visual images – visual memories- from those early experiences as a student; I also have thoughts and beliefs associated to those visual images. I liked some of these learning experiences and I disliked others. Both images and thoughts have shaped my teaching practices and beliefs: I have taken the features of the ones I consider adequate practices, and I have tried to avoid the ones I consider non- adequate based on my experience as a learner and my own personal values and beliefs.

The second aspect that has influenced my beliefs on teaching and learning has been my formal training and education as a teacher first and then as an English teacher. My education has been on teaching since high school level: I studied first 'Normal Primaria' to be a primary teacher, then I did my BA on Education; then my M.A. was on TESOL and now my Doctoral studies though on Applied Linguistics, continue on the same direction as my M.A.: English language teaching and learning. Throughout these programmes, I have learned and reflected on different topics and issues related to teaching and learning first on mainstream education and then more specifically on teaching and learning languages. Since 1988 I have been a teacher educator at the Autonomous University of Puebla (BUAP) at the Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas (LEMO) a major in Modern Languages that has two areas of specialization: teaching and translation. In these years I have learned how to be a university teacher, a language teacher, a teacher educator and a thesis supervisor. This study refers mainly to this last point. I have been a thesis supervisor since 1995, since that time I have faced some difficulties: I did not know how to help students be motivated to write their theses and to produce a successful and timely completion. These difficulties are similar to the ones reported by Aspland et al (1999). As they mention (p.128), I had minimal experience of supervision when I started supervising

theses in the teacher education program where I work. Little by little I started developing strategies to make my supervising practice more effective, and I also began to identify some problems while doing this work. It has been painful for me to witness how many students after finishing their BA courses did not finish their theses often due to the lack of adequate supervision. Most of the students finishing the coursework at the LEMO who have to defend their theses, take a long time to retake their research in order to defend it, and after making that decision, many of them fail to finish. It is worth mentioning that LEMO students with an average below 8.5 -in a scale from 0 to 10- or students that have failed one or more subjects have to defend their theses when they finish their coursework in order to obtain the degree. Then, as a thesis supervisor I have tried different strategies to motivate students and help them finish their work. The strategies used have helped some of them, but they have not always produced a timely completion (Aspland et al, 1999, p. 129). Thus, the positive consequences for both students and society have been delayed. Through the years of experience as a thesis supervisor, I have found that students are not motivated to write their theses because they have other ways to get their BA diploma. Besides, they do not know how to write a thesis or a research report. Few teachers at LEMO work with the writing skill. As a result, students feel they are not ready to conduct research and write a report such as a thesis, they see it as a very complex task almost impossible for them. Thus, I realized that it is necessary to transform learners in researchers as pointed out by Kenny (1993). Besides, they are scared of defending a thesis because they think that both writing it and preparing for the defence are going to be very difficult processes. In other words, they need a supervisor that helps them believe they can do it and shows them how to do it.

It was in 2001 when I took a Diploma on Supervision and Mentoring of Practicum courses given by two teachers from Warwick University. In it the participants learned about the reflective approach to train foreign language teachers (Wallace, 1991). I reflected on the type of feedback I had been giving to my students. I realized that I had given a lot of 'prescriptive feedback' instead of 'collaborative feedback' (Wallace, 1991, p. 107). Thus, I assessed critically my assumptions, developed a plan of action and began trying out this plan. I realized that my teaching and thesis supervision had been prescriptive and teacher centred, allowing little room for students reflection, engagement and growth. So, I decided to change my teaching and supervisory practices to a more collaborative approach (Ib). I think that the Diploma on Supervision and Mentoring showed me the advantages of applying the reflective model of professional education/development (Wallace, 1991). This model proposes a continuing process of reflection on 'received knowledge' (theory) and 'experiential knowledge' (experience) in the context of professional action (pp. 49, 52, 56). So, applying this model to reflect on my performance as a thesis supervisor, I realized that I had been teaching in a traditional way and I needed to change my teaching methodology. Thus, I began looking for ways to enhance learners' autonomy especially when writing their BA theses. In order to do so, I taught the First and Second Research Seminars –two consecutive courses where students write their BA theses- in a different way. I designed a series of checklists that learners had to use to self-evaluate and edit their own chapters of their theses. I allowed them to have long periods of individual work and I stepped aside. But I discovered afterwards that students did not like the experience as they reported in the teacher evaluation formats. They felt 'abandoned'; they needed more guidance and support in those periods of individual work. As Muñoz (1998, p. 36) states adequate, informed and professional supervision practices may produce excellent results whereas

inadequate supervision practices can make learners lose their motivation to write their theses and as a result produce failure in thesis writing processes. I think that I gave very little importance to the affective factors that are involved in thesis writing as stated by Burns et al (1999). These scholars mention that some students during the supervision process may need supportive teachers who care both about academic and non-academic aspects of their lives. Also, I was not fully aware of the importance of maintaining a good relationship to produce successful results in thesis writing as stated by Hockey (1991). Furthermore, I ignored that continuous feedback both on the process and progress of research could have been highly beneficial due to the fact that it “ensures the development and maintenance of quality student-supervisor relationships and therefore, it improves student completion rates” (Aspland et al, 1999). Also by that time, I taught a course on academic writing to two groups. I found myself then concentrating on the theoretical knowledge base that students needed to do academic writing. Even though I had already started reflecting on the ideal role of a university tutor as a holistic process (Tapia, 2001), I had not thought on effective strategies to transform these espoused beliefs to beliefs in action (Borg, 2001, p. 186) in my teaching. Now I am aware of the fact that the learner should be considered as a whole human being and taught as that, agreeing with Jaatinen’ ideas about the same topic (Tapia & Herrera, 2007, p. 4). As is usual on my courses, I tried to do my best in these academic writing courses, but I just taught my students all the technical elements involved in the writing process with a lot of enthusiasm. I included some affective elements in the course such as telling students that it was very important to write about a topic they were interested in as suggested by Kenny (1993, p. 219). I did this in order to help them become engaged in the activity. At the end of those courses I lived an unpleasant experience. After giving my results to the coordinator, I found out that some students had cheated. This is a problem in writing

practices at the LEMO as reported in Olmos & Tapia (2007). Then I found myself facing a 'disorienting dilemma'- a situation that did not fit my preconceived beliefs- as described by Mezirow (1995). This situation motivated me to reflect and change my teaching practice. I promised myself to start learning and researching how to foster moral values both in my language and content courses.

Then I conducted a study with a colleague that shared the same beliefs about the importance of fostering values in our BA courses. The results of this research were presented in an international conference (Garduño & Tapia, 2003). In this study we found to our surprise that some students of our program did not know what a *value* was. However, most of them agreed on the fact that values should be fostered both at home and at school. After that, I began reading different authors (Díaz-Barriga & Hernández, 2002; Moskowitz, 1978; Sottit & Domene, 2001) and applying some of the techniques suggested by these scholars to foster values such as reading and reflecting on biographies of famous people, watching and reflecting on movies and anecdotes to discover students' values. It was then when I was asked to teach the Research Seminars again. In these courses I wanted to make my learners become active participants and to foster learner autonomy as suggested by Kenny (1993). But I also wanted to help them acquire some moral values and to help them get enough motivation and courage to finish their BA theses. In order to do so, I included systematic reflection through dialogue learner diaries, background music in most of the sessions, humanistic activities, teacher lectures, some individual work, self evaluation and peer feedback in these consecutive courses. At the end of the first course, I administered a questionnaire to them and they reported having found the methodology of the course adequate and effective (Tapia, 2006). Reflecting on the methodology used, I think that it was successful because it was a process where I



gave students both education and training. That is, I taught them the theoretical elements to write their BA theses, and I trained them to use techniques to do so, such as APA format; but I also educated them: I tried to change their beliefs about thesis writing (Deng, 2004). I told them they were ready to write their thesis that it was not very difficult and I also told them to value their work thus; it seems that I transformed some of their beliefs about thesis writing. With the education they received I witness growth in most of them, they found they had things to say (Kenny, 1993, p. 221). This time the results were different. Most of the students (16 out of 18) finished a full draft of their BA theses and I felt satisfied with these results. I think that as I had begun to observe my students carefully and to reflect on the effect on my teaching I began to guide my students towards a better understanding of the processes involved in their learning process (Britt, Irwin, & Ritche, 2001).

After that course I felt that I had begun to discover my individual teaching approach or method that reflected my beliefs, values and experience as stated by Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 251). This is an example of personally evolved theories or sets of beliefs about teaching and learning (Burns, 1992, p. 57) or 'tailor made' methodologies that are generated in 'peripheral countries', that is, third world countries that are not fully developed such as Mexico. These methodologies developed in peripheral countries are derived from years of accumulated experience, wisdom and intuition about what works best for their students (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 140). This methodology has a view of teaching and learning that can keep me focused on the effects of my efforts and perceive 'coherence' between my espoused beliefs and my beliefs in action as suggested by Clarke (2003, pp. 128-129). Then the next time I was given the same courses, I thought it was a good idea to use the same kind of methodology because I had seen its results, so my beliefs about

thesis supervision were shaped by these experiences (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 31). This time I had 23 students. It is worth mentioning that most of the students of this group (16 out of 23) did not have to defend their theses to get their BA diploma. The university gives them the option to obtain the degree just by getting an average of 8.5 or more on their courses, not failing any course and getting a TOEFL score of 550 points on the TOEFL test. So, as I was aware of this situation as well of the importance of motivation at the beginning of the writing process as highlighted by Hedge (1988, p. 21), I looked for teaching strategies to encourage students value and enjoy the process of thesis writing. It was with this group of learners that I conducted my doctoral thesis research from August 2006 to May 2007.

#### *Goals and rationale for the teaching method used*

Based on my students' needs I set four goals for this course. These goals reflect my personal beliefs and were designed to shape my students pre-existing beliefs about thesis writing and professional development. So, I aimed to make my students:

1. Believe that they were prepared to write their theses and that the process was not very difficult.
2. Believe that the research they were going to conduct belonged to them and this fact could make the process easier and more pleasant.
3. Become aware of the importance of conducting and sharing their research to grow both personally and professionally.
4. Commit themselves to finish their theses and by doing this valuing their thesis as a tool to enhance their personal and professional growth.

The rationale as well as the teaching method used to achieve them is described next. Students enter pre-service programmes with pre-existing beliefs and it is important to be aware of this fact (Pajares, 1992, p. 322). There is some evidence that trainee

cognitions do change during teacher education (Sendan & Roberts, 1998; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000). However, in order to encourage students to change their beliefs about the process of thesis writing, I used two strategies: I looked for ways to facilitate their change in status from learners to researchers as suggested by Kenny (1993) and I adopted a constructivist view of teaching and learning in order to foster transformative learning and made them reflect throughout the process (Díaz-Barriga & Hernández, 2002; Mezirow, 1995). So, I tried to teach the Research Seminars as a constructivist teacher looking for ways to act as a mediator between the knowledge and the learning process of the students; be a reflective professional who analyzes his/her teaching practice and takes decisions based on the needs of the learners; analyze his/her beliefs about teaching and learning and is willing to change; promote meaningful learning for students; help learners achieve their goals and promote self-learning and autonomy in the students (Díaz-Barriga & Hernández, 2002, p. 9). I reviewed and tried to improve my teaching methodology with a lot of enthusiasm. Brown's (2002, p. 15) views provided a useful framework to clarify the role of the teacher as a leader of the teaching learning process(es) as well as the importance of presenting teaching techniques in a positive and enthusiastic manner in order to be effective. The strategies applied to implement these changes are explained in the following paragraphs.

As I stated before, many of the learners of this group did not have to defend their theses to obtain their BA degree. This fact lowered their motivation to finish this work and defend it in a professional examination. So, right from the beginning of the course I began talking to them about the relationship between their thesis and professional development. Furthermore, I adopted the three ways in which supervisors and students typically think about supervision as reported by Burns et al

(1999, p. 71). These are the *thesis*, *the professional* and the *person* orientation. As mentioned before, on the *thesis orientation* view, the focus of the supervisor is on helping students produce their thesis in an efficient and academic manner. In order to help students write their thesis, I provided a collection of readings to teach them how to do it, such as Barras (1996), Cresswell (2005), Criollo (2003) and Schmelkes (1998); I even used them to foster reading strategies and autonomy (see Appendix C); I also lectured sometimes and I gave them tasks to make them work in teams. Besides, I supported my students by guiding them and giving feedback on their drafts as they progressed writing their theses, but as I did not want to make the process teacher centred, I also encouraged self-evaluation and I organized frequent peer revision activities. Regarding the *professional orientation*, supervisors see the process as a kind of apprenticeship for induction into academic life. I did this by talking to my students about the importance of thesis writing in their professional and personal development, so I linked the professional orientation with the person orientation. I agree with Deng (2004, p.167) on the fact that “it is necessary to initiate pre-service teachers in a wide range of perspectives that are intrinsically valuable to the teaching profession if they are to become well educated, morally sensitive and highly committed professionals”. I also believe that teacher education programs should strive to generate teacher development. This term is used to describe a process of continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers (Lange, 1990, p. 250); when teachers develop, they become professionals. This is exactly what I tried to do in the two Research Seminars. Wallace (1991, p. 147) claims that teacher education courses should be broadly educative, in terms of the trainee personal and intellectual development, and fully professional, to prepare the trainees for the profession by making them competent to assume their responsibilities and to foster continuing development of its graduates as autonomous

professionals and reflective practitioners. Besides, following the ideas of Eraut (1995, p. 232) I tried to show a moral commitment to serve the interests of students by reflecting on their growth and progress looking for ways to achieve this goal; I reflected on my teaching practice and asked students to reflect on their learning and to interact with their classmates to construct knowledge and learn from each other.

Now, the role of reflection to shape pre-service teacher beliefs and promote professional and personal development is discussed. Richards et al (2003, pp. 41, 47) see change as a major dimension of teachers' professional lives and they considered it as multidimensional and influenced by personal and contextual factors. They claim that both pre-service and in-service teacher education should seek to find ways and opportunities for thoughtful, positive change. Freeman (1989 cited by Richards et al, 2003, p. 47) argues that change does not necessarily mean doing something different it can mean a change in awareness or doing the same thing in a different context. It could be an affirmation of current practice. He also considers change as something that may not be immediate or complete. He states that some changes are quantifiable and that some types of change can come to closure and others may be open-ended.

There were four types of activities that helped students to reflect on their performance in the courses: reflection with quotations at the beginning of each session (Castañeda, 1991; Hernández, 1991); reflecting on movies, group work and dialogue diaries. The purpose to foster reflection with quotations was twofold: first students were reflecting about their own growth process and becoming aware of their own values, as suggested by Rugarcía (1999) and also I used them to teach how to make direct and indirect quotations in texts (see Appendix D). Rugarcía claims that is

necessary to teach and to learn about values. He proposes a methodology where the students learn how to solve problems and make judgements about different situations in life. This can be done when teaching any subject, including foreign languages. This type of activities is related with the learner centred and task based approaches used to teach foreign languages.

Another element of the methodology of the Research Seminars was reflection about movies. I showed my students two to make them reflect on the importance of their projects: one per course (see Appendix E). The movie of the first course was 'Finding Forrester' and the movie of the second course was 'Pay it forward'. 'Finding Forrester' presents the story of a young black man who was born in the Bronx and gets sports scholarship in a prestigious school. He meets a writer who helps him to learn how to write effectively. 'Pay it forward' tells the story of eleven years old boy whose parents are alcoholic. He designs a project in his social science class which motivates people to help three persons and encourage other three to do the same (Sottit & Domene, 2001, pp. 341, 271). I think that these movies helped students to value their thesis and to understand the process of writing. Students liked them and they said that they found positive examples and values in both of them.

Both Díaz-Barriga & Hernández as well as Ferreiro & Calderón (2000) state that cooperative work allows the student to learn attitudes, values, skills and specific knowledge. Then, I used group work to make the learners reflect. Group work also allowed learners to have the chance to listen to each other's thoughts and feelings. Little by little, they began to learn each other's names and to learn what their projects were about.

I also asked learners to reflect systematically about classroom activities and on their individual progress in the dialogue journals where they also expressed their thoughts and feelings. I did this because I wanted my students to develop and to have a conceptual understanding of their practice (Crookes, 2003, p. 113). I also did it because I wanted them to experience 'transformative learning'. Transformative learning is defined by Cranton (1994 cited in Imel 1998, p. 2) as a complex description of how learners construct, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experience. Mezirow (1995) claims that for learners to change their meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes and emotional reaction) they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which may lead to transformative learning. Critical reflection was fostered through learner diaries. Writing a diary benefits learners. As Matsumoto (1996) claims, students become aware of their own L2 learning which helps them to assume full responsibility of their L2 learning process. In those diaries I could see that sometimes they expressed a change in their beliefs as they were experiencing and reflecting on the experience of thesis writing. -A detailed description of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter of the thesis that presents the second study of this doctoral thesis; in this study these dialogue diaries are analyzed in detail-.

