Monologues and Dialogues in the Language Classroom: A Study of Students' Experience in Trying to Learn English as a Compulsory Component at a Mexican University.

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates students' perceptions towards English classes in a Mexican public university. I argue that the lack of engagement of a small group of students taking part in English classes which are a compulsory component in their tertiary program is not a product of a lack of interest or ability as would normally be argued. This thesis establishes an alternative possibility.

Through an interpretive approach to research using several ethnographic techniques and discourse analysis to make sense of the data, the thesis suggests that in order to sustain an engaged position as language learners, students and teachers should construct dialogical spaces that could lead to a better understanding of each other and as a result a more conscious position as engaged learners of a foreign language. The data demonstrate that contradictory discourses within the institution's policies and those from different departments contribute to a disengaged attitude towards learning English where learning a second language competes with other subjects that are considered central for future professional practice within their disciplines of interest. Data also reveal that aside from the marginalized position that English appears to have, there are issues of students' marginalization at classroom level which could be the result of monologic positions the teachers and students that participated in this study appear to construct. To better sustain an engaged attitude towards the subject, I suggest that safe spaces could become arenas to raise the awareness of what being a language learner takes. I also suggest that many of the practices within a language classroom stem from monologic discourses and might be considered the source of many of the issues raised in this study. This research challenges some views currently held about motivation as these do not fit with understandings emerging from this study.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The lack of engagement of students in tertiary level taking part in English classes is not a product of a lack of interest or ability as would normally be argued. This thesis establishes an alternative possibility. Data revealed discursive issues related to lack of engagement in and outside the language classroom. To reach the point of stating this involved taking a stance where language is conceived of as a site of struggle and positionings it within a poststructural stance drawing on Bakhtin and Vygotsky to understand students' constructions.

Through a literature review on the good language learner and learner beliefs, I look at how the phenomenon has traditionally been explained; this discussion leads to the problematization of teachers' and students' interactions that suggest a different interpretation and understanding of this notion of lack of engagement.

This thesis provides an insight into students' processes as language learners. I started out looking at how students constructed their motivation, then I discovered through my data that something was happening that I had not envisaged. This implicates numerous aspects that we already know about English language teaching and English language learning. However, in my discussion, one of the major points I am going to make is that much of the discussion is actually one side of a failing dialogue. The discussion further shows that some constructions of a good learner and learner beliefs are part of the problem in English language teaching and learning as these assumptions have influenced many prominent ideas in the field of language teaching.

The phenomenon that I investigate is the lack of engagement of struggling students, a small group of students who I perceived as having difficulties. Engaging in learning English is apparently fostered by language teachers and the institution. However, teaching and learning processes appear problematic given that teachers and students have conceptions and expectations about these processes that do not seem to converge as often as would be considered ideal. This situation raises some questions that need clarification. One of this seems to be how teachers and students communicate; how communication influences students' attitudes towards the class

and the language. The phenomenon poses also a query on their mutual understanding and on whether or not they seek to understand each other.

Among the emotions that emerged through the research, fear, anxiety, lack of confidence, and preoccupation, appeared important in the learning process, an argument that has been raised in the past, but which in this particular case, challenged not only gaining promotion within their language classes, but the completion of a university program. I discovered while gathering data that students' positions changed; this raised other questions, what triggers those changes? What underlies those changes? While students who face difficulties apparently adopt marginal positions as language learners, how they overcome such positions and become participants of the language learning discourse communities, whether or not they exercise agency, are some of the issues raised.

A consideration of positions of power and control that teachers may adopt in a language classroom became necessary to understand the influence these positions of the language teachers could have on students' positions as language learners.

Another issue raised in this study is the role of exams and how the process interferes on students' learning and attitude towards the language class in a context where English is mandatory and yet resisted. Perceptions about classroom objectives are also suggested to have some bearing upon an engaged attitude. Thus, my quest became exploring perceptions about the type of activities used in class and teachers' teaching approach and how students perceived their teachers and their teaching approach. The thesis addresses issues related to them as well as the way the Self Access Centre (CAADI, Centro de Auto Aprendizaje de Idiomas) may support the construction of an engaged learner.

In order to understand the diversity and intricacy of the phenomenon, I chose an interpretive research approach using ethnographic methods to gather data: unstructured students' and teachers' interviews, participant student observations at the CAADI, non-participant classroom and patio observations, students' e-mails and my researcher's field notes and journal.

The nature of the study calls for a situated context in which the objective is not to reach generalizations but interpret participants' constructions to understand their realities.

The discussion derives from the findings of an interpretive ethnographic study of a group of tertiary students at a Mexican public university where English is a mandatory subject. The justification of the project stems out of the need to identify factors that impact students' engagement in the learning of a second language and thus their ability to finish a tertiary program in a particular institution.

The thesis is organized in six chapters. Their construction involved continuous reassessment as my understanding and awareness of the meaning of doing research evolved at the same time as that of the project itself. In the process, writing became a central feature that allowed me to explore in depth emergent topics. Many of those pieces of writing did not become part of the final document; but they were valuable means of personal development which evolved into the following organization of my thesis.

Map of the Thesis

Chapter 1

I provide an introduction to the study, a map of the thesis, the research focus, background information about the institution where the study took place, and factual information about key participants. I also present information about the researcher, the source of the initial research questions and reasons that justify the project.

Chapter 2

Through a chronological approach, this chapter explores how the phenomenon of students who have difficulties has traditionally been explained by key studies. I discuss relevant literature in the field of English Language Teaching (henceforth ELT) that deals with constructions of the good language learner, learner beliefs and language learning beliefs. I also look at how these concepts have changed over time

as the relevance of the social contexts where students struggle has grown opening a space for students' voices to be heard. This discussion is necessary to explain the monologic nature of teachers' discourses that emerged from the data and as a result monologic positions students and teachers apparently adopt.

Chapter 3

This chapter presents the research methodology I used for the study. I first define and give a rationale for the research methodology. I then give an overview and rationale of the research process. I describe the research process and ethical issues that were of concern.

Chapter 4

The main objective of this chapter is to analyze the data. However, at the beginning of the chapter I explain the approach I used to analyze the data. After introducing the data analysis process, I look at how students construct their experiences drawing on data from students' and teachers' interviews, observations and researcher's notes and journal. The evidence suggests contradictions within the institution's discourses and positions adopted by different discourse communities. I analyse data concerning affective factors that impinge upon students' constructions of their experiences as language learners. There is evidence that students seek safe spaces where they develop some level of awareness of the process of learning English. The Chapter also looks at gaps between teachers and students where communication is constructed in the form of monologues rather than dialogues. This seems to prevent students from becoming aware of the significance of engagement in learning English and of gaining ownership of the language being learned.