The emotional support was also reinforced via my feedback in the dialogue journals. It was especially in the electronic journals that I applied the *person approach* to thesis supervision because I was able to focus on the whole person and to be sympathetic and supportive of academic and non-academic aspects of students' lives (Burns et al, 1999, pp. 71-73). In those journals I answered their questions and provided important information to help them write their theses; I expressed my beliefs by making comments on their thoughts and feelings, and encouraged and supported

them. Also, I was able to monitor the process, not only the product due to the fact that I was able to obtain almost immediate feedback from them. In other words, with these dialogue diaries I lived and I was able to witness all the advantages discussed in one of the papers presented at the 34<sup>th</sup> Mextesol Conference with a scholar who is also doing research analysing electronic dialogue diaries (see Tapia & Herrera, 2007). Some of them are discussed next. Diaries can help both learners and teachers to identify what is personally significant to the learner (Jarvis, 1992, p. 138). They allow the teacher to perform an ongoing needs assessment of the learners and identify issues that need to be discussed in class (Shin, 2003, p. 8). Besides, they help both learners and teacher to reflect on practice (Jarvis, 1992, p. 142).

Also as mentioned before, I adopted a *constructivist* view of learning and teaching and this methodology helped me to implement the *person orientation* view to thesis supervision (Burns et al, 1999, p. 71). Constructivism views learning as a process of knowledge construction. In a constructivist approach, teachers have to provide teaching techniques that support meaning construction and teaching contents need to depart by learners' current understanding and perceptions (Sercu, Méndez, Castro, 2005). Thus, I helped learners discover their meanings and experience personal growth. One of the first issues where I applied this approach was to make my learners believe that they were prepared to write their theses. I was aware of the fact that when learners and teachers meet for the first time, they may bring with them different expectations about the course methodology and the outcomes of it (Brindley, 1984, p. 95). So, I listened to them, I became aware of their lack of confidence in themselves and I could see also that they were not very motivated to write and defend their theses. As Mantle-Bromley (1995) mentions, teachers should be aware that some learners come to the classroom with attitudes and beliefs that



could be harmful for their learning process. So, following Brindley's (1984, p. 95) advice I told my students that even though they may not have all the knowledge and skills to write their theses they could learn to do so, if they had the right attitude. I told this and other important messages through reflective quotations from two books written to pursue personal growth. As I taught them two consecutive courses, I used Castañeda (1991) for the First Research Seminar and Hernández (1991) for the Second Research Seminar. Dewey (1933 cited in Pamplón & Cota, 2007, p. 21) claims that reflection requires students to actively and purposefully participate on their learning. Its effectiveness lies in the fact that students need to become self-aware of his/her weak areas to be able to start working on improving them. So, it is necessary for teachers to directly integrate tasks that guide students in self-awareness and analysis (ibidem). On the other hand, 'empowering' the learners is highly related to Dewey's ideas because it lies to the fact that the only persons that can change things in their lives are the subjects themselves. It is believed that in order to do so, they have to transform their attitudes and beliefs to reach the institutional objectives and as a result reach personal satisfaction (Münch, 2005, p. 67). In the case of thesis writing, it is an 'institutional objective' of the university due to the fact that students have to produce a draft of their theses at the end of the Second Research Seminar. But I tried to make students make this objective theirs, not only belonging to the institution. One of the actions I did to achieve this goal was to tell them about the possibility of sharing the results of their research with other scholars, and to publish their research. I was aware of the fact that most academic researchers recognize that the prospect of publication is a major incentive for conducting a study as stated by Borg (2006a, p. 26). In this way I motivated and tried to empower my students to conduct a piece of research and write their thesis. One strategy that constructivism suggests to help learners empower themselves is the

process of scaffolding. Effective scaffolding has been described by Lepper & Hodeell (1984 cited in Bean & Stevens, 2002, p. 208) as a process that encompasses a number of key features within cognitive and emotional domains.

Cognitive features include:

- a) selecting activities that are challenging but not impossible for students;
- b) monitoring and debriefing their efforts;
- c) using hints and leading questions to develop self-regulation and self-confidence;
- d) using direct instruction, demonstrations and think-alouds;
- e) using a wide repertoire of analogies and metaphors to explain concepts; and
- f) Using indirect hints to suggest that something is wrong with a student's response instead of providing negative feedback.

On the other hand, emotional support includes:

- a) ignoring some errors;
- b) providing a safety net to allow for mistakes;
- c) structuring experiences to prevent failure; and
- d) Creating a cheerful atmosphere.

I followed most of these steps in the Research Seminars, except for think alouds. I consciously made use of metaphors in my lectures to scaffold their learning and illustrate different topics related to thesis writing. An example of metaphor used in the First Research Seminar is provided next. Choosing a main dish from the menu in a restaurant was compared to selecting the topic to conduct research and write their thesis about. In both cases (in a restaurant or in the First Research Seminar) students may want to choose more than one but it is usually difficult to 'eat' that much. Therefore, I suggested them to choose one, the one they liked best and leave others for another occasion.

In order to facilitate their work I also did strategy training on the following types of learning strategies: met cognitive, cognitive, affective and social as suggested by Oxford (2002, pp. 125-126). This scholar presents examples of learning strategies reported in research outside the second language field (Brown et al, 1983; Dansereau, 1985; McCombs, 1988 cited in Oxford, 2002, p. 125). These examples are: organizing, evaluating and planning their learning (metacognitive strategies); analyzing, transferring information, taking notes and summarizing (cognitive strategies) and controlling their emotions, staying motivated (affective and social strategies). I tried to apply them in the Research Seminars to help learners write their theses.

Besides, I was aware that I needed to make changes in my teaching in the following areas: the balance of power, the function of content and my role in the classroom if I wanted to make my teaching more learner centred (Weimer, 2002, p. 95). These changes had to be implemented in a non-threatening classroom climate to facilitate student learning. Fraser et al (1986 cited in Weimer, 2002, p. 101) found that “students do not rate as ideal the common rule-oriented, requirement-driven and teacher controlled classroom”. It is also important to highlight that environments that foster learning are created by action, not by announcement (Ib.) I started creating this supportive environment when I sent an electronic welcome letter to my students. Most of them sent me a prompt answer to my email expressing their surprise because they said they had not received a welcome letter in any of their previous courses. The idea of a welcome letter was taken from Grunert (1997, p. 28). He suggests this technique to help students feel welcome to college courses. The letter I sent was addressed to the whole group of learners. I could see that this type of letter make students feel important for their teacher. Besides, I applied the following

idea in my course “the starting point to analyze the didactic dimension of the educational process is the encounter between the subjects that live the teaching learning processes” (Mendoza, 2003, p. 33). Another key element in creating a learning atmosphere was the use of background music that was chosen to relax my students. The music used was mainly classical and instrumental, though some pop music from the seventies was also used. This element helped me to take into consideration Christison’s (2001) recommendation about the fact that feelings and emotion can determine the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Thus, learning a language should be relaxed and stress free (Turula, 2002, p. 31). Even though my students in the Research Seminars were not only learning the language but conducting research, I knew from experience that this process produces a lot of anxiety to most students. So, I took advantage of music to relax learners and to help them to express their feelings and thoughts as suggested by Bastidas (2001, p. 47). In the classroom I looked for ways to establish an environment to build trust and care in order to facilitate sensitive relationships among learners as suggested by Taylor (1988 cited in Imel, 1998, p. 4) to foster transformative learning. Hedge (2000) states that group work and pair work encourages cooperative learning and collaborative work which reduces dependence on the teacher (p. 14). Thus, I organized team work for various purposes: to discuss leading questions, to make them aware that they were striving to reach the same objectives and were facing similar difficulties; to learn from each other’s mistakes and success; to centre the process on them; to develop self-confidence and to create a relaxed atmosphere. As Smith (1996) mentions, teachers have reported that their most successful classes have been those in which “there was a social gathering atmosphere in which students were friends as classmates” (p. 209). Also, I could see that background music contributed to create a good atmosphere.

Finally, I describe how I tried to form my group of BA students as well trained researchers, as Freed (1991 cited in Crookes, 1997, p. 72) suggests. I followed the steps suggested by Kenny (1993, p. 224) in order to make my students feel and become researchers, not learners. I asked them to:

1. Choose and describe an initial awareness of a problem
2. State a preliminary expression of the need or problem
3. Write a more coherent rational statement of it
4. Produce a description or how research may proceed

Similar to the process followed by Kenny (1993, p. 221) for investigative research, I also began the First Research Seminar steering the learners to become autonomous investigative researchers. Also, I found the maxims about whole language stated by Goodman (1986, p. 8) illuminating to make my students find and develop a sense of ownership that could help them do and enjoy the research process. As Goodman claims, it is easy when it is interesting and relevant; it is chosen by and belongs to the learner; it is part of a real event and it is accessible to the learner; it has social utility and the learner has the power to use it. So, I shared these ideas with my learners throughout the two Research Seminars. By doing this I made my students find they have things to say and I did not treat them only as pupils but as researchers as suggested by Kenny (1993, pp. 221, 223). This scholar made several points on helping learners conduct research which were influential on the design of the teaching methodology used in the Research Seminars analyzed in this study.

... “I would say that releasing learners from the need to be pupils, drawing out learners’ own meanings and purposes, organizing these in the direction of investigative research, and helping learners formulate how a search may proceed, changes learner status and is one way of engaging learner autonomy” (p. 230).

In order to achieve this, I tried to help them identify an authentic need for conducting research, so they could give an authentic response as suggested by Hall (2001, p. 231).

#### **4.4 Study**

This section describes the participants and the instrument, research questions and procedure used to collect and analyse the data in this study.

##### *Participants*

I had twenty three students in total. The group I had on the First Research Seminar continued almost intact in the Second Research Seminar. Only one student dropped out in the middle of the First Research Seminar and one new student took his place on the Second Research Seminar. However, seven students out of twenty three I had (30% of the group) were studying the Major in Modern Languages to become translators, so they could not participate on my doctoral thesis research due to the fact that the study was aimed to study the beliefs of pre-service teachers. The rest of the group that is sixteen students (70%) were pre-service teachers. Eight from these students (35% of the group) gave their consent to participate in my doctoral thesis research at the end of both courses after receiving their scores. They were willing to answer the instruments for this study, and allowed the researcher to use their electronic dialogue journals as a source of data. These eight participants were six female and two male whose age ranged from twenty two to twenty five years old. Six of them studied their high school in a public institution and two in a private one. Five were full time students and three had part-time jobs. Their research interests were in these areas: teaching, teaching methodology, teacher effectiveness, teaching and

pragmatics, learning strategies, linguistics and translation. Fig. 2 summarizes personal information of participants.

Fig. 2. Personal information of participants			
Sex	Age	Type of High school	Occupation
5 Male	4 - 22 years old	1 – private	5 full time students
6 female	1 – 23	7 – public	3 part time students
	2 - 24		
	1 - 25		

### *Instrument*

As teacher cognition research is interested in phenomena which are not directly observable, it is crucial to identify data collection strategies to elicit these phenomena (Borg, 2006b, p. 167). In language teacher cognition, questionnaires have been widely used to study teacher beliefs about language learning and teaching (Borg, 2006b, p. 169). Studies conducted by Allen (2002); Johnson (1992) and Peacock (2001) are some examples of them. The study conducted by Peacock used one of the most used questionnaires in the field: the BALLI – Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory- designed by Horwitz (1988). This doctoral thesis research took it as a model to generate an instrument to pursue the objective of this study and answer the research questions. This type of instrument was used to collect the data to complement the diary study. Diaries had a very flexible way to collect data. Actually participants knew that even though the directions given that the teacher were to express their thoughts and feelings on the electronic dialog diaries, they could write different messages to the teacher where they expressed questions or issues related to the course and/or their thesis writing process. So, I considered adequate to use a more structured format for the second study in the form of a questionnaire. No questionnaire was found exploring the topics of this doctoral thesis, so I decided to design one.

### Instrument design

Taking into account the insights of Eraut (1995, pp. 235-245); Fullan (1995, pp.253-54); Burns et al (1999, p. 71); Schmelkes (2004, pp. 33, 41) and Viaggio (1992, pp. 307, 311-312), I developed the TAPDQ –Thesis and Professional Development Questionnaire- to examine pre-service teacher beliefs about four areas related to the process of thesis writing: professional development; thesis writing and professional development; personal development and thesis writing; strengths and weaknesses as thesis writers and future professionals. The questionnaire was first piloted with a similar group of LEMO students. The feedback obtained from this trial as well as the feedback from thesis supervisors was useful for polishing the final version of the instrument. The application of the instrument was twofold: first, to obtain pre-service students beliefs about professional development and thesis writing, and second to make students reflect on the cognitive and affective issues involved in thesis writing.

### Instrument structure and content

The first section, on 'personal information' had semi-structured questions that required the participants to provide the following information: sex, age, type of high school, occupation and research interests. The second, third, fourth and fifth sections contained a Likert-scale with four options and fifteen statements on each. Answers to each statement on them were given on a scale of possibilities that went from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). At the end of each of these sections there was a space provided for comments. Section 2 is called 'Professional development'. This section deals with issues related with being a professional and the meaning of professional development. The third section was 'Thesis writing and professional development'. This section addresses issues involved in the process of thesis writing



and analyzes its relation with professional development. Section 4 is called 'Personal development and thesis writing'. This section intends to elicit the perception of change of the participants after writing their theses and their plans after finishing the process. Section 5 is called 'Strengths and weaknesses as thesis writers and future professionals'. The participants were asked to self- evaluate themselves and were asked to write a reflection explaining how they could take advantage of their strengths to reduce their weaknesses. The instrument can be seen in Appendix A. The instrument was designed with a scaffolding view. It actually takes the respondent from the general issues involved in professional development to his/her own process of growth and professional development.

### *Procedure*

#### *Data collection*

Students who agreed to participate in my doctoral thesis research after finishing the two Research Seminars and receiving their scores, were given an envelope containing the consent form which was the first form filled by the participants as well as the instrument. They read the consent form, filled it up, kept a copy and gave one to the researcher. Then they took the envelope and gave it back to the researcher one or two days later. All of them delivered it to the teacher in her office personally, so I even though they did not write their names on the instrument, I was able to identify them.

#### *Data analysis*

At the beginning of the process of data analysis the participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Then the answers of the participants for section 1

were read and summarized. The answers of sections 2, 3 and 4 were counted, grouped and registered. The answers to section 5 were read and summarized to find patterns of similarity or divergence. Then the answers of sections 2 to 5 were analyzed and a discussion of them is presented in the section of findings.

#### **4.5 Findings and discussion**

This section presents the findings of the study, its analysis and discussion. Figures 3 to 6 are included in Appendixes G to J which contains the participant's answers to Sections 2, 3, 4 of the TAPDQ as well as the individual scores of the participants. Appendix K presents the answers of the participants to section 5 of the questionnaire.

##### **Discussion of main findings**

Even though this case study is limited to the participation of only eight pre-service teachers, it allowed the researcher to identify their beliefs on the following four areas: 1) professional development; 2) thesis writing and professional development; 3) personal development and thesis writing; 4) strengths and weaknesses as thesis writers and future professionals. The main findings are shown on Tables 11, 13 and 15. The answers are presented in order of importance: first the statements that got more consensuses on the agreement area and then the ones who got less. This consensus is indicated by the three numbers that appear next to each statement: The first represents the number of agreement answers including both totally agree and agree; the second number is the number of answers in the 'totally agree' option and the third is the number of answers in the 'agree' choice. Tables 12, 14 and 16 contain the comments of the participants per section.

Table 11 presents the beliefs of the participants regarding professional development.

Table 11. Professional development beliefs

	<u>Agreement answers</u>
1. Developed teachers can make a difference in the life of students.	8: 8-0
2. Developing professionally requires reflection.	8: 7-1
3. Professional development means ongoing learning.	8: 7-1
4. A professional should continue developing.	8: 7-1
5. Being a professional requires a positive attitude.	8: 6-2
6. Professional development leads to autonomy.	8: 6-2
7. Professional work requires moral commitment.	8: 6-2
8. Being a professional requires knowledge.	8: 5-3
9. Being a professional requires skills.	8: 5-3
10. Developing professionally occurs through the interaction with others.	8: 5-3
11. Successful translators have developed professionally.	8: 5-3
12. After finishing my major I will be a professional.	8: 1-7
13. I know what professional development is about.	8: 1-7
14. Successful teachers have developed professionally.	7: 5-2
15. I know what a professional is.	7: 1-6

All the statements were ordered according to the beliefs of the participants.

Now each of them is discussed.

1. Developed teachers can make a difference in the life of students.

This was the statement where all the participants strongly agreed. This agreement may be due to the fact that they have experienced this in their 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975, p. 160 cited in Allen, 2002, p. 519) where they have

experienced learning with methodologies they have liked and others they have not liked. Also, I think they have had the experience of being students of experienced and developed teachers who have made a difference in their lives. I think that those teachers are aware of their responsibility of making students happy citizens as stated by Mendoza (2003, p. 23).

## 2. Developing professionally requires reflection.

I talked about the importance of reflection for teacher development as stated by Bailey, et al (2001) as well as Richards & Lockhart (1996). But they also experienced it throughout the two courses with the quotations, movies, group discussions, and peer feedback and dialogue journals.

## 3. Professional development means ongoing learning.

Bailey, Curtis & Nunan (2001) describe this statement by explaining that “professional development is about moving forward through a greater understanding of where we are now by reflecting on how we got to be here” (p. 247). The participants had the chance to reflect on the process of thesis writing and they experienced in those two courses ongoing learning.

## 4. A professional should continue developing

These were other topics discussed in the Research Seminar courses. And they were associated with the idea that a professional never stops learning as discussed by Ur (2002). I think that through the reflection generated in the course they became aware of this principle.

## 5. Being a professional requires a positive attitude.

The importance of having a positive attitude was addressed in the First Research Seminar since day 1 taking Castañeda’s reflection (1991, p. 12) “La attitude mental es el material de que está fabricado tu destino”. This quotation states a person’s attitude determines his/her destiny. Even though the topic was discussed in relation

mainly to thesis writing, students reflected on it and tried to take this reflection to their lives and their destiny as the quotation points. An example of this can be seen in one of acknowledgements of a thesis from this group of students defended in 2008 “We want to thank a very special teacher, Mtra. Rebeca Tapia, our thesis director, because she convinced us to defend the project and not to be conformist or pessimist. She is a clear example of motivation and decision making, at least for us”.

#### 6. Professional development leads to autonomy.

Autonomy was a topic that received little lecturing but demonstration in the way I asked students to work on their thesis projects. Some of them positive comments about this issue in class expressing their surprise to my respectful attitude towards their decisions while writing their thesis. This methodology is associated with a *social action perspective* towards education. In this view educators promote critical reflection and transformative learning; “self directed learning, especially in relation to the development of personal autonomy would also be congruent with this perspective” (Cranton, 1996, p. 174).

#### 7. Professional work requires moral commitment.

Again, this was a topic I tried to demonstrate with my teaching practice. I tried to make a commitment with each of my students in the classroom by individualizing my teaching as Sarwar (2001) did. With the application of this philosophy she taught her students values implicit in moral commitment such as responsibility, self-confidence; friendship and tolerance. Also, as Eraut (1995, p. 232) explains being a professional implies moral commitment. Students reflected about this statement through the use of quotes in class.

#### 8. Being a professional requires knowledge.

Ur (2002) considers a professional as belonging to a group where all the members have specific skills, knowledge and follow certain conventions (p. 388). Students

reported as their strengths as future professionals having knowledge and being skillful (see Table 22, Appendix K). This comment also applies to statement number 9. Being a professional requires skills.

Eraut (1995, p. 230) considers skilled behavior as part of the work of a professional teacher. It is through the application of these skills that the professional shows his/her professional competence.

10. Developing professionally occurs through the interaction with others.

This was a topic that was not fully discussed, but it was demonstrated in the Research Seminars; Bailey et al (2001) mention that the interaction with others can help language teachers pursue professional development.

11. Successful translators have developed professionally.

As mentioned before, the original group of the participants also had pre service translators, so I asked them to reflect about this topic to identify their beliefs about other professionals in the area of languages and help them reflect about the field of languages as a broader professional field. Successful professional performance is commonly associated with professional development (Koontz & Weihrich, 2004, p. 427). Furthermore, learning and development derives from experience (Kolb, 1984) and this is a truth that applies to all professions.

12. After finishing my major I will be a professional.

This is a belief commonly held by Mexican society in general. So, this is what students were expecting after finishing their studies. Being a professional requires knowledge to apply them in their professional performance or professional practice. Graduating from a B.A. transforms people into professionals (Suárez-Iguíñez, 2000, pp.13-14).

13. I know what professional development is about.

This was a frequent topic on the Research Seminar courses. I told them about the importance of reading journals, attending conferences and workshops from our field in order to become updated as Brown (1994, p. 430) suggests.

14. Successful teachers have developed professionally.

Perhaps students were not very clear about the relationship between successful teaching and professional development. However, I tried to make them aware about this issue. Edge (1992 cited in Bailey et al, p. 1) explains the discoveries made in our practice can guide our future development, but as they were pre service teachers, they have not had much experience.

15. I know what a professional is.

The participants seem not be totally clear of all the implications that being a professional means. As stated before Ur (2002) mentions that being a professional means to belong to a group where the members of that group possess certain skills, knowledge and conventions that other people do not have (p. 388). They will learn about this statement after graduating.

General discussion about Table 11.

1. Participants' beliefs recognized the importance of the teacher not only on the teaching process, but also in the life of students. Some teachers believe that their job is just to teach the language or the content of the course and they limit themselves to those tasks. This was the belief that got most agreement, and I think that it was due to the fact that I tried to exemplify this principle in this course through the use of the teaching methodology. I taught them how to write their thesis, but that was not the only thing I did. I tried to make them grow as persons and professionals. As Mendoza (2003, p. 23) states it is the teacher's responsibility to make students happy citizens.

2. Reflection was one of the main elements of this course through the use of quotations, movies, group discussions, peer feedback and dialogue journals. Thus, they reported as an important belief that developing professionally requires reflection. I highlighted the importance of reflection for professional development as suggested by Bailey et al, (2001). Besides, they had the opportunity to experience it as a tool that helped them to achieve various goals: ongoing learning, getting a positive attitude, becoming more autonomous and developing commitment.

3. Participants' beliefs show that they knew that being a professional required knowledge and skills, and most of them thought they knew what a professional was and what professional development was about. Most of them believed that success teachers have developed professionally. Finally, they all agreed that after finishing their thesis they would become a professional, a belief commonly held by Mexican society in general.

Regarding the participants' comments from this section, only one participant made a comment. It can be seen on Table 12.

Table 12. Participants' comments from Section 2

Participant	Comment
Carmen	I have read something related to professional development because of my thesis project. I have also worked with other people (eg. on the thesis and social service research). That's why I strongly agree that professional development includes all the things previously mentioned.

In it, Carmen reporting having read information related to professional development and justifies her full agreement to most of the items to Section 2.



### Section 3. Thesis writing and professional development.

Table 13 shows the beliefs of the participants regarding thesis writing and professional development again in order of importance for them.

Table 13. Thesis writing and professional development beliefs

	<u>Agreement answers</u>
1. Thesis writing requires a positive attitude.	8: 7-1
2. Thesis writing requires knowledge.	8: 6-2
3. Thesis writing is a challenging task.	8: 5-3
4. Thesis writing requires skills.	8: 5-3
5. Thesis writing means ongoing learning.	8: 5-3
6. I know what thesis writing is about.	8: 4-4
7. Thesis writing is done better through the interaction with others.	8: 4-4
8. Thesis writing fosters professional development.	8: 4-4
9. Thesis writing requires reflection.	7: 5-2
10. Writing a thesis requires moral commitment.	7:2-5
11. A thesis writer should continue researching.	6: 5-1
12. Thesis writing leads to autonomy.	6: 3-3
13. The lives of successful thesis writers have changed after writing a thesis.	6:2-4
14. Successful thesis writers have developed professionally.	6: 1-5
<u>15. After finishing my thesis I will be a professional.</u>	<u>3: 0-3</u>

Similar to the level of agreement found with the statements for Section 2, most of the subjects agreed with most of the statements of this section. Again, the statements were ordered according to the beliefs of the participants.

Now each of them is discussed.

1. Thesis writing requires a positive attitude.

This issue was discussed on the first session of the course. The importance of having a positive attitude in thesis writing was presented with a quotation at the beginning of the session and an anecdote. Besides teacher education programs should strive to generate teacher development. This term is used to describe a process of continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers as Lange (1990, p. 250) suggests.

2. Thesis writing requires knowledge.

This was clear for all the participants of the study, especially when writing the literature review of their thesis as suggested by Criollo, (2003, p. 105). Also, thesis writers need to have knowledge as also discussed by Criollo (p.1).

3. Thesis writing is a challenging task.

LEMO students usually find thesis writing a challenging task and the participants were not an exception. The findings of Study 1 revealed this issue. Kenny (1993) claims that research should be challenging but as Freed (1991 cited in Crookes, 1997, p. 72) states there is a need to form well trained researchers.

4. Thesis writing requires skills.

The participants were aware of this fact because they had already experienced it. Criollo (2003) based on his experience as thesis supervisor trains thesis writers to acquire skills related to this process.

5. Thesis writing means ongoing learning.

Actually, participants experienced this statement. During the nine months they were working on their thesis in the Research Seminars, they kept on learning. I think this occurred because they were receptive. As Allwright & Bailey (1991) explain, student receptivity is a necessary element for learning.

6. I know what thesis writing is about.

The participants lived the experience and learned from it. As Kolb (1984) explains, people learn and develop from experience. They seemed to know what is involved in thesis writing.

7. Thesis writing is done better through the interaction with others.

This relates to individual learning styles as stated by Oxford (2002, p. 127) learning styles are a key factor for strategy choice. So, some learners preferred to work alone and others liked to interact with their peers. They discussed this in their diaries.

8. Thesis writing fosters professional development.

This is my belief, and some students began to agree with me. As Kenny (1993) claims, there is learner growth after conducting a piece of research. Actually, some of the participants took their BA thesis to be presented in conferences and this took them to meet scholars in those events.

9. Thesis writing requires reflection.

Thesis writing is a complex process. Reflection is needed in this process throughout the different steps of thesis writing: topic selection; planning; choosing and processing literature; collecting and processing data; and writing the information (Criollo, 2003, Mercado, 2001). As the participants lived the experience reflecting, they discovered by themselves the value of it in the process of thesis writing.

10. Writing a thesis requires moral commitment.

One of the issues discussed in the Research Seminars was the issue of ethics involved in the different stages of research. For example, when doing the review of literature, students need to avoid plagiarism (Mounsey, 2001); also, when conducting field research they need to ask the participants for their consent (Richards, 2003, pp. 107-109) and when reporting research the identity of the participants should be protected (Álvarez- Gayou, 2003, p. 210). The students also came up with the formula

to write a thesis which was 'enthusiasm + effort'. The latter one implied commitment with one's work.

11. A thesis writer should continue researching.

In the Research Seminars we discussed the fact that finding a topic they were interested in, they may continue exploring it even after finishing their thesis. As Kenny (1993) suggests, my participants began to perceive themselves as researchers, not as learners. Participants were also aware of the fact that in the chapter of the conclusions of the thesis there is a section on directions for further research that suggests this continuity.

12. Thesis writing leads to autonomy.

By adopting a constructivist view of teaching and learning I tried to foster autonomy. However, I saw that some students were used to traditional teaching and learning methods. I usually tell my students they should be making informed decisions in their thesis. I remember once a student told me that she was amazed to see that I did not give her 'prescriptive feedback' (Wallace, 1990, p. 107). I think that some students became more autonomous after taking the two Research Seminars and experiencing them with this constructivist methodology.

13. The lives of successful thesis writers have changed after writing a thesis.

It is living the experience and reflecting on it what makes thesis writers different because they experience learning and professional growth (Encinas, 2003, p. vii). As Kolb (1984, pp. 27, 36) notes, learning is a continuous process grounded on experience and learning is the process of creating knowledge. As the participants had just finished doing the process, I think they were not fully aware of their change. I could see a change on them: they were more collaborative, autonomous, and more reflective. It is my belief that finishing and defending it can help them reach other goals in life. At least this is how I feel about myself.

14. Successful thesis writers have developed professionally.

Participants began to perceive the thesis writing process as a process where they begin developing professionally. Actually, the teaching methodology used not only has proven to be effective to help students to write their thesis as Tapia (2006a) claims, but also to help them learn about the importance of reflection and reflection fosters professional development (Bailey et al, 2001).

15. After finishing my thesis I will be a professional.

Participants were aware of the fact that defending the thesis is what makes students obtain a degree, not just finish writing it. This explains the fact that this was the last statement of the list. The main reason why people write a thesis is to obtain a degree (Criollo, 2003, p. 3).

General discussion for Table 13.

1. Participants believe that writing a thesis requires a positive attitude, knowledge, skills, commitment and reflection, agreeing with Criollo (2003) and Mercado (2001). They see it as a challenging task that generates ongoing learning, and they said they knew what thesis writing was about after experiencing it as stated by Kolb (1984), people learn and develop from experience.

2. They also believe that thesis writing is better done through the interactions with others- they actually experienced it with group work and peer feedback- and that it fosters professional development. Most of them believe that thesis writing leads to autonomy. Experiencing the process of choosing a research topic, designing a piece of research and conducting it, allowed some of them to feel more confident about their learning and writing skills. Besides, I tried to avoid giving them prescriptive feedback as suggested by Wallace (1991, p. 110). They also believed that the lives of successful thesis writers have changed and that they have developed

professionally. I think that this was due to two reasons: first, they had experienced it, and second, I explained them the fact that their thesis could be an important element that could help them start their professional development. As Kenny (1993) mentions, learners experience growth after conducting a piece of research.

3. The statement that got most disagreement was that after finishing their thesis they will be a professional. I think they were clear that they needed to meet all the requirements established by the university to obtain the degree, such as finishing their coursework and their social service. It seems that they felt that just obtaining the degree would not in itself transform them overnight into fully- formed professionals. Participant's comments about this section can be seen on Table 14.

Table 14. Participant's comments from Section 3

Participant	Comment
Sandy	In the last item I would say it partially fosters professional development.
Nancy	It's the first time I'm writing a thesis, I can't say if I'll be successful. It's just the beginning of something. Also, I can't say if successful writers have developed professionally. I don't know of any.
Carmen	I have experienced thesis writing and I know I have developed my skills, I mean improved. I also learned many things that I didn't know. I can say that writing a thesis is a very challenging but satisfactory because we can make changes through providing evidence in the thesis.
Yazmín	There are sometimes, some questions where a neutral position would be the best option. For example, for numbers 8, 9, 10 and 13. Especially number 13, there are various factors that may influence that decision. Sometimes the research needs other factors (money, motivation, attitude). The last decision is taken by the researcher.

In her comment, Sandy clarified her belief about statement 15 by indicating that she partially agrees with it. That is, thesis writing partially fosters professional development. Nancy's comment indicates that she is not sure about the answer to statements 7 and 13. It seems that for her is very important to have lived or experienced something in order to report her beliefs about that experience. On the other hand, Carmen's comment describes her experience about thesis writing and she recognizes her personal growth. It seems that she values this experience. She also discusses in her comment the social responsibility of research. Yazmin's comment suggests the researcher to add a neutral answer to the format of the questionnaire, especially for statements 8, 9, 10 and 13.

#### Section 4. Personal development and thesis writing

Table 15 contains the participants' beliefs about personal development and thesis writing. They are also shown in order of importance for the participants.

Table 15. Personal development and thesis writing beliefs

	<u>Agreement answers</u>
1. I am committed with my thesis.	8: 5-3
2. I have acquired knowledge.	8: 4-4
3. I am a more reflective student.	8: 4-4
4. Now, I value peer feedback more.	8: 4-4
5. I have acquired skills.	8: 3-5
6. I should share my thesis findings with other professionals.	8:3-5
7. I have grown after writing a thesis.	8: 2-6
8. I have improved my attitude.	8: 2-6
9. I have become more autonomous.	7: 4-3

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 10. Thesis writing has helped me to be a better student.                            | 7: 2-5 |
| 11. I feel like polishing my thesis.  | 6: 4-2 |
| 12. I feel like defending my thesis in an exam.                                     | 6: 3-3 |
| 13. Writing my thesis has helped me to begin my professional development.           | 6:3-3  |
| 14. I feel like presenting my thesis in a conference.                               | 5: 2-3 |
| <u>15. At the beginning of the course I was not ready to write my thesis. 1:0-1</u> |        |

Similar to the level of agreement found with the statements for Section 2, most of the subjects agreed with most of the statements of this section. Now each of them is discussed.

1. I am committed with my thesis.

They reported being committed with their thesis. They became aware of discipline and continuous work to finish their thesis. This is a personal decision, but I believe that as they chose their thesis topic and they experienced process writing (Seow, 2002), they developed a sense of ownership. At least they had to be committed with their work until they delivered the thesis at the end of the Research Seminars. Many of their topics were chosen based on situations of their lives that according to them were the most significant in their foreign language learning (Jaatinen, 2007, p. 49).

2. I have acquired knowledge.

As they had to read many authors to write their thesis, they have seen that this statement applies to them. Various scholars agree on the fact that thesis writing help students acquire knowledge through the process of writing the review of literature for their thesis (Criollo, 2003; Mercado, 2001; Suárez-Iguíñez, 2000).

3. I am a more reflective student.

The participants were asked to reflect in the Research Seminars. They were actually learning through reflection in action, that is, reflecting while writing their thesis; also



they reflected on action, when getting feedback from their peers or the teacher about the drafts of their thesis chapters (Craft, 1996, p. 39). Although there could be individual differences, the methodology of the course made the participants more reflective.

4. Now, I value peer feedback more.

Process writing supports peer revision Seow (2002, p. 318). Even though some students may have not liked the amount of work involved in performing this task, I think they could see the value of the activity. Peer revision made the classroom more constructivist and collaborative.

5. I have acquired skills.

Students could perceive their improvement using APA format, reading better and faster, etc. I think this was also possible due to the teaching of strategies as suggested by Oxford (2002) and their use by the participants.

6. I should share my thesis findings with other professionals.

This was a topic often discussed in the course. Hedge's ideas (1988, p. 21) about the steps involved in composing a text guided that reflection. I think I emphasized the first, that is, being motivated to write and the last being publishing. It seems that some of the students understood the rationale behind it and decided to do it. The evidence of this is presented next. Two students of the Research Seminars presented papers derived from their B.A. thesis in international events, one with a teacher and the other on his own. Another two students presented papers derived from their thesis with a teacher in national events. The only paper published was the last one, the others were just conferences, and however, I was very proud to learn about these presentations.

7. I have grown after writing a thesis.

Participants had the chance to become aware of their growth throughout the continuous reflection performed in the Research Seminars. Encinas (2003, p. vii) describes this. "Writing a thesis has become an opportunity for undergraduate students to enhance their English skills and learn to communicate within the English Language Teaching (ELT) community which enables their further professional development after graduation".