Chapter 5

In this chapter I first re-visit the research questions and the literature review done in Chapter 2 in light of the evidence found in the data analysis. Then, I examine the findings from Chapter 4. I start by looking at discursive contradictions within the institution's discourse communities and their influence upon students' level of engagement in learning English. I discuss the impact that monologic classes may

have on students' experiences. I draw on Bakhtinian and Vygotskian views to problematize those experiences.

Chapter 6

Based on the discussion in Chapter 5, in this chapter I first revisit the research questions and provide answers and then I present possible implications of this research project for the institution where the study took place. I also look into implications within the ELT profession. I conclude that a redefinition of constructions related to good learners, learner beliefs, motivation and classroom interaction may foster better understandings between teachers and students in this study which could lead to engaging in learning English.

The means to get to the stage of organizing this thesis in these six chapters are closely linked to the research approach and the focus of study which I introduce below.

1.1 Research focus

This thesis investigates students' constructions of what being a language learner means and the struggles that this process involves as students who participated in this study negotiate positions that would warrant the possibility of finishing their tertiary studies. I was particularly interested in a phenomenon I observed as a teacher: learners of English who faced problems and still persevered. This led me to form my initial research question which was:

What motivates some unsuccessful students to continue learning a language?

From there, I developed three more questions:

- What kind(s) of motivation keep(s) a learner on track even if the experience appears to be unsuccessful?

- What are the factors that affect students' motivation to continue studying?

- How do previous learning experiences affect the motivation to learn a foreign language?

However, these questions changed as the project evolved. The process involved becoming aware of what the project implicated, understanding who I am and where my previous knowledge came from. Understanding my own story and finding that there are different ways to conceptualise the world and how these sustain my conceptual understanding became part of the investigation. From trying to define kinds of motivation that affected students' persistence, I moved towards an understanding of how students construct and negotiate positions that enable them to persist within a classroom environment where dialogue was not always present. This shift of position and the emergent nature of the study led to the reconsideration of the initial research questions. Thus, the research question that led the study is:

What is the nature of undergraduate students' experiences as language learners when English is a mandatory subject?

While carrying out the research, it became obvious that there were many factors complexly intertwined in these experiences that were not necessarily obvious at classroom levels and of which I was not aware at the outset of the study. As my awareness developed, several questions arose:

> *What factors enable or deter students in engaging in learning English?*

> *What is the nature of the difficulties they face?*

> *How do students perceive their teachers, their classes, the English language?*

> *Is there agreement in teachers' and students' perceptions?*

These questions emerged as I analysed the data and it became evident that teachers and students were talking about the same issues but using a different "language."

Some Implications of an Emergent Study

Doing research involved a process of dipping into other disciplines like sociology to better understand what society is and how it relates to the individual or vice versa; anthropology to delve into meanings of being a person and different perspectives of looking at a person as a highly complex member of society; visiting philosophy

involved exploring the underpinnings of different views of the world that are directly linked to the research approach; I also looked into critical social psychology to explore perspectives under which social context and language play central roles in the construction of reality. These became grounds for reflection in my search.

An interesting area that became essential for this study was Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and monologism. Dialogism which according to Holquist (2002) is a term that Bakhtin never used, but which has come to link Bakhtinian conceptions of dialogue, involves an understanding of "the complex factors that make dialogue possible" (Clark and Holquist, 1984:9) where differences between individuals are constantly present and where the meaning of those differences are not necessarily obvious to the other and therefore there should be constant negotiation during interaction. For Bakhtin, this search of understanding is the main characteristic of a dialogue and being within a dialogue implies being aware of the other. However, a dialogue means that the words being used in the interaction have been appropriated by those interacting. If this is so, then whatever words we use, they are not our words, but the words of previous dialogues. Therefore, the words used in an interaction are polivocal as they have their own histories which give them meaning and position in the world; they come from other discursive arenas and thus, they do not belong to anybody as they are the result of a relation with others. According to Clark and Holquist, within dialogism "all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying *simultaneous but different* space…ranging from political bodies and the bodies of ideas in general (ideologies)" (1984:20).

On the other end of a continuum of dialogism, monologism stands as a position that is one sided and thus there is not awareness of the presence of the other (Clark and Holquist, 1984). The implicit meaning of an extreme monologic position is that there are not differences between individuals and therefore understanding or the negotiation of mutual understanding is not necessary. For Bakhtin, monologue "is a logical construct necessary to understand the working of dialogue" (Clark and Holquist, 1984:59). I would argue that the importance of monologism stems from the dominant position it has had in Western thought which developing "detached from

social conditions" (Linell, 2000:52) may be seen as a simplified view of the world as it is a celebration of the individual self (Sampson, 1993).

Similarly, Vygotsky's (1986) inter and intrapersonal interaction/negotiation processes could be placed under dialogical lenses. Even though there are differences in the views of these two thinkers (while for Vygotsky language as social interaction is the means to develop the self, for Bakhtin boundaries between language and the self are blurred), bringing Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's views together have informed many educational studies (Palincsar, 1998; Hall, 1993; Platt, 2002; Lillis, 2003; O'Dowd, 2003, to mention but a few) expanding views of the role of mutual understanding and the awareness of the other as it positions the individual as part of social groups where learning takes place; social interaction opens spaces to negotiate understanding and appropriate someone else's words and other symbols. As Semyonov (2002) a scholar from a Russian university contends, the practice of dialogism involves "the humanization of education through dialogue reflection", a statement that I consider addresses the presence of interpersonal dialogue as well as the intrapersonal dialogue as conceived by Vygotsky (1986).

These ideas borrowed and developed from Bakhtin and Vygotsky and which I discuss further in Chapters 5 and 6 helped me in the construction of this study. I centred much of the discussion on the existence of dialogical understanding between teachers and students in the language classroom as a social space as well as the dialogue that the researcher constructed with herself in the process, a position that calls for some explanation.

My position as a researcher and the role of reflexivity

As a researcher, I position myself in an interpretive research approach where language is conceived of as a site of struggle and the self as member of discourse communities within the university as well as other social arenas. Consequently, discursive resources become central for the understanding of lived experiences. As an insider of the research setting, my researcher's position is an important consideration. I am an English teacher researching my own setting and need to be aware of my own subjectivity through reflexivity.