8. I have improved my attitude.

As it was mentioned before, the importance of having positive attitude was one of the first and main messages discussed at the beginning of the thesis writing process. As Mercado (2001, p. 7) states it is possible to write a thesis even if the writer is facing a difficult situation. Some participants improved their attitude.

9. I have become more autonomous.

Teachers play an important role in promoting learner autonomy and playing their role as facilitator, counselor and resource can contribute to foster autonomous learning (Voller, 1997, p. 112). As stated earlier, the teaching approach used in the Research Seminars and the kind of feedback given to participants by the teacher aimed to foster this goal and it helped some participants to become more autonomous learners.

10. Thesis writing has helped me to be a better student.

This was one of my goals for the course. It seems that the learners who reflected on their diaries every week were the ones who could benefit most of the methodology of the course. Wisker (2005, p. 363) points out that educational research produce various benefits: the development of knowledge, the ability to recognize the questionable and the importance of informed decision making.

11. I feel like polishing my thesis.

At the end of the Second Research Seminars they got peer and teacher feedback. Most of them realized that their work needed to be revised and edited. Editing is an important element of process writing (Seow, 2002, p. 318).

12. I feel like defending my thesis in an exam.

This was again an individual decision. When I asked them at the end of the Second Research Seminar if they were interested in defending their thesis, many of them said yes, but not immediately (Tapia & Olmos, 2007). I think that this is due to the effect of various factors including economic issues such as high graduation fees.

13. Writing my thesis has helped me to begin my professional development.

I think that they were not fully aware of the potential of their thesis to begin their professional development. This may be due to the fact that they were just about to finish their major and if they believe that they would become professionals after finishing their major, it would be until then that they may start their professional development. According to Ur (2002, p. 391) the English teacher is a professional who should be a promoter of change and may undertake academic research. She considers that both activities are different but mutually beneficial.

14. I feel like presenting my thesis in a conference.

As it was discussed before, this item had a great variability. I think that some learners were not fully aware of the value of their work. Some others were not satisfied with it. However as mentioned before, from the original group of learners that had twenty three subjects, two of them presented their thesis work in a national conference and two of them in international conferences within six months of having finished the Second Research Seminar. Although three of these presentations were done with a teacher still they have proven that some of the students of the Research Seminars really felt like presenting their thesis in a conference. It is worth mentioning that two

of these students belonged to the translation area of the LEMO, so they could not participate in this study.

15. At the beginning of the course I was ready to write my thesis.

As I mentioned on the section of method and rationale, right from the beginning of the course I became aware of the students lack of confidence in them to write a thesis and I could also see that they were not motivated to write and defend their theses. This perception is confirmed with the identification of this negative belief through this questionnaire. So, as I could identify this belief at the beginning of the course, I noticed that it could be harmful for their learning process as discussed by Mantle-Bromley (1995), and I decided to take action to modify this pre-existing belief. Also, this answer of the participants may be because they answered it after writing their thesis in the two Research Seminars and they were now aware of the fact that they were not ready at the beginning of the courses to write their thesis.

General discussion for Table 15.

1. Participants believed they were committed with their thesis. I think that this commitment was generated due to the fact that they had developed a sense of ownership. Many of them chose their thesis topics on situations they had lived and were most significant in their foreign language learning as stated by (Jaatinen, 2007).
2. They also believed that they acquired knowledge, skills, improved their attitude and experience growth. Thus, they seem to value having conducted this piece of research and having learned through it as suggested by Suárez-Iguiñez (2000). Most of them also believed that they have become better students and more autonomous after writing their thesis.

3. Through the course, they learned the importance of editing in the writing process. Thus, they believed that they value peer feedback more and that they need to polish their work. Actually, process writing supports peer revision (Seow, 2002).

4. Participants believed that they should share their thesis writing with other professionals, but not all of them believed they would like to defend their thesis in a professional examination and even less they would like to present their thesis in a conference.

5. Most participants believed that at the beginning of the course they were not ready to write their thesis. As I identified this negative belief at the beginning of the course and saw that it could be harmful for them as suggested by Mantle-Bromley (1995), I decided to take action to modify it.

In the section of comments, only two participants made a comment. Their reflections are presented on Table 16.

Table 16. Participant's comments from Section 4

Participant	Comment
Nancy	There are so many factors that help you to grow professionally. It is not only the thesis.
Carmen	During my thesis seminar I worked with peer feedback and it was very good. I like others criticizing my work and I really want to defend the thesis (of course along with my research partner). Both of us want to do it.

Nancy pointed out in her comment that professional growth is the result of many factors, not only writing a thesis.

Carmen explained the importance of peer feedback for her as well as her intentions to defend her thesis.

Section 5. Strengths and weaknesses as thesis writers and future professionals.

The last section of the instrument asked participants to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses as thesis writers and future professionals. They are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 17 displays the beliefs of the participants regarding their beliefs about their strengths and weaknesses as thesis writers and Table 18 shows their beliefs of their strengths and weaknesses as future professionals.

Table 17. Beliefs about their strengths and weaknesses as theses writers

#### Strengths

Participants mentioned having ability on the following areas:

1. Having a positive attitude
2. Finding an area of study they really like
3. Finding relevant information by themselves and using it appropriately
4. Clarifying their ideas and writing effectively
5. Working with other people and being willing to accept critique
6. Reflecting and working in an autonomous way

#### Weaknesses

Participants mentioned having difficulty on the following areas:

1. Finding and choosing their research topic
  2. Choosing and organizing information
  3. Reading and processing information
  4. Organizing their thoughts and expressing their ideas
  5. Concentrating on their work
  6. Working with other people
  7. Identifying and correcting spelling mistakes
-

## Discussion of Table 17.

### Strengths

Participants expressed having six strengths as thesis writers. These beliefs are discussed next.

#### 1. Having a positive attitude.

Since the first day I discussed the importance of having a positive attitude to pursue goals in life. As Molinar & Vázquez (2001, p. 70) stress, I tried to develop the potential of my students as human beings; I aimed to be their leader and teacher by inviting them to grow as persons and future professionals. As a result, some of them acknowledge having a positive attitude after finishing the two Research Seminars.

The words of Julian and Carmen show this belief.

*Julian: I have a positive attitude.*

*Carmen: I am very positive.*

#### 2. Finding an area of study they really like.

This was a suggestion that I gave to my students following Kenny (1993, p. 219). I think that they came to value the importance of choosing a topic they felt it was important for them due to the fact that this selection would ease the research and writing processes. Pedro's answer illustrates this point.

*Pedro: If we choose the adequate topic... I was aware of the fact that we really need to love our topic in order to work well on it.*

#### 3. Finding relevant information by themselves and using it appropriately.

This is an important skill to conduct research and write an academic work, but each student did this activity differently, depending on their previous knowledge and experience. Hall et al (1986, p.151) state that readers are able to draw out the meanings in the context of their own previous knowledge and experience and make

sense of them. But students not only read the information, but also they had to use it to support their ideas, as suggested by Criollo (2003, p. 105).

Nancy and Sandy described this belief.

*Nancy: I can find good and relevant information.*

*Sandy: I've learned to cite authors and develop coherence and cohesion in my work.*

#### 4. Clarifying their ideas and writing effectively.

When writing a thesis it is important to have clear ideas (Criollo, 2003). But clarifying our ideas is a process that starts since we establish the field and define our relationship toward it and the reasons why we are interested in it (Hall et al, 1986, p. 151). But once we have this clarity, it is necessary to put these ideas in writing according to the genre we are writing as pointed out by Swales & Feak (2000, p. 7). Paula's comment reflects her awareness of this issue.

*Paula: I am reflective, autonomous and I have clear ideas.*

#### 5. Working with other people and being willing to accept critique.

This was a teaching strategy used throughout the two courses to enhance positive interdependence on students (Oxford, 1997). Some students liked the experience, others did not. I tried to act as a facilitator. Carmen's comment explains this.

*Carmen: I am very positive and willing to accept critique. I can work with other people...*

#### 6. Reflecting and working in an autonomous way.

Borko & Putnam (1995, p. 59) highlight the importance of reflection in professional development. As I wanted student's value thesis writing as an activity that could initiate their professional development, reflection was a key element in the Research Seminars. Besides, I promoted self directed learning especially in relation to the



development of autonomy because I think that I had a constructivist perspective as educator. Paula's comment shows her beliefs about these issues.

*Paula: I am reflective, autonomous and I have clear ideas.*

## Weaknesses

Participants identified seven weaknesses as thesis writers. These beliefs are discussed next.

### 1. Finding and choosing their research topic.

It was difficult for some participants to find and choose a research topic. Hall et al (1984, p, 151) mention that this is a common problem of students when writing a text "one of the difficulties that many of us suffer from when we write... is to establish the topic and its related concepts". The comment of Pedro illustrates this point.

*Pedro: It was difficult for me to choose my topic, especially as I was aware of the fact that we really need to love our topic in order to work well on it.*

### 2. Choosing and organizing information.

Participants found difficulty selecting, organizing and using information to express their ideas. Criollo (2003) signals the function and content of the review of literature and he suggests ways to choose and organize this information through the use of an outline designed by the researcher (pp. 105-107). This outline can help thesis writers to select information that may prove useful to express the writer's ideas. Paula expresses her concerns about these issues.

*Paula: ...it is difficult for me to choose information and to express some ideas.*

### 3. Reading and processing information.

Once students had found and selected the information of their thesis topic, they have to read and process that information. Swales & Feak (2000, p. 117) mention that "the

preparation of a literature review is a three step process: finding the relevant literature, reading and then writing up the review". Julian describes this belief.

*Julian: ...however, I must admit that I'm a slow reader so I process information slowly.*

#### 4. Organizing their thoughts and expressing their ideas.

Thesis writers need to organize their thoughts in order to be able to express their ideas. Expressing their point of view is a relevant issue in this activity. Criollo (2003, p.p. 120-135) suggests ways and provide exercises to help thesis writers be successful in this enterprise. Participants expressed their concerns about this area.

*Paula: ...it is difficult for me to choose information and to express some ideas.*

*Carmen: ...however, I need time to organize my thoughts.*

#### 5. Concentrating on their work.

Thesis writing is a challenging task that requires writers to devote much time and effort and to concentrate on the work. Menasche (1997) points out that in order to write research paper students need to be aware of the fact that "the writing process is recursive, open-ended and generative of ideas". Thus, students need to concentrate on their work to generate these ideas and write their research. Julian expresses having difficulty concentrating on his thesis.

*Julian: ..and I easily lose attention...*

#### 6. Working with other people.

One of the reasons why this teaching strategy was used was to promote collaboration. Lange (1990, p. 255) states that teacher education should promote collaborative work "because problems can be solved in groups of people who collaborate by sharing expertise and perspectives". Some participants find easy to

work with other people but not all. I think that this occurred due to the fact that they were not used to work in teams. Julian's participation expresses this issue.

*Julian: .. I am not a group worker.*

## 7. Identifying and correcting spelling mistakes

The mechanics of writing are an important part of the presentation of the thesis.

Menasche (1997, p. 92) signals the importance of self editing after writing the final draft of a research paper. He suggests students editing to improve content, organization and mechanics that includes spelling. Sandy comments this.

*Sandy: .. however, I have some spelling mistakes....*

### Table 18. Beliefs about their strengths and weaknesses as future professionals

#### Strengths

Participants mentioned having ability on the following areas:

1. Being responsible and committed with their work
2. Being willing to learn new things
3. Having knowledge and skills
4. Managing problems as they arise, reflecting and getting confidence

#### Weaknesses

Participants mentioned having difficulty on the following areas:

1. Working collaboratively and being sociable
2. Being responsible and hard working
3. Lacking experience, not knowing how to apply knowledge and skills appropriately; getting stressed, nervous or disappointed easily.

## Discussion of Table 18

### Strengths

Participants expressed having four strengths as future professionals. These beliefs are discussed below.

#### 1. Being responsible and committed with their work.

Responsibility and commitment are desirable features of English teachers. Ur (2002, p. 391) states its importance by saying that professional English teachers are committed to reaching certain standards of performance and are responsible of their learners and their learning. Sandy and Nancy's words about this topic are quoted next.

*Sandy: I'm responsible, committed and willing to learn....*

*Nancy: I'm responsible; I think I want to commit myself with my work...*

#### 2. Being willing to learn new things

This strength is crucial to become a professional and to foster professional development. Lange (1990, p. 255) points out that "lifelong learning must be a construct in every teacher development program". Julian's comment illustrates this point.

*Julian: ...I like to learn new things...*

#### 3. Having knowledge and skills.

According to Pettis (2002, p. 394) "principles, knowledge and skills are fundamentally integrated in the professionally competent teacher". So, the fact that participants admit having knowledge and skills at the beginning of their teaching career is good. Paula expresses this straight in the following way.

*Paula: I have knowledge and skills.*

#### 4. Managing problems as they arise, reflecting and getting confidence.

The participants of this study are at the beginning of their teaching career, and they are learning through experimentation and reflection about these experiences. Thus, they are trying ideas, solving problems as they arise and becoming confident by doing so (Craft, 1996, p. 39). Carmen describes this belief next.

*Carmen: ... I can manage problems at the moment they arise and I have the capacity for reflection.*

#### Weaknesses

Participants expressed having three weaknesses as future professionals. These beliefs are discussed next.

##### 1. Working collaboratively and being sociable.

Working with colleagues can help us become better professionals (Bailey et al, 2001). But working with others requires us to be open and sociable. We can learn from others, but if we are not used to work in teams this may take time.

Julian and Sandy wrote:

*Julian: On the other hand, I'm not very sociable, I get stressed easily....*

*Sandy: .. however, I don't know how to work in teams. If I work in groups I have to know the persons very well to feel comfortable.*

##### 2. Being responsible and hard working.

I think that participants were aware of the relevance of these features for professionals as stated by Ur (2002, p. 391). However, they admitted lacking them in their comments.

*Sandy: I am a bit lazy sometimes.*

##### 3. Lacking experience, not knowing how to apply knowledge and skills

appropriately; getting stressed, nervous or disappointed easily.

In this item all the weaknesses are linked to the lack of experience as English teachers. Even though they were pre-service teachers, they were beginning to teach, so they had started their induction stage. These first experiences were presenting a challenge to them. The induction stage is a period of survival where the new teacher is trying to be accepted by students, peers and supervisors. They are looking for comfort and security in dealing with everyday problems and issues (Fessler, 1995, p. 185). Participants' comments show their concerns about this career stage.

*Nancy: ... but I know that if I live a bad experience I give up doing what I was doing, I get dissatisfied easily.*

*Paula: I have knowledge and skills, but it is difficult for me to know how to apply them appropriately.*

*Carmen: ... however, the first time or the first minutes I'm in front of many people I get nervous, then after some time I feel confident.*

*Julian: ... I get stressed easily and I don't have much work experience.*

Finally, Table 19 displays the beliefs of the participants regarding the ways they can use their strengths to overcome their weaknesses as thesis writers and Table 20 shows their beliefs on the ways to overcome their weaknesses by using their strengths as future professionals.

Table 19. Beliefs about ways to overcome their weaknesses as theses writers using  
their strengths

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Participants believe these are the ways to overcome their weaknesses as thesis writers.

1. Improve spelling mistakes by: a) looking at what others do in their work; b) taking extra time to look up words in a dictionary; c) reading their work twice before delivering it.
2. Organize information by looking at each part of the outline and deciding if the information is relevant or not.

3. Practicing reading and writing to have a good level on both.
4. Seeing thesis writing not as a program requirement but as a step to become professionals.
5. Polishing their work and learning from their errors.

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#### Discussion of Table 19

Participants expressed five ways to overcome their weaknesses as thesis writers.

These beliefs are discussed below.

1. Improve spelling mistakes by: a) looking at what others do in their work;  
b) taking extra time to look up words in a dictionary; c) reading their work twice before delivering it.

As mentioned before, mechanics -including spelling-are an important part of the edition process of the thesis. Wisker (2005, p.56) suggests students to develop good habits of articulation, refinement, editing. However, what it is interesting to note here is that participants share three strategies used by themselves to overcome this weakness.

- a) Looking at what others do in their work.

Participants were asked to work in teams to edit their thesis. This activity proved to be useful for them. Seow (2002, p. 317) states that responding to student writing could be done by the teacher or peers and it is a key element for process writing because it help writers revise their work. It seems that giving feedback to peers not only served them to edit their work but also helped them to learn from each other's writing. Sandy's comment explains this.

*Sandy: I think I can improve my spelling mistakes by looking at what others do in their work.*

b) Taking extra time to look up for words in a dictionary.

The importance of editing in writing is stated by various scholars (Hedge, 1988; Seow, 2002; Wisker, 2005). The ways students edit their work varies and it may depend on what they have learned from previous experiences. Though looking up words in a dictionary takes time, it is one way to correct spelling mistakes (Hunt & Beglar, 2002). Sandy describes this strategy.

*Sandy: I think I can improve my spelling mistakes.... taking some extra time to look up for the words in a dictionary.*

c) Reading their work twice before delivering it.

Edition should be addressed differently for every student due to the fact that not all students make same errors (Ferris, 2002, p. 329). It seemed that my students were not used to proof-read their work before delivering to the teacher. Thus, it was necessary to train learners to self-edit their own work. Again, Sandy's comment shows this belief.

*Sandy: Besides, I think I can read my work at least twice before handling it in.*

2. Organize information by looking at each part of the outline and deciding if the information is relevant or not.

Menasche (1997, pp. 51-54) suggests the design and use of an outline to write a research paper. This technique facilitates the organization of information. Nancy notes the importance of organizing information when writing a thesis.