I have not arrived to this position through objective scientific methods. My life experiences have shaped my views and opinions; thus, I had to constantly question what I was doing and why I was looking at those events in the way I was looking at them considering that:

> …reflexivity claims that since the activity of the knower always influences what is known, nothing can be known except through those activities… if research, the making of knowledge-claims, is dependent upon the activity of the researcher, can such knowledge ever be a truthful representation… are we as researchers researching the world, or ourselves as makers of knowledge-claims? Can research ever be anything more than a subtle form of writing the self? These questions suggest a further and perhaps a key question –what kind of 'problem' is reflexivity, indeed is it a problem at all? We might want to argue that by foregrounding how we construct what we research, reflexivity is no longer a problem but a *resource*. It helps us to recognise that we are part of rather than apart from the world constructed through research… by becoming aware of the operation of reflexivity in the practice of research, the place of power, discourse and text, that which goes 'beyond' the purely personal, is revealed" (Usher and Edwards, 1994:148)

Thus, I take that however problematic a reflective process may be, it is a necessity when an individual's subjectivity becomes part of the research. Reflexivity became an opportunity to challenge personal views shaped by previous experiences as I questioned the nature of life, my teaching practice and the meaning of language. It is for these reasons that I included a personal biography making evident a connection between the research topic and the researcher. I believe that this strategy also serves the purpose of highlighting my own subjectivity.

Personal Interest on the Topic

My interest in this topic arose from having worked for nine years as an English teacher at the institution where the study took place, and the contact with many students; some who struggled but persisted; others who gave up when facing difficulties; still others who sailed through the process with apparent ease. I was intrigued by these differences. It made sense to see students persevering when they did not have apparent problems; however, those students who failed time after time and still persisted became a mystery I wanted to understand and which I associated with motivation. I believe that this stems from my educational background, a trained English teacher whose main objective was to provide the *right environment* for students to learn English.

1.2 The Researcher

In this section I will look at the researcher's biography and how I relate to the group of students who became central to this narrative. There are different views regarding the inclusion of the researcher's biography. On one hand, an autobiographical reflection is considered problematic by some (Kauffman, 1993) and it is perceived narcissist. However, disassociating it from the research would leave a gap to the understanding of the social location of the researcher as a figure that influenced with her personal views and values the research process. In agreement with Goetz & LeCompte (1984), the researcher's biography brings light to sources of influence that should be openly acknowledged. Guba and Lincoln consider that there is an interactive process between the researcher and her participants that in the end is created through the research process:

> "The investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the "findings" are literally created as the investigation proceeds…" (1994:111)

Drawing on these ideas and the dialogical nature of my interaction with teachers and students who participated in this study, my biography serves the purpose of looking for biases and their acknowledged presence within the study. I consider necessary to make evident the sources of such biases at the onset of the study as their influence will be a constant anchor. Nonetheless, I am not claiming a full understanding of who I am as I take reality to be fluid and under constant construction.

Who am I?

At the beginning of my PhD studies this question posed no problems to me. Today, however, this has become a very complex question that cannot be answered within the simplistic views I held before. My views have changed radically through the process of becoming a researcher. It has meant exploring and understanding unforeseen fields and the reflective processes that it has involved.

Who I am is a social and historical construction. There are two personal experiences which seem relevant to the present study; my experience working at the Language School where the study took place; the second being my experience of four years studying chemistry. The latter, as a highly positivistic field bears an important

influence on my views of the world. The former, allowed me to consider myself as an insider to the setting as I have worked there for many years; but also, it has served as ground of feelings of inadequacy for not having the right qualifications for the job. These and other experiences seem to be the basis of personal constructions of what being a student and a teacher means and which influence my understanding of the institution.

I consider all these constructions potential biases while interacting with participants, as I carried idiosyncrasies and values which helped me make sense of the realities participants shared with me.

Becoming an English teacher

This story portrays me not only as a student teacher but also as a language learner. The latter sets me in a position similar to that of the students who participated in the project. I realized that many of the issues students were raising had been part of my own processes. Reflecting on the reasons for choosing the topic of my PhD which I thought was only because I wanted to understand students' struggle, relates to my personal story. I see myself in those students who do not want to give up school regardless of their struggle.

After 8 semesters as a chemistry student, I became an English teacher by accident. Based on my experience as a student in Mexican private schools where many English teachers had no qualifications to teach except their ability to speak the language, I believed I had enough qualifications to become an English teacher. A short teacher training course became a critical event that changed my views. I learned how to use *recipes* in the language classroom; it was knowledge I did not understand and involved mainly following text books. As I experienced teaching, I became wary and insecure; things in the classroom did not always follow what the book said. A second teacher-training course opened the opportunity to work at a public university, but still, I did not feel I was qualified for the job.

Those courses did not provide the necessary principles to understand what lay behind teaching and the reasons for acting the way I was taught to act. During the courses, I perceived that most things were matter of fact. If I used the methodology that I was

taught, students would learn the language. I was not to question anything. Nevertheless, I felt empowered. I had begun the process of belonging to the profession because working as an untrained English teacher troubled me. I think this uneasiness played an important role in my decision to continue studying along with a critical self-perception attempting to carry out something for which I disqualified myself. Completing a distance BA program in TESOL and a MA in TESOL distance program were part of the process to overcome those feelings. The sense of achievement that these two endeavours gave me, were powerful enough to engage in PhD work.

Having presented this short biography as a source of bias where feelings of inadequacy marginalized me from a professional discourse community, I believe validates, first the inclusion of this short biography and second the stance I adopted for this study considering discourse multivoiced and dynamic, borrowing these characteristics of discourse from Bakhtin (1981). I believe that all my lived experiences transpire the stance I decided to adopt through the study as part of the dialogical nature of discourses. Having explained how I relate to the setting, now I will discuss background issues of the research that have also influenced the researcher.

1.3 Background of the research

The objective of this section is to present an overview of the context where the study took place. Locating the study in time and place is central to understand the situation faced by students as well as that of the researcher.

Education in Mexico, like elsewhere, has been an arena of ideological struggles and political power. Based on this assumption and also considering that discourse is dialogic and multivoiced as posed by Bakhtin (1981), public universities in Mexico are the result of a collection of policies that through time have shaped them; those changes have translated into means to develop certain areas and not others, depending on the political ideology that prevailed along a historical line. Their development has inevitably been influenced by international trends, internal and external conflicts and economies where competing political views during the twentieth century lay behind the educational system that for the past eight years

encountered right wing policies that have emphasised the importance of economic growth after a period of some 70 years under a dominant regime which according to Diaz-Cayeros et al "The national PRI, in control of the federal government… decides whether to reward or punish the locality through the provision of withdrawal of budgetary funds." (2000) suggesting a highly authoritarian position where withholding funds was the means to control. Even though in 2000 the country underwent an important political shift, previous means to exercise control remained. Being this the position of tertiary institutions in Mexico, the university where the study took place is by no means an exception where often policies implemented obey central government mandates. Despite the autonomous nature of the institution, its budget comes entirely from the central government; thus, following policies dictated from above is a form of power and control where meeting established targets appear as surveillance strategies to conform. Even though complying with government mandates translates into federal funding, some researchers consider that "the distribution of funds for education… seem unrelated to measures of education need of potential" (Diaz-Cayeros et al, 2000:23) which in practice apparently means that political issues overrides the needs of the education sector. However, this does not mean that there have not been initiatives to improve it. But, for some researchers, the initiatives have apparently been too shallow to make a significant difference (Tatto, 1999). The latter could be attributed to the uneven financial support that different levels of education have received (Lachler, 1998) as tertiary education has apparently obtained more money than basic educational levels a factor that may lead to think that the education of those students reaching university levels may not be of the best possible quality.

The problems spelled above have had an impact on tertiary institutions. Several of the policies adopted suggest a need to increase the quality of education to prepare students for their future professional life. One of these policies relates to competitiveness and quality. There is an increasing influence of a view of competitive academics to improve the institution's efficiency levels, in terms of academy, quality and students. According to Narvaez (2006) who discusses attrition at higher education level in Mexico,

> "…the concern for growth and coverage was substituted with concerns for quality and efficiency… programmes were instruments of public policies that gave birth to a new frame of restrictions, opportunities and incentives aimed at fulfilling those goals. Evaluation practices were adopted as a way of ensuring quality and efficiency. Concisely, a 'managerial style' of education was implemented: a new period of '*financially* driven' policies has started" (2006:30-31)

These strategies are said to reflect the levels at which students will be able to enter a competitive world. The scheme involves measuring academia's competitiveness through assessment exercises; in the end, the results of those exercises translate into financial gain. It could be argued that academic performance has fallen into a trap of competitiveness similar to that of the market where the quality of teaching and learning, as a consequence seem to have been affected (Narvaez, 2006) as the efforts of the institutions are geared towards positive evaluations to gain financial support that do not necessarily reflect on higher quality teaching and learning standards.

The university's motto[1] is a strong claim of conservative and humanistic views of the self as a unified and fixed identity. The Mission and Vision statements[2] are in tune with the motto, and hold a conservative, moral view of the world where a search for the truth is central. Within these ideals the individual is perceived as a free, unified being who can exercise agency within a democratic society. These statements seem to be in conflict with current government policies where the creation of private institutions seems to be privileged. New institutions compete with public ones, a standpoint that has apparently translated into less funding for public institutions and less growth which in practical terms means accepting fewer new students despite a constant urge to do otherwise. Being this the case, the enormous gaps and disparity in terms of financial resources, have narrowed down the opportunities to join a public university for those who cannot afford a private institution. One of the reasons for this move is apparently linked to the perception that private institutions are cost effective enterprises that provide efficient education. The number of private institutions throughout the country keeps rising; the following quote from del Rio (2001) provides an idea of the present trend:

> "In terms of higher education, the private sector has exceeded the public sector. According to the Association of Universities and Institutions for Higher Education

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[1] For ethical reasons, I decided not to include it as this would give away the institution's anonymity.
[2] I decided not to include them because doing so would involve disclosing institutional identity.

(ANUIES) today there are more private universities and institutes than public ones. According to ANUIES there are 735 private institutions that provide first degrees as well as postgraduate programs against 515 public ones… the number of private institutions increased notably in the last three decades. In 1970 there were only 41 private universities against 68 public institutions[3]". (p.113)

While private institutions have thrived, public institutions are seen as inefficient and lacking the quality to compete with the market of private institutions; as Narvaez (2006, citing Ordorica, 1996) explains, the changes have involved moving

"…from *politically* to *financially driven* public policies'. The first mainly addressed issues of equity (understood as the state plan of *massification* of education) while the latter addresses issues of quality and efficiency… educational policies have moved towards different ends of a continuum. (2006:28) (emphasis in original)

Under these circumstances, there has been another initiative to enhance students' future job opportunities and mobility that is: the establishment of English as a compulsory subject. The underlying assumption behind this decision seems to be that students would add value to their education and stand in a position to compete not only with private Mexican institution graduates but also to gain entrance to the globalized world where English is said to be "the basic knowledge for every global citizen" (López, 2007a). This policy supports the institution's internationalization trend; there are multiple opportunities for international exchange programs open to students who can demonstrate a sound linguistic proficiency in a foreign language, mainly, but not only, English. However, the impact of this has been limited as most students do not fulfil the basic linguistic requirements. Opening opportunities within the institution towards a more internationalised and globalized experience, seems to be in line with the policy of implementing English as part of the curricula of all tertiary programs. Aside from offering international experiences to students, the options opened by the institution are also geared towards teachers and lectures. Opening international exchange opportunities to academics and students is considered a strategy to enhance:

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[3] La iniciativa privada rebaso al gobierno en la impartición de la educación superior en el país ya que actualmente existen más universidades e institutos de paga que los públicos a cargo de la Federación, señaló ANUIES. Según estadísticas entregadas al presidente electo Vicente Fox por la Asociación de Universidades e Institutos de Educación Superior (ANUIES), existen 735 instituciones particulares que imparten licenciatura y postgrados, contra 515 públicas…el número de instituciones privadas se incremento notablemente en las últimas décadas, pues en 1970 eran apenas 41 universidades de paga contra 68 de educación pública (2001:113).

> "mobility towards the dominance of international relationships on equal terms; second, from casuistic action towards systematic policies of internationalisation; third, from disconnection of specific international activities on the one hand and on the other internationalisation of the core activities towards an integrated internationalisation of higher education." (Teichler, 1999).

However, the local situation where the illiteracy rate among the general population stands between 10 and 15%, and where according to national statistical information 83% of the population within the higher education sector do not speak/read a second language (Lopez, 2007b), the scheme has not rendered the results expected, being those to improve students' future opportunities. As a result, there have been several amendments to the General Law of Education whereby the education sector is to "emphasize knowledge about universal culture and international solidarity through the learning of foreign languages" (Lopez, 2007b) (my translation[4]). As a result, the university has made an effort towards the establishment of a standardized level of English for all tertiary students. While all the issues raised here are important under the assumption that there is a dialogical relationship at all levels, the most salient one for this project is the adoption of English as a compulsory subject for all university students. I would argue that this policy created new problems to an already complex situation facing financial difficulties.

Since the policy was adopted, the number of students finishing a first degree has dropped. Despite the fact that there has not been a study carried out to establish quantitatively or qualitatively the attrition rate or its causes, many teachers and students informally talk about English being partly responsible for this phenomenon.

The discussion, so far, has given me the opportunity to describe the conditions where the students who participated in this study stand. These should be considered as part of the contextualization of their reality which in fact is an important argument for this thesis.