*Nancy: It is always hard for me to organize the information. Sometimes I find or search for a bit of information that I don't know how to process it. If the information is already relevant then what I have to do first is to look for each part of my work.*

3. Practicing reading and writing to have a good level on both.



Menasche (1997, p. 2) highlights the importance of reading academic sources to do a research paper. Thus, reading sources and incorporating them in academic writing are a necessary skill to conduct and report research, but often developing this ability seems to be difficult for students due to the lack of practice. Julian's comment illustrates this point.

*Julian: I think I can overcome my problems by getting used to academic skills such as reading and writing to the point that they come out naturally.*

4. Seeing thesis writing not as a program requirement but as a step to become professionals.

At the BUAP writing and defending a thesis is considered as an option to obtain a degree. Thus, students who have to do it because they did not get an average above 8.5 or they failed a subject see thesis writing as an unpleasant requirement. This is why the importance of valuing their thesis as a tool to initiate their professional development was emphasized in the Research Seminars. Julian's comment explains this.

*Julian: ...also by thinking that thesis writing is not a requirement but a step to become a professional.*

5. Polishing their work and learning from their errors.

Experience can help students learn and develop (Kolb, 1984). Experiencing self edition allows a writer to learn from his/her errors. Similarly, experiencing difficult situations in our professional lives can help us learn from them. This is what the reflections of Pedro refer to.

*Pedro: Now as thesis writer and future professional we can take advantage of all the mistakes in order to make it as part of the strengths.  
... I think we should have in mind the mistakes in order not to commit them again.*

Table 20. Beliefs about ways to overcome their weaknesses as future professionals  
using their strengths

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Participants believe these are the ways to overcome their weaknesses as future professionals.

1. Socialize better by making an effort to know more the people they will work with.
  2. Reinforce their responsibility to fight their laziness and improve their time organization.
  3. Be aware of the fact that life will always bring problems or bad experiences, but one can learn from them.
  4. Have the enthusiasm to change the stereotype of English as the 'boring class' as English teachers.
  5. See thesis writing as the first step in professionalism.
- 

#### Discussion of Table 20

Participants expressed five ways to overcome their weaknesses as future professionals. These beliefs are discussed next.

1. Socialize better by making an effort to know more the people they will work with.

Bell & Gilbert (1994) note that teacher development occurs in three areas: professional, personal and social. Regarding social development, they say that teachers need to develop collaborative ways to relating to other teachers. This is what the participants experienced in the Research Seminars. However, working collaboratively was not easy for all of them. Sandy considers this issue in her comment.

*Sandy: I think I can socialize better by getting to know more the people I will work with.*

2. Reinforce their responsibility to fight their laziness and improve their time organization.

According to Zeichner & Liston (1996, p. 11) a reflective teacher takes responsibility for his or her own professional development. Participants were asked to reflect often in the Research Seminars. Thus, they had the opportunity to set the basis and initiate their professional development. Sandy's comment shows the way she plans to improve time management.

*Sandy: I can also take advantage of my responsibility to be less lazy and try to do things with more anticipation.*

3. Be aware of the fact that life will always bring problems or bad experiences, but one can learn from them.

"Continued professional growth and excitement can also help us to combat negativity in our teaching contexts" (Bailey et al, 2001, p. 7). Problems are a natural part of our lives; however they produce certain effects on human beings, so we need to learn how to deal with them. Bell & Gilbert (1994, p. 485) signal the relevance of attending to feelings as part of teacher development. If these feelings are not considered when they arise, they may eventually lead to burnout ((Bailey et al, 2001, pp. 8-9). Nancy reflects on this issue in her comment.

*Nancy: I know in life there will always be bad experiences...*

*... trying not to give up first...*

*As I said, overcoming those situations and learn from them always help.*

4. Have the enthusiasm to change the stereotype of English as the 'boring classes as English teachers.

This suggestion relates to the ideas of Canagarajah (2002) regarding methodology design by English teachers. He notes that "this is perhaps the right moment to empower the local knowledge of teachers deriving from years of accumulated experience, wisdom, and intuitions about what works best for their students (p. 140).

In this case, Sandy as a novice teacher is identifying a need in their learners and she is suggesting a clear way to meet it.

*Sandy: ...and if I already have the enthusiasm to change the stereotype of English as a boring class. Then what is missing is the effort of teachers. I mean my effort. Trying not to give up at first.*

5. See thesis writing as the first step in professionalism.

Encinas (2003, pp. vii-viii) states that writing a thesis enables English teachers to initiate their professional development after graduation. I encouraged my students to start their professional development while writing their thesis. Julian's comment on this issue shows his position about this topic adding experience as another key element in professional development.

*Julian: Thesis writing is the step to professionalism, and professionalism requires experience. So, the more knowledge and practice we get, the more advanced we can get in our professional development.*

## **4.6 Conclusions**

This last part of this paper presents the conclusions of the study conducted.

The aim of the study was to identify the beliefs that pre-service teachers hold about professional development and thesis writing after finishing their BA theses. Those beliefs were clearly identified and discussed. I also think that the research questions were answered throughout the discussion of the findings and they will be explicitly answered next.

1. What beliefs do pre-service teachers hold regarding professional development after finishing their BA theses?

The findings of this study revealed that all participants strongly agreed with the following statement: Developed teachers can make a difference in the life of students. However, they also agreed with all the statements of Table 11. That is, participants believe that developing professionally requires reflection; professional development means ongoing learning; a professional should continue developing; being a professional requires a positive attitude; professional development leads to autonomy; professional work requires moral commitment; being a professional requires knowledge; being a professional requires skills; developing professionally occurs through the interaction with others; successful translators have developed professionally; after finishing their major they will be professionals; they know what professional development is about; successful teachers have developed professionally and they know what a professional is.

2. What beliefs do pre- service teachers hold regarding the relationship between thesis writing and professional development after finishing their BA theses?

The findings of this study suggest that all participants believe that thesis writing requires a positive attitude and knowledge; thesis writing is a challenging task that requires skills and it means ongoing learning; they know what thesis writing is about; thesis writing fosters professional development and is done better through the interaction with others; most of the participants believe that thesis writing requires reflection and moral commitment; a thesis writer should continue researching; thesis writing leads to autonomy; the lives of successful thesis writers have changed after writing a thesis and they have developed professionally. Finally, only three believe that after finishing their thesis they will be a professional.

3. Do they consider thesis writing as part of professional development?

As can be seen on Table 13, all participants believe that thesis writing fosters professional development and most of them believe that successful thesis writers have developed professionally. Most of them believe that writing their thesis has helped them to begin their professional development as reported on Table 15.

#### 4. Do they consider thesis writing as part of their personal development?

Participants admitted having acquired knowledge and skills after writing their thesis. They also reported being more reflective, having improved their attitude and having experience growth. They said they valued peer feedback more. Most of them said they had become more autonomous and having become better students.

#### 5. What role did their supervisor beliefs about thesis and professional development play in the process of thesis writing of these pre-service teachers at BA level?

As mentioned before, the teaching methodology used aimed to make students believe that they were prepared to write their theses and that the process was not very difficult; believe that the research they were going to conduct belonged to them and this fact could make the process easier and more pleasant; become aware of the importance of conducting and sharing their research to grow both personally and professionally; commit themselves to finish their theses and by doing this valuing their thesis as a tool to enhance their personal and professional growth. These objectives reflect my beliefs as a teacher supervisor. The findings of this study suggest that the Research Seminars were useful in shaping at least partially participants espoused beliefs and beliefs in action. Although there were individual differences, these supervisor beliefs defined my teaching philosophy and influenced the thesis writing process of the participants.

6. Have the pre-service teacher beliefs about professional development changed after writing their thesis?

Having experienced thesis writing caused an impact on the participants. The findings show that they believe that thesis writing fosters professional development and most of them believed that writing their thesis has helped them to begin their professional development as can be seen on Table 13.

7. Has the teaching methodology used been useful to shape pre-service teachers pre-existing beliefs during the process of thesis writing?

It seems that the methodology used has been useful to shape their beliefs though there is no separate evidence in this data of their beliefs at the beginning of the process. The only evidence available is the one included on Table 15 where the participants report their personal development and they claim to have learned and having grown after writing their theses.

8. What benefits has the teaching methodology produced in the pre-service teachers?

Participants reported having acquired knowledge and skills after writing their thesis. They also mentioned being more reflective, having improved their attitude and having experience growth. They said they valued peer feedback more. Most of them said they had become more autonomous and having become better students. So, it seems that the methodology proved useful to enhance participants' academic, professional and personal growth.

Still, further research needs to be conducted in this area. For example, it would be worth exploring pre-existing beliefs of pre-service teachers when they enter the

programme and to compare them with the beliefs of trainees at the end of their teacher education. As stated by Pajares (1992, p. 322) it is important to be aware of pre-existing beliefs of students when they enter pre-service programmes.

There were two main limitations of this research. The first is that the participants' answers may be biased due to the fact that I was researcher and also their teacher, so some of their answers may have tried to please me as their teacher. However, I believe that this last limitation was not fully affecting the answers of the participants due to the fact that some of their answers did not please me. For example, even though I encouraged them to present their thesis in a conference, not all the participants agreed to it; furthermore, three of them did not answer that statement with an agreement answer, but a disagreeing one. The second limitation is the fact that this is a case study and its results cannot be generalized. Thus, it would be worth conducting other case studies applying the TAPDQ to compare their findings with the ones of the present study.

It is worth mentioning, as Borg (2006b) points out, that the main research in the field of teacher cognition has been conducted in the United States. So, an important value of this study is the fact that it is a study conducted in Mexico and it can serve as a model to generate further research in this little explored area of pre-service teacher beliefs. Finally, it is expected that this piece of research contributes to generate reflection on thesis writers and thesis supervisors about the relevance of the issues discussed in this work.



## Chapter 5: Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the whole thesis, the answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of the work and the implications for thesis supervisors in teacher education programmes, teacher educators, and teacher education programmes.

### 5.1 Answers to the research questions

The research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis will now be answered.

1. What beliefs do pre-service teachers hold regarding professional development while and after writing their BA theses?

First, the beliefs while writing their thesis seemed to be particularly found in Study 1 where participants seem to have expressed their beliefs regarding professional development while writing their BA thesis in three areas: future professional practice, career development and personal growth.

Regarding *future professional practice*, participants believed that it is important to think about the age level of future students in order to be prepared to teach them; they also believed that they needed more teaching practice, but they were aware of the importance of finishing their major first; they believed that it is important to create a good classroom environment to foster good relationships between learners and teacher and they believed that having good time management was important for their future professional practice. These issues are related to their future practice that some of them had begun experiencing simultaneously to the Second Research Seminar. But, at the same time that they were experiencing their first lessons as a

language teacher, they were also experiencing the constructivist methodology of the Research Seminars. I found myself sometimes highlighting the steps in the methodology used to make them reflect and learn about it. One day one of the students congratulated me because she admitted that I was not imposing my ideas to direct their theses. She said she was astonished to see that I was not giving 'prescriptive feedback' (Wallace, 1991, p. 107). I think that I was trying to model them constructivist learner centred methodology.

Regarding *career development* participants believed that finishing their major was achieving a dream they had for years; that reflecting on their teaching practice could help them improve it, and that it was a good idea to do a good thesis to graduate with honours. They started to see themselves as professionals and they started to see the importance of career development. Finally regarding *personal growth*, they believed that teaching could make them full human beings. The reflections generated through the quotes, the movies and the humanistic activities tried to foster this.

Second, the beliefs about *professional development* after writing their thesis were particularly found in Study 2. These findings seem to suggest that participants believed that developed teachers can make a difference in the life of students; that professionals should continue developing; that developing professionally requires reflection, it means ongoing learning, it leads to autonomy and it occurs through the interaction with others. They also believed that *being a professional* requires having a positive attitude, knowledge and skills as well as moral commitment. Finally, they believed they knew what professional development is about and what a professional is. Though they were just about to finish their studies, I made them reflect in these

issues. I am aware of the fact that it is until they experience the professional life that they will become aware of the issues involved in it.

2. What beliefs do pre-service teachers hold regarding the relationship between thesis writing and professional development while writing their BA theses?

Firstly, the beliefs while writing their thesis seem to be particularly found in Study 1 where participants expressed beliefs regarding the relationship between thesis writing and professional development while writing their BA thesis in five areas: research opportunities, importance of the thesis, career development, future professional life and social responsibility.

Regarding *research opportunities*, participants seem to believe that it is important to conduct research and report it in a thesis about a topic identified as being a probable research gap in the area. I think they become aware of the steps related to conduct research and one of them was to identify possible topics to conduct research. Some of them mentioned while doing their thesis that they felt motivated to conduct research not only for their thesis, but also to improve their teaching practice.

Regarding the *importance of the thesis*, participants expressed beliefs about the value of the thesis by stating that it is important to do a good one and publish it. I showed them the steps in the writing process suggested by Hedge (1988, p. 21).

Regarding *career development*, they believed that it was important to finish their major and do a good thesis to graduate with honours. I explained this possibility that was available for them even if they did not have to defend their thesis in a professional examination. Not all the students liked the idea, but some of them did and have now defended their thesis.

Regarding *future professional life*, they said that it was important to take advantage of the opportunity of writing a thesis to explore topics related to their future professional interests. They began to see the connection between research and professional life as suggested by Ur (2002).

Finally, regarding *social responsibility*, participants mentioned the importance of doing a thesis that can benefit many students in the future. Through the reflection generated by the quotes, movies and team work, participants became aware of the possible beneficial impact of their research. That is, they began to discover the social impact of their thesis. This awareness was especially generated by participants that were researching about ways to improve the curriculum of the LEMO, thus, they were thinking about the possible implementation of innovations based on their study.

Secondly, the beliefs about the relationship between thesis writing and professional development after writing their thesis seem to be particularly found in Study 2. The data revealed that participants believed that thesis writing requires a positive attitude and knowledge; thesis writing is a challenging task that requires skills and it means ongoing learning; they know what thesis writing is about; thesis writing fosters professional development and is done better through the interaction with others; most of the participants believed that thesis writing requires reflection and moral commitment and it leads to autonomy, similar to what Eraut (1995) suggested; that a thesis writer should continue researching; that the lives of successful thesis writers have changed after writing a thesis and they have developed professionally. Finally, only three participants believed that after finishing their thesis they would be a professional. Again, these beliefs seem to show that they experienced growth after

writing their thesis. Though there were individual differences, most participants acknowledged this.

### 3. Do they consider thesis writing as part of professional development?

This question was particularly answered in Study 2. All participants believed that thesis writing fosters professional development and most of them believed that successful thesis writers have developed professionally and that writing their thesis has helped them to begin their professional development. Participants also mentioned that they see themselves as professionals not after writing the thesis, but after getting all the graduation requirements to obtain the degree, which agrees with the belief that a professional is the person who is awarded a degree.

However, I would like to note that *thesis writing* can be used as a research experience used to make changes in the real world and foster professional development in two ways. The first occurs due to the fact that the researcher tries to make changes in professional practices and acts as a professional in this process as suggested by Ur (2002). The second one refers to the *growth* experienced by the thesis writer when conducting this research due to the fact that he reads related research conducted previously and learns about theoretical and practical aspects of the profession. Besides, if (s)he integrates that knowledge with skills required to do academic writing in a constructivist environment where reflection about professional and personal growth takes place, he may also experience awareness and empowerment that could lead to make him/her to modify his/her attitudes and beliefs and as a result may become a better professional and human being. Then, the objectives proposed by Byram's (1999) model and suggested by Bailey et al (2001) and Eraut (1995) may be reached.

4. Do they consider thesis writing as part of their personal development?

The findings of the first study suggest that some of them did, not all. This is due to the fact that the methodology used was a constructivist one and as Schcolnik et al (2006, p.15) mention, the learning results in a constructivist classroom are different in each individual. On the other hand, the findings of the second study revealed that participants seem to have acquired knowledge and skills after writing their thesis. They also reported being more reflective, having improved their attitude and having experience growth. They said they valued peer feedback more. Most of them said they had become more autonomous and had become better students.

5. What role did their supervisor beliefs about thesis and professional development play in the process of thesis writing of these pre-service teachers at BA level?

As mentioned before, the teaching methodology used reflects my beliefs as a teacher supervisor. Both studies showed that the Research Seminars were useful in shaping at least partially participants espoused beliefs and beliefs in action about thesis writing and professional development. Although there were individual differences, these supervisor's beliefs defined my teaching philosophy and influenced the thesis writing process of the participants. It is worth noting that in every single action that takes place in the classroom, in every decision that teachers make, there is an underlying framework. This framework is based on the beliefs, assumptions and values that teachers hold (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). "If we accept this, then we must take for granted that any process of change in the teaching practice necessarily must be related to a change in the teacher's belief system" (Santos, 2000, p. 45). This innovative methodology presented and analysed in this thesis, was the result of the change in the teacher belief system. The term belief is a problematic concept

(Pajares, 1992). In spite of this, the studies of this doctoral thesis aimed to present two ways to identify and analyse what seems to be the participant's beliefs. Through the studies, this research tried to explore the teaching and learning practices in the two Research Seminars where pre-service teachers wrote their BA theses.

6. Have the pre-service teacher beliefs about professional development changed after writing their thesis?

There seems to be a general agreement between the two studies that thesis writing caused an impact on the participants. The findings of the first study suggest that most of them have changed. Some of them more than others, due to the individual differences in the experience of writing their thesis. This change can be seen more clearly in the last diary entries at the end of the First Research Seminar.