The Language School

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[4] "Fomentar el conocimiento de la cultura universal y la solidaridad internacional a través del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras." (López, 2007b)

To reach the objectives presented above, the Language School, as part of the university, has been appointed in charge of setting standards and validating language courses throughout the institution. In its Mission statement the Language School promotes the learning of foreign languages and the training of English teachers where self-learning is considered a tool for the holistic development of the individual[5]. The school's vision statement leans towards a search for a better understanding of cultures of the world under the guiding principles of the university, nurturing a *student centred communicative approach*. However, there are not explicit statements as to what it is meant by student centred communicative approach which according to many is problematic (Anderson, 2002).

One of the concerns within the Language School is quality. To assure quality, a complex combination of exams has been set up: first a placement exam to become part of the English program and then a series of departmental exams to assess progress and gain promotion; these exams are norm referenced and thus pose a question of how progress is measured with a test that is designed to compare students with each other. Table 1.1 shows an overview of the examination structure where I have included a description of each level.

Table 1.1 Overview of the Examination Structure and general description of the levels

While registered through the program, from English One to English Eight	4 exams to assess writing	20% of final grade (best three grades are averaged).
	A midterm and a final exam to assess reading and listening	20% of final grade (reading average) 20% of final grade (listening average).
	An oral exam at the end of term	20% of final grade.
	Homework and Classroom participation	20% of final grade.

Level	General description of level	Details of Placement test for placing student in this level	Examination to determine whether a student can progress to the next level

[5] For ethical reasons these have not been included.

1	Students assessed at Level 1 in the placement test are considered true beginners.	The placement test consists of an exam that comprises a range of easy to difficult items to gather information about students' linguistic skills (reading, writing, listening, grammatical and vocabulary) to determine an approximate level of proficiency.	To be promoted to level 2, students should demonstrate basic understanding of linguistic skills introduced through the semester: use of simple present for everyday activities, simple past and present continuous and future. This implies passing with a minimum average of 7 the examination scheme explained above.
2	Students assessed at Level 2 in the placement test have the following language abilities and skills: they are able to use simple present, present continuous, simple past and future tenses in common situations.	Students are expected to demonstrate understanding of basic English in simple present, present continuous, simple past and future tense in common situations.	At the end of the term students should be able to demonstrate through their average grade a more solid linguistic ability (listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary) which include the use of language in simple present, past and future tenses using high frequency vocabulary used in communicative activities of everyday English in common situations.
3	Students assessed at level 3 in the placement test are expected to have a more functional foundation and understanding of English for communicative purposes.	Students are expected to have solid understanding of basic structures (simple present, present and past continuous, simple past, future tenses) in everyday or common situations following a communicative approach. They are also expected to have an incipient understanding of present and past perfect, conditionals, different forms of expressing future in more	At the end of the term students should be able to demonstrate through their average grade a more solid linguistic ability (listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary) which include the use of language in tenses previously learned as well as the new content used in communicative activities of everyday English in common

		complex situations which also means more complex vocabulary.	situations as well as more abstract situations.
4	Students assessed at level 4 in the placement test are expected to have a solid understanding of all basic grammatical structures as well as better understanding of written discourse.	Students placed at this level are expected to have a sound knowledge of all basic structures. At the same time they should be able to infer meaning of abstract language.	At the end of the term students should be able to demonstrate through their average grade a more solid linguistic ability (listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary) which include the use of language in common situations as well as complex hypothetical situations including abstract language.
5	Students assessed at level 5 in the placement test are expected to build on their previous knowledge and enhance their understanding of written and spoken language. They are considered upper intermediate learners	Students placed at this level are expected to have not only a sound knowledge of all basic structures, but also the ability to read and write complex texts. At the same time they should be able to make complicated inferences of more abstract language.	At the end of the term students should be able to demonstrate through their average grade a solid linguistic ability (listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary) in communicative activities of everyday English in common situations, abstract language.
6	Students assessed at level 6 in the placement test are expected to have an advanced level of English. This means that they should be able to fully function in English in most situations.	Students placed at this level are expected to be fluent in the written and oral language. They are expected to understand all grammatical structures and have the ability to infer meaning of unknown vocabulary from context.	At the end of term, students should be able to demonstrate through their average grade an advanced linguistic ability in all the skills. They are particularly expected to demonstrate a high uptake of new vocabulary.
7	Students assessed at level 7 are expected to have a large body of functional vocabulary and high command of grammatical structures, basic and advanced.	Students assessed at level 7 in the placement test are expected to demonstrate their previous knowledge and be fully fluent.	At the end of term, students should be able to demonstrate through their average grade an advanced linguistic ability in all the skills. They are particularly expected to demonstrate a high

			uptake of new vocabulary particularly in oral discourse.
8	Students assessed at level 8 are expected to have a highly advanced level of English. They should be able to write, read and speak English without much problems, being able to fully function not only in everyday situations but in more academic ones.	Students assessed at level 8 in the placement test are expected to be almost fully functional in the language	At the end of term, students should be able to demonstrate through their average grade a highly advanced linguistic ability in all the skills. They are particularly expected to demonstrate a high uptake of new vocabulary in written and oral discourse.

Exams are locally tailored by English coordinators who actively encourage teacher participation in the process. According to the coordinators, the exams are closely linked to the contents of the textbook being used and therefore change every time books are changed. However, it is interesting to note that even though textbooks change which may mean that teaching approaches also change, the exam format remains and there does not seem to be a clear philosophy underlying their design. There is an emphasis on writing skills and students take four exams during the term; from which the lowest grade is not considered for the final average grade. Grading of these exams is carried out by each teacher who follows a holistic scale designed by coordinators. Reading and listening skills are assessed in what is considered locally communicatively through midterm and final exams; teachers grade their own students. At the end of term there is an oral exam which students must take in pairs or trios and they are assessed by two teachers who should not be their classroom teacher. One of them acts as facilitator while the other follows closely the interaction between students and facilitator; students may choose their exam partners. The grading criterion is holistic and highly subjective.

Linked to the exam policy to assure that students are promoted if they have reached an adequate linguistic level to cope with the next level, is the institution's policy of not allowing students who fail a subject more than three times to continue studying. Another aspect that influences students' attendance to class is the number of absences they are allowed to have during a term; students missing more than fifteen 50 minute classes or eleven 75 minute ones get a 20% deduction of their final grade.

Being 70% the minimum passing grade, such a deduction becomes a strategy to control and keep students in class. However, students may attend conversation workshops at the Self Access Centre (henceforth CAADI) and have a maximum of five absences removed every term. This last strategy is considered by some teachers as an opportunity for students to engage in the language while others perceive it negatively as a way to manipulate the rules. The importance of setting standards and rigorous testing processes are considered strategies to warrant quality of students' learning and teachers' teaching, constraining them to certain practices (refer to 5.2.2 for further discussion).

The other side of the picture would be that of assessing teachers' performance within the school. There are two assessment instruments: 1) a questionnaire given to students twice a semester and 2) classroom observations. These two assessment processes have sometimes been questioned by teachers and students alike as the results are not analysed and do not appear to impact practices. It is important to say that the majority of English teachers in the university are part-time teachers who sign six-month contracts and do not have any job security. They have to teach the number of hours they get paid and do not have paid preparation time.

English classes are also provided in different departments. The program and evaluation scheme followed at these other venues is the same; some English teachers work at one or more venues. It is within this context that the group of students that participated in this study complete their tertiary education and whose interest in doing so is commendable.

1.4 Participants and the Reasons for Choosing this Setting

In this section I provide an introduction to the research participants. The reason I am introducing them in Chapter 1 is that they became central to the study and were the catalyst by which my own views about motivation in language learning changed dramatically during the research. The four of them were not just willing participant, but actively sought me out and thus in a way selected themselves. The interesting thing was that the four participants all had different backgrounds, attitudes and approaches towards the learning of English and, in a sense they were therefore

representative of the variety of students forced to study English at the university. Choosing the setting was the natural thing to do as I had worked there for eight years. Another reason for choosing this school is its large English program which runs throughout the academic year; this was an advantage because it did not constrain the data gathering process in terms of course length and enough contact with students. Teachers I observed worked at the Language School and some also in other departments where the same language program is used.

While some students took classes at the Language School, others were studying English within their departments; a third group had taken classes at their departments and at the Language School at different points in time; this is not a concern in the institution as courses are considered equivalent. A common characteristic of these students is their need to take English classes to finish their first degree. All of them were young students from low middle class families. In some cases, they were the first in their family to reach this level of education while others came from families where education was the norm and thus were expected to finish their tertiary education. I mentioned above that students who participated in this study share some characteristics; however, there are important factual differences that will help contextualize the stories of four students who were key participants to this thesis.

Alondra

Alondra is a young woman who struggled to reach the required level of English to finish her major. She comes from an important industrial city about 40 km from the university. She belongs to a working class family and is part of the first generation in her family reaching tertiary education. She has always studied in the public school system. Her father is a shoemaker and her mother a homemaker. The value given to education in her family is high; her parents consider education as the key to improve their children's lives. She would like to continue studying an MA after finishing her first degree and pursue a career as a civil servant.

She considered herself an outstanding, committed student in all subjects but English; she failed one of the English courses during her tertiary education and faced several difficulties in the process of finishing the required language levels. Despite having

problems, when I went back into the field, in 2006, she had finished taking all mandatory language courses and was busy writing her thesis as the final requirement for her BA. She commented that she would like to start a master's program for which she would have to further her English proficiency and was taking additional English classes.

Evaristo

Evaristo is a young man who comes from the state's largest industrial city. He has always been part of the public school system. He comes from a low income middle class family. His father is an accountant but works as a substitute secondary school teacher. Their financial situation is tight and Evaristo felt the need to accommodate a part time job at weekends; a move that caused much dissatisfaction to his father who tried to persuade him to focus only on his studies and work only during the holiday seasons. On one hand, his father apparently appreciates that his son helps ease their financial situation; but on the other, his father apparently worries for his low grades in several subjects. During the week Evaristo rents a room and commutes home at weekends.

At the beginning of the data collection process, he was registered in fifth semester in his BA and was taking English Three for the second time. When he started his tertiary education, he was placed in English One at one of the university's departments. At the time of the first phase interviews, he was having problems and worried about the possibility of failing; failing English would mean not being able to register in sixth semester for his BA. When I contacted him, in July 2006, he had passed English Three in December 2005 but by June 2006 had failed English Four and registered at that level for the second time. In our last interview, Evaristo mentioned that he was desperate thinking that he was going to fail. Unfortunately, he failed English and had to drop out from the university for a year. He had enough time to study English, but he spent a lot of time doing other things (Field notes, February, 2007).

Raul

Raul is a young man who withdrew from university twice as he faced difficulties in his English classes, real and imaginary, while being a successful student in other

subjects. He is from a small agricultural town near the university. Even though he comes from a low income middle class family, living in a small agricultural town eases their financial situation. He has always been part of the public school system and before starting his tertiary studies, he trained in catering at a technical college. His father is a clerk at a government office and his mother a homemaker. His sisters are primary school teachers. While his father considers that earning a university degree will enable him to get a good job in the future, for his mother it seems education is not as important. He feels that his father pressures him to continue studying, while his mother supports his decisions. He had worked as a clerk at weekends for four years. He enjoys it because it provides him with a space to do his school work as he does not like his working space at home: the dining room. Even though he mentioned liking English, he believed not to have the ability to do so. When I first made contact with him, he was registered in fifth semester in his BA, taking English Three for the second time at the Language School. He would not be able to register in sixth semester in his BA if he did not pass English Three. By August 2006, he was registered in English Five having successfully passed the previous two. In January 2008, I talked to him informally; he had successfully finished his degree and had earned a scholarship to study abroad.

Rolando

Rolando is a young man from a large industrial town about two hours away from the university. He comes from a single parent family and commutes irregularly to his hometown. His mother is a teacher and head teacher working at two schools; his sister is a teacher. They had actually migrated from a poor community in a southern state and had managed to lead a financially secure life. Part of his education took place in private institutions. He receives financial aid from his mother and also has a scholarship from the institution. He sees himself mainly as a musician and works in night clubs. When he started his tertiary education, he was placed in third level of English at his BA's department. Our first interview took place when he was registered in fifth semester of his BA and was taking English Three. During the first phase of data gathering he was worried about not passing English; failing the course would prevent him from registering in sixth semester in his BA. He passed the course

and during the second phase of the data gathering process he was registered in English Five.

My objective in this chapter has been to contextualize the research through an introduction to the study, the setting where the research was carried out and a map of the thesis; I also introduced the researcher and factual information about four key participants of this study. As my introductory portrait of these four students explains, they faced difficulties in different ways and were also differently motivated. In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of how several researchers on language learning and motivation have attempted to investigate and explain factors and differences which impact on the process of language learning.

Chapter 2

Learners' Beliefs in Language Learning: A Literature Review.

Having presented the background to this thesis and sketched the ways in which it will progress, in this chapter I will examine relevant literature linked to constructions and ideas from research work conducted on topics related to this study. An understanding of these serves the purpose of relating my research to current debates. The chapter concludes by considering some recent views on constructions of the language learner which provide examples and counterexamples relevant to this study.

I will look at literature chronologically, but not exhaustively, focusing on key studies which have been cited extensively or which mention relevant issues for the study. This approach will allow me to look at early ideas and their influence on more contemporary trends; in doing so, I hope to make evident that the assumptions of different research approaches sustain and define ideas developed through research.