Also, the findings of the second study seem to show that they believed that thesis writing fosters professional development and most of them believed that writing their thesis has helped them to begin their professional development as can be seen on Table 13.

7. Has the teaching methodology used been useful to shape pre-service teachers pre-existing beliefs during the process of thesis writing?

Both studies seem to show that the methodology used was useful to shape their beliefs though there is no separate evidence in this data of their beliefs at the beginning of the process. However, the findings of the first study suggest that the methodology was useful in shaping their beliefs, especially the inclusion of reflection as an important part of the methodology, as most entries show. Besides, Table 10 from the second study provides some evidence of change where the participants

report their personal development and they mentioned having learned and grown after writing their theses.

8. What benefits has the teaching methodology produced in the pre-service teachers?

There was a general agreement between the two studies that the methodology seemed to be beneficial for the participants. From the findings of the first study we can infer that the methodology used generated academic, professional and personal growth in most of the participants. However, there were individual differences which are described in detail in it. The findings of the second study conducted at the end of the process suggest that participants had acquired knowledge and skills after writing their thesis. They also reported being more reflective, having improved their attitude and having experience some growth. They said they valued peer feedback more. Most of them said they had become more autonomous and had become better students.

## **5.2 Directions for further research**

First, more case studies with pre-service teachers can be conducted with a similar method and with other methods to compare their findings with the ones of the present thesis. Also, other case studies at master's level can be conducted with the same purpose. Besides, the participants of the study could be followed in a longitudinal research, in order to research their academic, professional and personal development through interviews, observations, focus groups or even diaries. Another possibility could be to analyze their supervisor's beliefs about the same topics explored on the second study through the analysis of her answers to the participants in the dialogue diaries.



### 5.3 Final considerations

This study is a study of *classroom research*. According to Cross (1990, p. 127) the purpose of classroom research is to help teachers gain insights into how students respond to their teaching methods and how they learn the content of a particular subject. Cross points out that classroom research is conducted to answer the following question “What are my students learning in my classroom as a result of my instruction?” (p. 128). But as any teacher conducting classroom research I am aware of the *ethical issues* involved in it: consent, honesty, privacy, ownership and harm (Richards, 2003, p. 140). I obtained written consent from the participants and I think I was honest because in that format I informed them what the purpose of the research was, that their identity was going to be protected (privacy), and that the research was not conducted to harm them. Regarding the ownership, they allowed me to use their electronic diaries as data sources and to get their answers to the questionnaires. Though I had stopped being their teacher -I had given them their scores of the Second Research Seminar- when I invited them to participate in the research, I was aware of the fact that they still saw me possessing a certain kind of authority.

As mentioned earlier, two possible limitations were identified relating to small numbers and the potential for students to want to try to please the teacher. Case-studies by their nature involve small numbers, and the lack of generalisability is compensated by the richness of the qualitative data uncovered. Both studies had examples of students responding in ways that would not necessarily please the teacher, so there is some evidence that the second limitation was not as serious as might be thought.

But, the objectives of this case study were met. The value of this study is that it describes strategies that can be used to improve both supervisory and thesis writing processes. It is a piece of research that seems to be initiating the research in this area at undergraduate level. It signals the need to conduct more research about supervisory practices by exploring supervisors and student's beliefs. This study helps to have a better understanding of the process and the issues involved in thesis writing at undergraduate level. Although these findings cannot be generalized, they can serve as a point of departure to research cognitions in supervisory practice in pre-service teacher education programmes.

This study reveals key issues that *thesis supervisors* could take into consideration to improve supervisory practices. It is especially in the first study where participants were having frequent communication with their supervisor. This frequent communication allowed this pre-service teachers to express their concerns, their opinions, their doubts, their likes and dislikes, their feelings. But they were motivated to communicate all of this because the supervisor was attentive to their needs and used that information to shape the syllabus into a reactive one as stated by Davies (2009).

*Teacher educators* can also reflect on issues raised in the development of this research that relate to their role in shaping beliefs of pre-service teachers. If we are aware of the importance of the impact of that our teaching practice exerts in the beliefs of pre-service teachers, then we should be putting in practice what we preach. If we want our students to use the constructivist learner centred approach and to be aware of the needs of their learners and to learn how to empower them, we should be creating similar conditions in our curricular practices (Schcolnik et al, 2006). These practices can foster construction of personal meaning that can take learners to

take responsibility of their own learning and develop deep and personal understanding (Pillay, 2002, p. 94).

It would also be advisable that *teacher education programmes* on the other hand, could revise their curriculum and curricular practices to evaluate if they are promoting professional development in both teachers and learners. As Bell and Gilbert (1994, p. 485) note, teacher development involves social, professional and personal issues. Thus, fostering teacher development would require attending to foster collaborative ways of relations, developing ideas and actions related to the profession and attending to the feelings of the teachers. If teacher educators develop, they would be able to make a difference in the lives of the students, as the main finding of Study 2 suggest.

I would like to conclude this thesis with a reflection for teachers of writing, teacher educators and thesis supervisors in EFL contexts. This piece of research is an example of supervisor commitment and dedication to educate thesis writers. I strongly believe that we as EFL teachers have the responsibility of educating our students that is to shape their beliefs to make them grow, in contrast to just training them to write an academic paper, such as a thesis as suggested by Eraut (1995). Reducing our work to the *thesis orientation* (Burns et al, 1999), may limit our teaching practice to a knowledge/skill endeavour and we would not be taking advantage of the opportunity to help our students to become better learners, better professionals and better persons. By committing ourselves to educate our learners, we allow them to experience growth but we also grow and develop professionally and personally.

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## APPENDIX A JULIAN'S DIARY

### FIRST ENTRY

1 Teacher,  
Here I include what I did during this week.

#### Thoughts

26 I have begun thinking about my thesis project. First of all, I have thought to research in the area of grammar but I am also interested in researching on the area of pragmatics. I still do not know whether to write on one of these topics or choosing a different one. As we still have some left time, I will be thinking seriously on what to do. I think that the first step of choosing the topic is one of the most complicated. However, choosing the topic is not what the thesis is all about. I am aware of the long process and also of the time that will take us all to fulfil our main objective. 13 14

#### Feelings

50 As I expressed in the first class, I am afraid of writing a thesis. I have had this bad feeling before entering university. Actually, since I was in high school I always feared this moment. I have felt anxiety and sometime frustration because I do not feel 25  
51 prepared to do research. I would like to overcome this fear and learn how to work on my thesis. A long time ago I used to think that I could be a researcher, and that I  
52 could carry out research projects but the more I learned about research in two of my subjects (Research methodology and Classroom research) the less I wanted to do research because I saw how complex it looked. Now, I do not feel like writing my thesis but I hope I can do an excellent work. 116

### SECOND ENTRY

1 Teacher,  
Here I include my second report.  
Regards,

#### Thoughts.

100 As I read my assigned homework, which was about reading and studying strategies, I discovered that I knew many of these strategies. I even used some of them unconsciously. Something that was really impressing was the fact that I learned about a strategy that I began using last summer. It is the strategy of highlighting information with different colours. I thought I was the only person that had developed this brilliant idea, but I am not. 53

18 Our teacher has given us some phrases we have to reflect on. In addition, she has provided us with some good advice when she told us to use music as a tool to write our theses. During one lesson, she asked about the topic we would select to carry out research. The comparisons she used to explain us how to this process were just fine. She also commented then that even if we liked the dish a lot we should not choose a topic that was so hard. That was a good comment. 101 56

6 In regard to the issue of selecting our topics, I have been so lucky because I am  
 22 going to work with one professor whose research is focused on the area of  
 pragmatics. I know I have some advantage over my classmates but I am also aware  
 that my thesis will not be done by itself but I will have to work really hard in order to  
 accomplish my target: writing my thesis.

**Feelings.**

48 I was afraid of telling my professor that I was going to work assisting a professor in  
 her research project. I felt this way because I thought she could feel kind of upset for  
 accepting the invitation of a different teacher. I was surprised when she said that it  
 was a good idea and that had been a good decision. I felt comfortable after hearing  
 her words. She just freed me from this fear.

102 As to the methodology she has been using I can say that it motivates me and cheers  
 me up. I used to be a person who had always had dreams and always thought of 54  
 achieving them. Nonetheless, there was a period of time in which I began forgetting  
 about the fulfilment of them. I began being pessimist. I said dreams were just that, 55  
 52 dreams and nothing more. Some months ago I had even stopped  
 dreaming. Suddenly, one day I began dreaming again. Now, this subject of research  
 103 seminar has been a signal more that tells me that dreams are achievable. The  
 phrases that the teacher uses enhance me and more specifically, the examples she  
 uses are motivating. I hope I never forget these thoughts I have just written and that  
 they lead my path.

### THIRD ENTRY

1 Hi professor,  
 Here I include my third report.

#### Thoughts.

74 Regarding the thoughts about my thesis, I can say that this week I did not do so 117  
 much for the development of it. Though I did what had been assigned to all of us, I 8  
 1 think I did not provide as much information as I was required. I did not either review 33  
 many sources to take my information. The fact was that I did not have a clear idea of 86  
 25 the concepts that had to be included in the first part of the work. Now, I do know what  
 to do as professor Elizabeth already told me the concepts I have to look up. It is still a  
 6 matter of decision for me to begin getting really involved in this effort-requiring  
 process. On Friday I'll be reviewing some more bibliography related to my thesis to  
 complement what I already had.

#### Feelings.

103 This week I felt motivated by two of the phrases given this week. I consider the most  
 motivating one was the one the teacher gave on Friday. That phrase was really  
 moving for me because it made me reflect on how selfish I am sometimes and I do  
 not care much about the others. It is very true that we will receive as much as we 56  
 give. But I think it is something we cannot do so easily.

### FOURTH ENTRY

1 Professor,

Here I include the entry corresponding to the fourth report.

### Thoughts

1 As I had previously commented, I had not done so much as to begin writing the first 13  
1 chapter. I had also mentioned that I would begin writing it. At the beginning I had no  
1 clear idea of how to start so the first thing I began doing was to read some 17  
1 information related to my topic. There was plenty of it and I had to select from all the  
1 one provided in different sources. I followed the directions given last Friday. As it was 27  
74 mentioned in class, we had to work in blocks of two hours so that we could take  
advantage of the time to the fullest. It indeed worked for me. I spent more than two  
hours reading. It was not an easy task because I felt tired at moments. I am not used  
to concentrating too much.

49 In regard to the development of writing the first chapter I can say that I had written  
few ideas at first. Then they began to pop up but were scarcely related to my topic.  
65 What I did was to keep the ideas I considered were relevant for my topic, then I 119  
110 selected the ones that were worthy. I also had to delete some info. Whenever I had  
118 doubts I used Criollo's book as a reference to write the sections in which I needed  
some help. Though his book helped me in some way, I had some doubts as how to  
include previous research in the field of my interest. I do not know if it was good or  
not, that will be evaluated by you. All in all I think I've given a tiny enormous step,  
which was to start with this project. Now I must go on as it has been suggested over  
and over.

71 To end with, the activity we did on Wednesday was worthy because we had the  
chance to have our papers reviewed and see the weaknesses our work. I knew I had  
some problem because before presenting my paper, one of my classmates had  
already given me some feedback about my work.

### Feelings

106 I must say that I felt pressured at the beginning because I did not know how I would 13  
49 begin. Then, as I moved forward I reflected and said that I did not have to feel 120  
40 pressured because it would not help in any way. So I decided to work as much as 38  
40 possible and forget about the stress that we create in ourselves. I accept that it is 15  
104 true the fact that writing is a difficult, even challenging task because we barely write 121  
enthusiasm which emphasized the importance of doing things no matter if they are  
tough. In fact, on Monday I felt so motivated and happy that I thought I could do 8  
things easily. I even felt like running, I had a lot of energy. That day, after reading, I 122  
redid some of the work I already had and included something more. Tuesday was  
86 The tough day but I managed to work. It was not impossible to advance in the 54  
project.

105 On Wednesday I felt bad a little bit because it was a difficult task to criticize our  
classmates' works. I could see from one of my classmate's face that she was a bit  
9 upset. She commented on Thursday morning that she indeed was upset and a bit  
disappointed because she had really worked on her project but there were obstacles  
that impeded her from doing more for her work.  
58 I am aware that, at a moment, I will experience the same situation of my classmate  
and I hope that I can say to myself that we can make things different if just we

58 include some good attitude and we give an extra effort. Because I consider that is one of all the elements involved in succeeding in what we do.  
I hope my attitude never changes.

Regards,

## FIFTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
This is the fifth entry of my diary.

### Thoughts

17 This week I just did not so much in regard to my thesis. I have checked some of the sections in my thesis that I have to work on and seen that there was some missing information that I could have included. I still have to search for information that may support my points but I am not sure whether I will find or not. 60

32 The activities that we did in class were interesting and more specifically I want to emphasize that the film we watched was really appropriate for the class as it deals with what we are about to do in our theses. I think I learned things that will be useful in the development of my project. I will take into account the fact that we have to get really immersed in our topics so that we can work faster and better. And also, I will take into account the fact that I must ask support from experts and that the must not plagiarize. 124 30 123

### Feelings.

47 There has been an emphasis in motivating ourselves since the beginning of the course. There have been phrases written down on the whiteboard saying that we can do many things and that it is our motivation what changes things. It has been said also that negative attitude should be avoided and just recently I read a sign saying 52  
32 "La única mala discapacidad en este mundo es la actitud negativa" It tells me a lot but nothing compared with what I learned from the movie Finding Forrester. It was something I had all the time dreamed of. Something similar to what Jamal experienced; finding someone who were interested in the his work and also provided 106  
108 him support that encouraged him so much to keep working on what he liked ( or loved?). The greatest lesson of this film for me was that we sometimes need someone that pushes us to the unknown and that guide us to accomplish what we are looking for. In addition, it is not just having that great mentor in front of us and stares at him as one more person around us, but also doing our best to improve more and more in our tasks. What I watched in that movie motivated me even more but also made me reflect on the fact that we have to work by ourselves because things are not made alone just like magic. 107 16 109

54 I will be working on my project.

2 Regards,  
Rolando

## SIXTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
Here I include the sixth entry of my diary.

### Thoughts

124 Interpreting and comprehending information are two difficult tasks for me to carry out.  
110 Just this week, what was presented in the class as to what to ask an author about the  
information stated in his/her work, from my view, will serve as a strategy to carry out  
those tasks. This is still a problem for me and I think I must start understanding what 59  
it is all about, otherwise, I will be in troubles. Last week I learned from my TOEFL  
score that this is my weakest area and is the one I need to pay more attention to. By 11  
Friday, I will start using some books to start developing my outline.

### Feelings

6 When I was told that I had to take the TOEFL test I felt a bit nervous because I had  
already taken it two years ago and my score had been 512, so I was nervous  
because I did not know whether I was going to improve my score or not. I have to say 59  
that I was sure I would get more than 550. I expected to obtain, however, a higher  
score than the one I got. When I received my score I was a little bit upset because,  
though I got more than the minimum (550), I felt I could have gotten a higher score.  
Later, I recognized I have to work on vocabulary and reading and that is what I will be  
doing this term and the next. But I have a comment for the TOEFL test. I think we  
have been trained to know things related to our area and have been less trained in 1  
other areas, specifically knowing, for example, vocabulary of other areas.

## SEVENTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
Here I include my seventh diary entry.

### Thoughts

72 This week's activities dealt with the development of chapter two. We were given  
8 directions on how to start writing our second chapter. As this chapter will include all  
the theory for the understanding of the phenomena in our theses, we will have look  
for information from different sources and start reading the information we find. This  
is, I consider, a difficult task to carry out. So far I have already found some sources  
and have gathered some information that I consider are worthy. I have had the  
125 chance to dedicate time to the task of reading some of the essential information  
needed for the development of my thesis and have discovered that I spend much  
time in reading. My reading speed is not the best. On Wednesday I went to the library  
and spent two hours in reading a single article; it was only 19 pages long. I wonder 60  
how I can increase my reading speed. I hope I can do it quickly or I will be spending  
much time in doing my reading assignments and this will take me more time in writing  
my next chapters.