I shall first unravel conceptualizations of learner beliefs through a discussion of how "the good learner" has been constructed linking it to the area of learner beliefs. Next, I will discuss the assumptions behind the research approach of particular influential studies. After that, I will introduce views that challenge those constructions, what Block (2003) calls the social turn in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) dealing with issues related to poststructural, social constructionist and discursive positions where the role of language is central. Finally, I will compare the underlying assumptions of the research traditions supporting two influential studies (Naiman et al, 1978; Horwitz, 1987, 1988) and those of the social turn. This discussion has important bearings on this study as I suggest that the concepts of "good language learners" and the beliefs that are attached to them fail to address the complexities and differences found in the language classroom and thus foster certain expectations on teachers about their language students.

2.1 A Chronological Overview of Literature on Learner Beliefs.

The main objective of this section is to discuss the emphasis given in the literature to learner beliefs during the 1970s and 1980s. I shall look into the emphasis that was given to the beliefs that learners themselves have about the process of language

learning. I will start looking at major studies in language learning. This will lead to a discussion of influential studies on issues that have included learner beliefs, in particular motivation and affective factors.

2.1.1 Major Studies in Language Learning

In this section I will examine major studies in language learning to understand how they discuss learner beliefs. These studies are relevant because they have had an important influence on how 'good' language learners have been constructed, on approaches to teaching methodology, and on teachers' views of their students' responses to classroom activities. I shall begin with a discussion of Naiman's et al (1978) model of the good language learner. Then, I will introduce other studies of the language learner. After that, I will discuss influential studies on motivation and affective factors to uncover how they relate to learner beliefs.

Learner beliefs in Naiman's et al (1978) model

I will start this discussion with a brief description of the study on The Good Language Learner by Naiman et al (1978) which has been influential within the literature on learner beliefs. This investigation draws mainly on Gardner (1975), Hatch and Wagner-Gough (1976) and Schumann (1976).

The objective of Naiman's et al work was to answer the question "what can best promote a high level of proficiency in an L2, or conversely, how can learning inadequacy or failure be prevent (sic)?" (1995:8) which according to the authors "addresses key problems for teachers: What strategies do successful learners adopt? What attitudes do they show to the language they are learning? What have been their most successful experiences of learning?" (1995:viii) under the assumption that

> *…some learners are more successful than others…do good learners tackle the language learning task differently from poor learners and do learners have certain characteristics which predispose them to good or poor learning*? (1995:4) (italics in original source)

The theoretical framework of the study considers six concepts of language learning that interact with each other: context and second language environment, the learner, teaching, learning, and outcome. Within each concept, there are a series of subcategories (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Model of the Second Language Learner and Language Learning
(Source: Naiman et al, 1995:3)

Box 5 Teaching

Classroom activities

↓

Box 1 Learner

Intelligence Language aptitude Past language experience Age Personality Motivation Attitude

Box 2 Learning

Unconscious processes Conscious strategies and techniques Affective component

Box 3 Outcome

L1 competence/ L2 proficiency Errors Interlanguage Failure Affective outcome

→   →

↑

Box 4

L2 Environment

Opportunities for second language contacts and use

For the interest of this thesis, I will focus only on some of the relevant aspects highlighted by this model that relate to learner beliefs. These are motivation and attitude as part of the construction of the learner, the affective component as part of the construction of learning and affective outcome.

How are learners conceived in this study?

In this study learners are regarded as individuals whose aptitude towards language learning, previous experiences, motivations for studying the language, cognitive characteristics or learning style as well as personality characteristics such as extroversion-introversion which is apparently an influence from Carroll and Sapon (1967), may impinge on the choice of learning strategies and the learning outcome. Attitudinal factors and motivation are perceived as factors affecting the learning process and considered to have a systematic relationship on the success of language learning. While evidence showed that motivation is good predictor for success, attitude was shown to be the best predictor.

How the learner impacts learning?

The learning process is conceived as the use of conscious learning strategies and unconscious mental processes (Naiman et al, 1995) to enable students to deal with three aspects: a new language in the presence of a first language which has been mastered, new linguistic forms and the possibility of conveying a message; and, the "choice between rational and intuitive learning" (Naiman et al, 1995:4). The strategies considered by the study stem from Stern's (1975) inventory defining strategy as "more or less deliberate approaches, and more specific techniques, i.e. observable forms of language learning behaviour*"* (Naiman et al, 1995:4). However, the conclusion from observations within the study does not determine the use of strategies as obvious indicators of successful learning; interviews revealed students' difficulties and preferences. Tolerance of ambiguity and field independence, defined as cognitive styles, relate to the way students approach learning and were shown to influence the learning process. Positive attitude is said to be "necessary, but not a sufficient condition for success" (1995:219).

The L2 environment

Within the L2 environment, the authors differentiate between learners studying a foreign language and those in a situation of language immersion (for example, English speakers learning Spanish in Mexico). While the latter is perceived as a functional way of learning a second language "communicating with native speakers…in a natural context*"* (Naiman et al, 1995:6), the former is conceived as

classroom learning where language is learned as a code, the forms of the language. Naiman's et al assertions are influenced by Gardner and Lambert's (1972) integrative and instrumental motivational orientations which I will discuss later in this chapter.

In their concluding commentary, the authors suggest that there is a complex interplay between teaching and learning. They also suggest that students have an array of preferences

> …for highly structured language programs and for being constantly corrected, while others prefer to be left alone, to be allowed to try out the second language when they feel so inclined… make mistakes… mother tongue explanations… (Naiman et al, 1995:226)

Teaching within this study relates to the use of strategies, input from the teacher, the classroom, all these bearing a different effect on the learning processes of good and poor students. Teaching styles and the materials used are perceived differently by different individuals; thus, it becomes essential for a teacher to be aware of those differences. Findings related to teaching showed teachers' attitudes toward good or poor students may affect or benefit some at the expense of others. Teachers were found

> … to identify their good and poor students accurately. They can provide characterizations of these students which refer to (a) behavioural indices, (b) personality and motivational indices, (c) intellectual or linguistic abilities, and (d) environmental factors. But these characterizations commonly consist of broad surface features; they are generally not diagnostic or analytical. They appear to reflect the teacher's preoccupation with curriculum and the progress of the class as a group rather than with the problems of individual students. (Naiman et al, 1995:220)

This conclusion positions teachers not only as influential actors in students' processes and progress, but assumes that teachers understand students' views however shallow that understanding may be, suggesting that teachers' decisions are based on those perceptions.

What are some implications of this position?