85 The directions we were given in order to start jotting down our information were 145  
similar to those we had studied previously for the development of chapter one  
(reading, underlining and note-taking). However, this time we also asked to draw a  
mind map in order to start making connections with other concepts that are  
interrelated. Finally, there were also comments on the TOEFL scores. Most of us 61

were not satisfied with the results. I thought I had been the only one who was dissatisfied but I was not, though I accepted, as I mentioned in my previous report, that I have to continue working in order to learn and improve my weak points. 62

### Feelings

This week I was not feeling well. I felt kind of tired in my classes. I do not know why it was. I felt moody and did not feel willing to work. Probably it was due to stress. Yes, maybe it was stress and I think it was caused by the fact that I was going to start my social service on October 3rd. I have to say that I felt good when we carried out the activity of closing our eyes and start thinking about that magnificent place in our minds. I felt great but it was just for a moment. I liked the activity a lot. It made me feel like a great person. I felt satisfied and happy; full of confidence and proud of all what I had been able to do; ready to help others because just this week as I talked to the students in the social service, I discovered that my goal in life is to help others. 63  
Now what I want to do is to teach something to people because I think that will make me a full human being. I did not know what I wanted to do in life but now I think I know what I want to do. Carrying out that activity was meaningful for me because just a day before I had learned what I wanted and that activity made me feel capable of doing that. By developing my thesis and learning from it I would like to be like that old man who gives support to those who are in their way to the summit of the mountain. 64  
4

## EIGHTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
Here I include my eighth entry of my diary.

### Thoughts

Regarding my thoughts about the development of my chapter two I have to say that this time my work was not as good as the first one. I did not feel satisfied this time with what I wrote. Yet, I commented this experience in the class. My main concern was, and is still, in regard to the issue of how we can provide a point of view of what we read. I had not thought about this point but when we read our works in class this question suddenly emerged. I doubt my writing skills. I am not doing a good job in writing and it is because I do not see my point of view in my writing, as my classmates observed. I wonder how we can provide that point and how we can contribute to the development of the points made by the different authors we cite in our work. I do not know either whether what I wrote was what had been suggested or not because my classmates wrote something different from what I wrote. I think we misunderstood the task. What I could notice was that they wrote more a description of the article they were supposed to have read but my piece of writing was more oriented to defining one of the concepts of my outline. Finally, another of my concerns is how much/often we can cite/quote in our work. I cited various authors but after giving it to my peers to have it checked they told me I had included so many quotations in my work. When I read it again I noticed they were right. I saw it as they did. It was too packed with quotations and even though I could define the main concept I saw it was too much words and very few my point of view. But the point is that I do not know when and how I can provide a point of view. 65  
127  
65  
126  
71  
127

### Feelings



115 In one of the activities we carried out in the classroom we were asked to provide  
 feedback to our peers in regard to their papers. We were asked to answer some  
 65 questions after giving that feedback. One of those questions dealt with how we had  
 felt when providing feedback. To be sincere, I did not feel comfortable when I had to  
 criticize my classmates' work. I had the chance to read three papers. When I was  
 going to provide feedback to my first classmate I did not know what to tell him  
 because what I had seen in his paper was more a description of one article he had  
 9 read rather than a definition of his terms; probably this was not so relevant but that  
 was what I criticized in his paper. My discomfort was also influenced because that  
 116 person is a friend of mine and I know he is a good writer so I felt I could threaten him  
 with my comments and cause him being angry. The same happened with criticizing  
 my other classmates' papers; however, I did it. Then, we commented how we had felt  
 and I told them what I felt like when I gave those comments. Even, one of them said  
 she had felt the same way. She gave a wise comment we have to separate  
 friendship from work if we want our works to be improved. This was a relevant  
 comment but sometimes I (we) tend to feel bad (resentment). I think this is something  
 I still have to learn. I know it will not be easy.

## NINETH ENTRY

### Thoughts

117 This week I have been reminded that anytime we write in English we have to follow  
 the conventions given in this language. I remember that I had been taught this in  
 several of my Target Language courses: state the main point to develop and start  
 writing about it however, as I continued writing I forgot that principle of the writing  
 128 convention in English. I find difficult to state my point at the beginning and start  
 writing about it. What I find most difficult is the fact that I feel I will not have much to  
 say in regard to my point and if I do it, I cannot avoid being verbose.

122 I have been told to read and learn from professional writers. I have done that but  
 there are so many ways to start writing that I have been confused and I do not know  
 which style to choose. I think what I have to do is to do it in my way, but of course,  
 147 following the format we must follow in writing the thesis.

118 Another point that my teacher has been pointing out is the fact that we have to watch  
 the news to learn to report them but whenever I try to find the mechanics they follow I  
 just can't. It is just so difficult for me to identify how they do that. This is supposed to  
 help us develop our writing in chapter two but I am honest, I cannot analyze the  
 mechanics they follow. 24

### Feelings

52 I do not know where these ideas can fit, in feelings or thoughts. At the beginning of  
 the course I felt great. I considered all phrases provided me with something good. I  
 66 thought of them as motivating, inspiring, really encouraging, but lately I  
 have forgotten about them and scarcely reflect on them. Now I do not feel the way I  
 used to. I have been confused because I do not know where to go after I finish my  
 5 major. I feel that this has affected me in a way. Just on Wednesday I thought of  
 many things dealing with my major and everything I have done throughout it. I know I  
 am about to finish and that this is almost the last step of this stage. Even though I  
 know this, at times I want to drop. I am not feeling well. 6

## TENTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
Here I include my tenth entry.

### Thoughts and feelings.

72 This week though we did not have all of our classes, there was a good point to  
discuss. It continues to be the development of our theses projects. To do so, in the 82  
phrase of the day we were asked to reflect on what the author meant by stating it. My  
18 reflection will be addressed later in this section. Another point that I want to consider  
in this entry is the 66 fact that I felt more comfortable after receiving feedback in regard  
109 to my written work. It was more meaningful to hear from the the teacher what my  
weaknesses and strengths are. Now I clearly know what I have to improve. I also  
know that not everything is wrong and that I am not as bad as I thought I was. I will 42  
now turn to the reflection regarding the phrase we commented in class last  
Wednesday.

67 We were asked in class to reflect on whether we agreed or disagreed with the  
phrase of the day. I partially agree with this phrase. On the one hand I consider that  
we can do what we imagine is possible. If for example we imagine climbing a  
mountain and we are before it and willing to do it, we will do it. We think it is possible  
and we will achieve that goal. It may take us a long time to reach the summit but we  
129 will do it. In my case as a student of the Research Seminar class, I consider I can  
achieve the goal of writing a thesis because that is what I have imagined as possible.  
I think it is possible to do it but I admit that I sometimes doubt I can do it.

68 I think, on the other hand, that there are certain things that even if we imagine  
them we cannot carry them out. A clear example of this statement is the issue of  
death. Trying to bring back to life to a dead person is impossible. This is an extreme  
situation but it is true. Another example to consider is the fact that we as thinking  
beings have not been able to live in peace. Many people have imagined living in  
peace but it has not been accomplished. There are wars among countries and as a  
consequence there have been many dead. I think that living in peace is possible but  
reality shows me something different. As a result, I would say that not everything a  
man can imagine can be carried out.

In sum, I can distinguish two points in the phrase proposed by the author. The first 117  
one is thinking of actions seen as observable and achievable. The second is thinking  
of actions as simple wishes (imaginary actions that will never be accomplished). I  
would suggest myself and others to consider the first point as this is what will enable  
us fulfil our theses projects.

## ELEVENTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
This is the eleventh entry of my diary.



## Thoughts

69 I do believe the fact that our affective side of learning is important. During the  
process of writing my thesis I have had different thoughts. Some of them have been 130  
influenced by my mood. Sometimes I have felt that I can do great things and  
accomplish whatever is in front of me. There have been, however, other times when I  
100 have felt everything is worthless. The information presented in class gave me some  
answers as to why I sometimes can do things easily and why others I just cannot. I 70  
am aware of this fact now, but I also consider the cognitive aspect as important. It is  
not just a matter of feeling motivated to do things, it is also a matter of using our  
knowledge to complement our tasks more efficiently.

112 Regarding some aspects of writing my thesis I learned something that I did not  
understand when I began writing my thesis, it was how to cite more than one author.  
What I did not know was what author I had to include first. I learned that it does not  
matter what author began research in the field of study, what matters is the  
alphabetical order of authors. This has clarified one of many of my doubts.

## Feelings

58 This week I did not feel bad. I think I am experiencing good moments because even  
though I have many things to do, I have not felt pressured or unmotivated. There has  
been some improvement in my attitude these days in contrast with my mood and  
attitude in the last three weeks. Now, what I have to do is to take advantage of this  
good willingness to do what I have to do and do my best.

## TWELFTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
This is the twelfth entry of my diary.

## Thoughts

122 This week has been stressing for me because I have been thinking about my thesis  
project. Even though I already have the information needed to start I wondered how 13  
to start doing it. On Friday, as I spent some time in the library reading some written 8  
material I had the idea of seeing what an expert in the area I am interested in  
included in the theoretical background of his paper. This idea had already been 120  
suggested but I had not known how to exploit its use. Now, I think, as the teacher has  
suggested, I am finding my way to approach writing chapter two of my thesis. It had  
not been easy to start. I had taken me a lot of time thinking when to start and how to 13  
do it. The last two weeks I had born in mind that I had to write but had not done 132  
anything to begin. Just last week I finally decided to start revising material I had not  
revised and taking notes, which I think is a good strategy because it has helped me 133  
extract the thesis statements of the authors' articles; I find it useful also because I do  
not get lost when I look for the information as it had happened previously because I 134  
only underlined the information but when looking for it, it was difficult to find it.  
Anyway, now I have started reading and writing the information I have already  
collected.

I have a reflection that draws on the phrase posted on Wednesday. What the phrase 18  
conveyed to me was a picture of many situations in my life. I could enumerate

several but the one I am presenting describes the process of writing my thesis. I had learned in the development of chapter one that I had to start writing as soon as possible but I immediately forgot it. Actually, I am aware of the fact that I did not really learn the lesson and now, that is causing me being stressed. If I had really learned that I have to do things earlier I would not be overwhelmed now for all the things that I have to do (social service, work, and oral presentation in one class, exam, and writing chapter two of my thesis). Now, I think I have to take things more seriously otherwise it will cause me troubles in my professional life.

### Feelings

This week, even though I have many things to do me feel motivated to work. I have changed my bad attitude to an enthusiastic one. I am conscious that it has not been a matter of attitude only, but also a matter of a good state of mind, of feeling good, of having elevated self-confidence and esteem. I know I'll make it. I want to remark that the article by Christenson made me aware of why I can work highly motivated at times and why at other times I just feel like doing nothing.

### THIRTEENTH ENTRY

Professor,  
This is the Thirteenth entry of my diary.

### Thoughts

This week was just marvellous regarding my thesis. After finishing writing my thesis I learned that I can achieve my set goals. I had set the goal of writing two pages everyday so that I could complete the development of chapter 2. I had told myself that I had to do that no matter by which means but I had to do it. Since I had already read about my topic I started connecting the ideas I already had and complemented them with some new that I had found while I was doing my literature review from other sources. I also learned that by having different sources, I could learn easily the original authors because other authors interpreted their ideas; this gave me insights to understand better what the authors meant in the original work. After having all the information that I was going to type, I started to think of how to organize it. I began writing isolated items of what I wanted to include in the whole chapter. I did this because I thought that it was crucial to start writing something and not to think about what to include first and what not to. When I finally had something written down I started to try to include related topics to the points I had already developed. Then when I had finally my information I wrote the introduction. I think we can write an introduction when we finally know what we have in every section of our work. I followed the format of the essay presented in class. It is a format that helped me understand the mechanics of writing academically. Regarding the evaluation of my peers, I felt flattered because they told me the organization of my paper was well done and it was easy to read for them but I still lack the comment of the teacher to let me know if it was a good job or it needs improvement. I think it does need, I am not satisfied with it.

### Feelings

92 After finishing my chapter 3 I felt great. I felt happy, satisfied, cheerful, more 141  
 motivated than when I started to write chapter 2. I think the formula of effort plus  
 enthusiasm really works, but we must be in the mood to really exploit the formula that 21  
 eventually enables us to do our work easily and successfully. When I finished I felt  
 great, but I have to admit that when I read what I had written I felt a little bit  
 disappointed because I think my work still lacks something. I do not know what it is 158  
 but it lacks something. I will notice that when I finally receive the comments of the  
 118 teacher.

#### FOURTEENTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
 This is the last entry of this course.

##### Thoughts.

This last week of classes I only went over my project and made some changes. I  
 included a table of contents that I had not included and that my classmates had  
 suggested me to include. As to my classes I already presented my project and found  
 out that many of my classmates and I share some information in our literature review 144  
 it was surprising for me to see that we have almost the same information. I think that  
 we could discuss the information altogether and enrich our works. I will see if it is  
 possible.

##### Feelings.

Regarding my feelings I just can say that now I feel worried for what is next. In a way  
 104 I feel relaxed but feeling a bit worries because I am sure that it will be difficult to start 142  
 next year with the same enthusiasm that I had already developed. Well, I will try to  
 start as enthusiastic as I was this term but I know beforehand that it will be difficult for  
 me to do it.

#### FIFTEENTH ENTRY

1 Professor,  
 This is the last entry of the course.

90 Since the beginning of the course I was afraid of writing my thesis as I reported it in  
 some entries of my diary. You mentioned that by the end of the course we would 67  
 finish at least chapters 1, 2 and a draft of chapter 3. That was the golden treasure 143  
 144 all wanted to get. I was one of those longing to finish it up. The process is not  
 finished yet; I am aware of this fact but believe that I will complete it when the course  
 118 finishes. I overcame my fear by believing in doing what I wanted. The phrases 121  
 presented in class encouraged me at times; there were other times, however, when I 141  
 felt that they were too idealist for me. I felt great when I had finally drafted my tree  
 92 chapters and saw that the only way to write something is to dedicate time and effort 133  
 to it. I learned to use the note-taking technique and identifying the main purpose of  
 134 the articles I read. This latter one helped me identify the information I was going to 145  
 find throughout the text. It was easy in some articles to find the needed information  
 but there were other articles that were really complex for me to decipher.

- 73 Regarding the work I did I know I did not work as hard as I could have. I always completed my work but I consider that it could have been easier and faster if I had done my tasks exploiting my time to the fullest. I must learn to work taking advantage of all the available time that I have. That will be my resolution for the coming year.
- 54 The greatest lesson I learned was to be constant and work with enthusiasm. Now it is my decision to continue working or remain stuck.
- 11 Thanks for helping me and congratulations for all the work you have been doing as in your PhD as with all of us in class.

## APPENDIX B

### Thesis and Professional Development Questionnaire (TAPDQ)

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get your opinion about professional development in Modern Languages and its relationship with thesis writing based on your experience as a student of this major.

We appreciate your willingness to participate in this study that will contribute to the knowledge and development of our field. Your answers will keep confidential and will be only used for research purposes.

#### I. Personal information

Circle the option or write down your answers.

Area: Teaching/ Translation

Sex: M / F Age: \_\_\_\_\_ High school: Private / Public

Occupation: Full time student/ Part time student (if you work)

Research interests: \_\_\_\_\_

#### II. Professional development

Directions for sections II to IV.

Circle the number that corresponds to your degree of agreement with the statements listed on the left (strongly agree= 4; agree = 3; disagree = 2; strongly disagree = 1). There is no right or wrong answer. They will just represent your opinion or your personal experience.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I know what a professional is	4	3	2	1
2. After finishing my major I will be a professional	4	3	2	1
3. Being a professional requires knowledge	4	3	2	1
4. Being a professional requires skills	4	3	2	1
5. Being a professional requires a positive attitude.	4	3	2	1
6. I know what professional development is about	4	3	2	1
7. Successful teachers have developed professionally	4	3	2	1
8. Successful translators have developed professionally	4	3	2	1

9. Developing professionally requires reflection.	4	3	2	1
10. Professional development leads to autonomy	4	3	2	1
11. Professional work requires moral commitment	4	3	2	1
12. A professional should continue developing	4	3	2	1
13. Developing professionally occurs Through the interaction with others	4	3	2	1
14. Professional development means ongoing learning	4	3	2	1
15. Developed teachers can make a difference in the life of students	4	3	2	1

Comments

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### III. Thesis writing and professional development

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Thesis writing is a challenging task	4	3	2	1
2. After finishing my thesis I will be a professional	4	3	2	1
3. Thesis writing requires knowledge	4	3	2	1
4. Thesis writing requires skills	4	3	2	1
5. Thesis writing requires a positive attitude	4	3	2	1
6. I know what thesis writing is about	4	3	2	1
7. Successful thesis writers have developed professionally	4	3	2	1
8. Thesis writing requires reflection	4	3	2	1
9. Thesis writing leads to autonomy	4	3	2	1

10. Writing a thesis requires moral commitment	4	3	2	1
11. A thesis writer should continue researching	4	3	2	1
12. Thesis writing is done better through the interaction with others	4	3	2	1
13. The lives of successful thesis writers have changed after writing a thesis	4	3	2	1
14. Thesis writing means ongoing learning	4	3	2	1
15. Thesis writing fosters professional development	4	3	2	1

Comments

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#### IV. Personal development and thesis writing

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. At the beginning of the course I was ready to write a thesis	4	3	2	1
2. I have grown after writing my thesis	4	3	2	1
3. I have acquired knowledge	4	3	2	1
4. I have acquired skills	4	3	2	1
5. I have improved my attitude	4	3	2	1
6. I have become more autonomous	4	3	2	1
7. I am committed with my thesis	4	3	2	1
8. I am a more reflective student	4	3	2	1
9. I feel like polishing my thesis	4	3	2	1
10. I feel like defending my thesis in an exam	4	3	2	1

11. I feel like presenting my thesis in a conference	4	3	2	1
12. I should share my thesis findings With other professionals	4	3	2	1
13. Now I value peer feedback more	4	3	2	1
14. Thesis writing has helped me to be a better student	4	3	2	1
15. Writing my thesis has helped me to begin my professional development	4	3	2	1

Comments

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## **V. Strengths and weaknesses as thesis writer and future professionals**

1. Write down your answers based on your personal experience

A. Thesis writer

\* My strengths

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\* My weaknesses

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B. Future professional

\* My strengths

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\* My weaknesses



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2. Write a reflection at the back of the page explaining how you can take advantage of your strengths to reduce your weaknesses both as thesis writer and as a future professional.
  - A. Thesis writer
  - B. Future professional

### APPENDIX C: Activity to foster reading strategies and autonomy

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Learning to better my reading strategies</b>
<b>Level</b>	High intermediate or above
<b>Objectives</b>	To help students become familiar with reading strategies that can help them become better learners.
<b>Timing</b>	One hour of independent study + 30 min. of class time
<b>Resources</b>	A text containing reading strategies and if possible an explanation of how to identify key ideas and summarize texts.
<b>Description</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students are asked to read a text of reading strategies and to make a summary or a mind map of the reading for homework.</li><li>2. The next class the teacher asks students to bring their mind maps.</li><li>3. Students get in pairs and discuss their work.</li><li>4. The teacher asks them to share their findings with the whole group.</li><li>5. Finally, students can make a summary of the main strategies or share the strategies they use to read texts.</li></ol>
<b>Notes</b>	The text can teach students how to summarize the text.
<b>Further reading</b>	Barras, R. (1996). <i>Students must write: A guide to better writing in coursework and examinations. (2nd ed.)</i> . London: Routledge.

Contributor:  
Rebeca E. Tapia Carlín

## APPENDIX D: Activity to foster reflection with quotes and collaborative learning

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Quoting quotes</b>
<b>Level</b>	High intermediate or above
<b>Objectives</b>	To help students become familiar with the use of quotations in APA format at the same time they reflect on a quote in teams. To learn how to do direct and indirect citations without listening to the lecture of the teacher, but learning from the models provided and their classmates.
<b>Timing</b>	20 minutes approximately
<b>Resources</b>	A quote that can foster reflection
<b>Description</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are asked to read a quote provided by the teacher from a book or in an article or brought by a classmate but also from a written source.</li> <li>2. The teacher asks students to get in teams of 3 students to reflect about the quote and to use it to write two types of sentences: one using it as a direct citation and the other one as an indirect citation applying APA format. The teacher should provide some models to show learners how to do it.</li> <li>3. Students discuss the quote in teams and write the two types of sentences. Then they can write them on the board or on paper walls.</li> <li>4. When everybody has finished students stick their papers or write their sentences on the board to review APA format.</li> <li>5. Finally, students can review their works and ask questions to their peers and to the teacher.</li> </ol>
<b>Notes</b>	The teacher can act as a facilitator and monitor.
<b>Further reading</b>	<p>Moskowitz, G. (1978). <i>Caring and sharing in the foreign language class: A sourcebook on humanistic techniques</i>. Boston, MA: Heinle &amp; Heinle.</p>

Contributor:  
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## APPENDIX E: Activity to foster reflection with movies

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Movies can teach us</b>
<b>Level</b>	All
<b>Objectives</b>	To help students reflect about the content of movies and apply that reflection on course content and on their lives.
<b>Timing</b>	Variable, from 1 to 3 hours.
<b>Resources</b>	DVD player and TV or screen
<b>Description</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students are prepared to watch the movie with some questions about the content of it. This can be done in pairs or small groups.</li><li>2. The teacher asks students to watch the movie. The movie can be shown complete or the teacher can select just part of it, depending on the available time.</li><li>3. The teacher can make pauses to highlight important scenes if needed.</li><li>4. The teacher can ask comprehension questions about the movie like the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What was the movie about?</li><li>• What did you learn from it? or What was the message of the movie?</li></ul></li><li>5. Finally, students can work in small groups sharing their views of the movie and producing a group answer to these questions.</li></ol>
<b>Notes</b>	It is advisable to show the movies with the captions in English to help learners understand the message of the movie.
<b>Further reading</b>	Sottit, D. & Domene, R. (2001). <i>El programa práctico de las virtudes</i> . México, Mex.: Ruz.

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## Appendix F: Text of Consent Forms

### Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: **Ex-Learners and their ex-teacher's beliefs about thesis writing and professional development.**

You are invited to participate in a study of pre-service ex-student teachers and their ex-teacher about the process of thesis writing. The purpose of the study is to identify the beliefs of pre-service ex-student-teachers and their ex-professor about thesis writing and at the end of it. The study is being conducted by Rebeca Elena Tapia Carlín- student of the doctorate of Applied Linguistics of Macquarie University. Her contact information is the following: Mobile phone: 2225-052822, and email [rebetapc@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:rebetapc@yahoo.com.mx). The research is being conducted to meet the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Applied Linguistics under the supervision of Prof. David Hall, professor of the department of Linguistics, Macquarie University (Sydney, Australia) Prof. Hall's contact information are telephone +61 2 9850 9647 and email [david.hall@ling.mq.edu.au](mailto:david.hall@ling.mq.edu.au).

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer two questionnaires and a guided account describing your experience writing your thesis and giving advice to other thesis students and their supervisors. These instruments may take you about 2 hours to answer. Also you will be asked to allow the researcher to use your weekly electronic diary entries written throughout the course for the purposes of this research.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential. No individual will be identified in any publication of results. The researcher and her supervisors will be the only ones to have access to the data firstly, but this information may be used in the future by other researchers to conduct a longitudinal study protecting your identity by giving you a number or a pseudonym. If you want to withdraw from the longitudinal study, you will contact the researcher and she will not take your data into consideration for that study.

If you decide to participate in this study about 'Ex-Learners and their ex-teachers beliefs about thesis writing and professional development', you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without having to give a reason and without consequence.

The findings of this research will be reported in 3 research articles and a doctoral thesis. This research will attempt to help future thesis writers and thesis directors to facilitate the process of thesis writing by knowing more about it through the analysis of thesis students and thesis director beliefs.

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand the information

(Participant's name)

above any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(participant's name-block letters)

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigators name: Rebeca Elena Tapia Carlín

Investigator's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone [02] 9850 7854 Sydney Australia; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)), or Mtra. Evangelina Rodriguez Vega, Coordinator of the LEMO (229-55-00, Ext. 5820, email [evarodveg@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:evarodveg@yahoo.com.mx)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

**(Investigator's or participant's copy)**

## Appendix G: Participants' answers to Section 2 of the TAPDQ with commentary

**Key:** 4-Totally agree; 3-Agree; 2-Disagree: 1 totally Disagree

**Fig. 3. Group scores for Section 2: Professional development**

Question/Answer	4 TA	3 A	2 D	1 TD
1. I know what a professional is	1	6	1	0
2. After finishing my major I will be a professional	1	7	0	0
3. Being a professional requires knowledge	5	3	0	0
4. Being a professional requires skills	5	3	0	0
5. Being a professional requires a positive attitude	6	2	0	0
6. I know what professional development is about	1	7	0	0
7. Successful teachers have developed professionally	5	2	1	0
8. Successful translators have developed professionally	5	3	0	0
9. Developing professionally requires reflection	7	1	0	0
10. Professional development leads to autonomy	6	2	0	0
11. Professional work requires moral commitment	6	2	0	0
12. A professional should continue developing	7	1	0	0
13. Developing professionally occurs through the interaction with others	5	3	0	0
14. Professional development means ongoing learning	7	1	0	0
15. Developed teachers can make a difference in the life of students	8	0	0	0

The main pattern of the answers contained in this figure is a general agreement to most of the statements. There were only two participants who disagree to statements 1 and 7. Thus, most participants believe that they know what a professional is and successful teachers have developed professionally. However, these statements are not the ones where the participants agreed most. The items that had most agreement (7 or 8 participants) were 2, 6, 9, 12, 14 and 15. These answers suggest that most participants agree on the fact that finishing their major transforms them in

professionals; they know what professional development is about; professional development requires reflection and it means ongoing learning thus a professional should continue developing. Actually, statement 15 was the only one from the whole instrument that got 100% consensus, that is, the 8 participants marked the option 'Totally agree' in it. This means that all the participants believe that developed teachers can make a difference in the life of students. Other statements of this section which had an important agreement were statements 5, 10 and 11. These answers show that most participants also believe that professional development leads to autonomy and professional work requires professionals to have a positive attitude and to make a moral commitment.

## Appendix H: Participants' answers to Section 3 of the TAPDQ with commentary

**Fig 4. Group scores for Section 3: Thesis writing and professional development**

Question/Answer	4 TA	3 A	2 D	1 TD
1. Thesis writing is a challenging task	5	3	0	0
2. After finishing my thesis I will be a professional	0	3	4	1
3. Thesis writing requires knowledge	6	2	0	0
4. Thesis writing requires skill	5	3	0	0
5. Thesis writing requires a positive attitude	7	1	0	0
6. I know what thesis writing is about	4	4	0	0
7. Successful thesis writers have developed professionally	1	5	2	0
8. Thesis writing requires reflection	5	2	0	0
9. Thesis writing leads to autonomy	3	3	2	0
10. Writing a thesis requires moral commitment	2	5	1	0
11. A thesis writer should continue researching	5	1	2	0
12. Thesis writing is done better through the interaction with others	4	4	0	0
13. The lives of successful thesis writers have changed after writing a thesis	2	4	2	0
14. Thesis writing means ongoing learning	5	3	0	0
15. Thesis writing fosters professional development	4	4	0	0

Even though there are more items which have some answers of disagreement (2, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13), again most of the subjects agree with most of the statements of this section. The item who had most disagreement was number 2 which referred to the fact that after finishing their theses they would be professionals. This shows that most participants do not believe that after finishing their major they will be professionals. The items that got most agreement were the following: 5 (7 answers); 3 (6 answers); 4, 7, 8, 10 11 and 14 (5 answers). So, the participants believe that thesis writing requires first of all a positive attitude. However they think that thesis



writing is a challenging task that also requires knowledge, skills and it means ongoing learning. There was another pattern of agreement found in the answers of the participants for items 6, 12 and 15. These answers suggest that all participants believe they know what thesis writing is about, and they believe that it is best done through the interaction with others; they also believe that writing a thesis can foster professional development. Finally, the rest of the items got less consensus among the participants: 9, 13 and 2. The answers of items 9 and 13 suggest though that some participants believe that thesis writing leads to autonomy and the lives of successful thesis writers have changed after writing a thesis; also, they believe that after finishing their major they will be professionals. In the section of the comments only four pre-service students participated.

## Appendix I: Participants' answers to Section 4 of the TAPDQ with commentary

**Fig 5. Group scores for Section 4: Personal development and thesis writing**

Question/Answer	4 TA	3 A	2 D	1 TD
1. At the beginning of the course I was ready to write a thesis	0	1	3	4
2. I have grown after writing my thesis	2	6	0	0
3. I have acquired knowledge	4	4	0	0
4. I have acquired skills	3	5	0	0
5. I have improved my attitude	2	6	0	0
6. I have become more autonomous	4	3	1	0
7. I am committed with my thesis	5	3	0	0
8. I am a more reflective student	4	4	0	0
9. I feel like polishing my thesis	4	2	2	0
10. I feel like defending my thesis in an exam	3	3	1	1
11. I feel like presenting my thesis in a conference	2	3	2	1
12. I should share my thesis findings with other professionals	3	5	0	0
13. Now I value peer feedback more	4	4	0	0
14. Thesis writing has helped me to be a better student	2	5	1	0
15. Writing my thesis has helped me to begin my professional development	3	3	2	0

Similar to the results found on Sections 2 and 3, this figure also shows a general agreement to the statements of this section. However, it is clear that there is one statement where the answers of the participants were concentrated on the disagreement area: 3 participants disagree with it and 4 participants totally disagree with it which means that 7 participants disagree with it; this was statement number 1 which was about the fact that at the beginning of the course the students were ready to write a thesis.

The items that had most agreement were items 2 and 5 followed by 4, 12, 7, 3, 8 and 13. This means that the participants see themselves as having grown after writing their theses and among this growth they recognize a positive change in their attitude. Also, they recognize they have acquired skills and knowledge after writing their thesis, they are more reflective and value peer feedback more. They believe they are committed with their theses and they should share their findings with other professionals.

Then other statements that showed consensus on agreement for this section were items 6, 14, 9, 10 and 15. Thus, participants believe that they have become more autonomous students after writing their thesis and thesis writing has helped them to be better students. They also consider that thesis writing has helped them to begin their professional development. Finally, they believe that they need to polish their thesis and they would like to defend their thesis in an exam.

The statement that showed most dispersion not only in this section but in the whole instrument was statement number 11, which was about the willingness to present their thesis in a conference: five students agreed and three disagreed.

Individual scores

## Appendix J: Individual Scores of the TAPDQ with commentary

Fig 6. Individual scores for Sections 2 - 4

Participant	Section 2 Professional development	Section 3 Thesis writing and professional development	Section 4 Personal development and thesis writing	TOTAL	MEAN
1. Sandy	52	49	43	144	48.0
2. Nancy	60	49	48	157	52.3
3. Paula	54	53	55	162	54.0
4. Carmen	57	53	53	163	54.3
5. Marisol	50	46	39	135	45.0
6. Yazmín	55	48	41	144	48.0
7. Julian	53	49	53	155	51.6
8. Pedro	52	57	50	159	53.0

The participants who got the highest overall scores were Paula and Carmen. The participant who got the overall lowest score was Marisol. But it is important to point that the scores reflect their personal experience as thesis writers and their beliefs after that process which was unique for each of the participants. But it is worth noting that the meaning on the scores on each section varies and it cannot even be generalised per section, due to the fact that agreement to some statements may indicate a higher awareness of the issues involved in the area.

## Appendix K: Participants' answers to Sections 5 of the TAPDQ with commentary

Section 5. Strengths and weaknesses as thesis writers and future professionals.

Table 21. Strengths and weaknesses as theses writers

Participant	Comment
Sandy	I've learned to cite authors and develop coherence and cohesion in my work: however I have some spelling mistakes and I don't give my point of view.
Nancy	I can find good and relevant information, but it is difficult for me to organize it.
Paula	I am reflective, autonomous and I have clear ideas; however, it is difficult for me to choose information and to express some ideas.
Carmen	I am very positive and willing to accept critique; I can work with other people however, I need time to organize my thoughts.
Julian	I'm resourceful, I'm a good writer, I have a positive attitude, I'm fascinated with my area of study; however I must admit that I'm a slow reader so I process information slowly, I'm not a good group worker and I easily lose attention.
Pedro	I think when we write a thesis we become more independent students and we try to look for information by ourselves, however, it was difficult for me to choose my topic, especially as I was aware of the fact that we really need to love our topic in order to work well on it.

Six out of the eight participants answered the fifth section of the instrument. Each of the answers of the participants is different.

Table 22. Strengths and weaknesses as future professionals

Participant	Comment
Sandy	I'm responsible, committed and willing to learn, however I don't know how to work in teams. If I work in groups I have to know the persons very well to feel comfortable and I'm a bit lazy sometimes.
Nancy	I'm responsible, I think I want to commit myself with my work; but I know that if I live a bad experience I give up doing what I was doing, I get disappointed easily.
Paula	I have knowledge and skills; but it is difficult for me to know how to apply them appropriately.
Carmen	I like what I do, I can manage problems at the moment they arise and I have capacity for reflection, however the first time or the first minutes I'm in front of many people I get nervous, then after some time I feel confident.
Julian	I'm a committed person, I like challenges, I like to learn new things, I hardly give up. On the other hand I'm not very sociable, I get stressed easily and I don't have much work experience.
Pedro	If we choose the adequate topic the writing process will be easier. However, I think that we need to learn a lot about writing and its different steps.

In thesis writing they mentioned totally different strengths and weaknesses. However, on the section of future professionals, they share a few commonalities. Sandra and Nancy begin their participation highlighting the same strength: responsibility which is also related to Julian's answer: commitment. But again, most of their answers describing their weaknesses are different among themselves.

Table 23. Personal reflection to overcome their weaknesses as thesis writer.

Participant	Comment
Sandy	I think I can improve my spelling mistakes by looking at what others to in their work or taking some extra time to look up for the words in a dictionary. Besides, I think I can read my work at least twice before handling it in. The problem with the latter strategy is the fact that sometimes I finish the work some minutes before delivering it. I have said to myself that I should do the work with more anticipation but I have always failed to do it.
Nancy	It is always hard for me to organize the information. Sometimes I find or search for a bit of information that I don't know how to process it. If the information is already relevant then what I have to do first is to look for each part of my work.
Julian	I think I can overcome my problems by getting used to academic skills such as reading and writing to the point that these skills come out naturally. Also by thinking that thesis writing is not a requirement, but a step to become professional.
Pedro	I think we go through the first step which was very difficult at the beginning. Now as thesis writer and future professional we can take advantage of all the mistakes in order to make it as part of the strengths. Personally, I think I need to polish my work by adding or making sentences clear and easy to understand. Of course I think we should have in mind all the mistakes in order not to commit them again.

Table 23 presents a problem solution approach on their narratives which shows a clear understanding of the issues that the four participants who answered this section faced in the process of thesis writing.

Table 24. Personal reflection to overcome their weaknesses as future professionals.

Participant	Comment
Sandy	I think I can socialize better by getting to know more the people I will work with. I can also take advantage of my responsibility to be less lazy and try to do things with more anticipation.
Nancy	I know in life there will always be bad experiences and if I already have the enthusiasm to change the stereotype of English as the boring class. Then what is missing is the effort of teachers. I mean my effort. Trying not to give up at first. In fact this happened to me recently. I can say that now I wouldn't like to work with students from secondary school. As I said overcoming those situations and learn from them always help.
Julian	I think that answer a leads to B. Thesis writing is the first step to professionalism, and professionalism requires experience. So, the more knowledge and practice we get the more advanced we can get in our professional development.

As the participants are beginning their teaching careers this was a more difficult task as the previous one. Only three participants took the challenge of answering it. Still, it contains relevant reflections that show a clear understanding of the task and the issues they are aware they need to work on as well as the way to lessen their weaknesses.