For language learning, the implications of this position have meant looking at success within the language classroom. The model conceptualizes learners (Box 1 in Figure 2.1) separately from their social arenas whose individual characteristics influence the learning process and the outcome; individual characteristics are defined

by others and not by the individuals being defined. On the other hand, learning is conceived of as the result of multiple influences coming from teaching, the learner and the environment, but as internal traits.

What learner beliefs and attitudes does Naiman et al (1995) think are important in language learning?

In this study learner beliefs are not addressed as such. However, the authors make reference of motivational factors and attitudes as major factors of students' success in learning a second language.

Attitude is considered "crucial at the beginning stages of language learning" (Naiman et al, 1995:146) and suggest that fostering positive attitudes early on the learning process may help decrease the drop out rate. The authors relate attitude to motivation, particularly the views on motivation developed by Gardner and Lambert (1972) of instrumental and integrative orientations (see below for a more detailed explanation). Based on this, for Naiman et al "the social, political, and linguistic context of teaching and learning has a major influence on the learner, particularly on his attitudes and motivations" (1995:7)

Having looked at the views developed by Naiman et al (1995) about the language learner, it seems necessary to discuss other studies that construct language learners.

2.1.2 Other Studies on the Language Learner

In this section I will discuss how learner beliefs about second language learning have been seen in other studies. There is a vast amount of literature on the field and I will only focus on the influential work done by Horwitz (1987, 1988), whose work refers to learner beliefs, Oxford (1990) and Wenden (1987), who focus on language learning strategies. I shall present these ideas in this order discussing only views that relate to learner beliefs.

What did Horwitz's studies say about learner beliefs?

Horwitz's (1987, 1988) hypothesis-based studies drawing on her previous work, on the work of Holec (1987), Corder (1967) and Wenden (1987), analyzed data using descriptive statistics and became influential, representing the state of the art at that

point in time. According to Wenden (1987) nothing had been done before in such a systematic way. These studies define five categories of learner beliefs:

1. Difficulty of language learning

This is defined in terms of students' expectations of language learning success; their perceived ability to learn the language; perceptions about the difficulty of the different language skills; whether it is easier to learn those skills or to understand the language (understanding is synonymous of being able to understand oral language); and, the level of difficulty of the language being learned. Thus, difficulty is apparently seen as a two layered construct, personal expectations and perceived abilities to deal with the forms of a language; this seems to relate to Naiman's et al (1995) descriptor of learning outcomes.

2. Foreign language aptitude

Language aptitude is defined in terms of age, innate ability, gender, intelligence, scientific orientation, and ability developed through previous language learning experiences. This echoes Naiman's et al (1995) conception of the learner.

3. Nature of language learning

The nature of language learning is characterized in terms of the role of cultural contact and language immersion in language achievement; if learners perceive difference between language learning and the learning of other subjects; how learners conceive language learning tasks; and students' perceptions of structural differences between English and their mother language. This description is apparently related to the L2 environment and perceptions of classroom activities described in Naiman et al (1995).

4. Learning and communication strategies

Learning and communication strategies are defined in terms of the importance of having a good accent; seeking opportunities to practice; the importance of repetition; in terms of becoming accurate, level of correctness; the perceived role of mistakes; the importance of practice in a language laboratory; guessing or inferring meaning;

and, self-consciousness about ability to speak. Like previously, this category seems to relate to Naiman's et al (1995) descriptions of learning, teaching and outcomes.

5. Motivations and expectations

Motivation and expectations are defined in terms of future job opportunities as well as opportunities to use the language in the future, meeting native speakers of that language; and, the importance of learning that language.

Overlapping themes

The five themes that stem from Horwitz (1988) constantly overlap which seems to demonstrate the complexity of these issues. The concept of difficulty of language learning involves the success to achieve fluency in the target language, an issue linked to aptitude, learning strategies and perhaps anxiety factors, bearing some influence on attitudes towards the language. Learning and communication strategies are conceptualized in a way that highlights success as the objective is to reach some level of proficiency. The nature of language learning is conceived in terms of beliefs about the role of cultural contact with the target language and achievement, different learning styles and the strategies that learning styles would foster which may impinge upon attitudes towards classroom activities. That is, cognitive factors such as intelligence, aptitude and learning strategies are complexly linked with affective factors. While intelligence is seen as necessary to achieve success in second language learning, language aptitude has been conceptualized as a factor that may predict language learning success (for a full discussion refer to Carroll, 1964). These constructions echo Naiman's et al (1995) model of the good learner.

An interesting difference is the position of affective factors. Anxiety, attitude, and other affective factors are not spelled out as part of learner beliefs; they are considered consequences of students' beliefs. This makes the goal of characterizing learner beliefs even more difficult. For example, from the social psychological position of Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) they are placed close to motivation. For them anxiety is perceived as "a stable personality trait referring to the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking…in the second language"

(1993:5). Anxiety is described in terms of feelings of apprehension, self-esteem (Horwitz et al, 1986) and bodily responses. It has also been suggested that there is a negative relationship between anxiety and language learning success affecting the individual's self confidence (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). For Oxford,

> Anxiety sometimes arises in response to a particular situation…but it can be a major character trait… [it] does not decrease over time for all students… [it may] become a trait rather than a state… it can have pervasive effects on language learning and language performance. (1999:60)

There appears to be lack of consensus as to whether anxiety may have a negative or positive effect on the learning process; however, this influence does not seem to be challenged.

It has been linked to levels of tolerance of ambiguity that learning a second language involves. It has been said that

> …a degree of ambiguity-tolerance is essential for language learners. Students who are able to tolerate moderate levels of confusion are likely to persist longer… than students who are over frightened by ambiguities. (Oxford, 1999:62-63)

In these terms, the ability to take risks may become a way to deal with ambiguity,

> …language students who fear ambiguity or whose self-esteem is low, frequently "freeze up", allowing their inhibitions to take over completely… [they] are stalled by actual or anticipated criticism from others or by self-criticism…when they do not have enough practice, their language development becomes seriously stunted. (Oxford, 1999:63)

Social anxiety and competitiveness are factors that have been conceptualized as comparisons students make to evaluate their ability in the language they are learning.

How were these categories developed?

These categories are part of the inventory of language learning beliefs developed by Horwitz (1987, 1988) that has become known as BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory). It assesses these categories under the assumption that "preconceived notions about language learning would likely influence a learner's effectiveness in the classroom" (Horwitz, 1988:283). This assumption seems to be in agreement with Naiman's et al (1995) model in the sense that the characteristics that describe the good learner relate to the five categories of learner beliefs defined above.

To achieve her goal, Horwitz draws on Holec (1981) who claims that learners should go through

> … a gradual "deconditioning" process which will cause the learner to break away…from a priori judgements and prejudices…that encumber his ideas about learning languages. (1981:22)

In other words, if individuals want to learn a second language, they should restate their views on how a language is learned. The assumption that learners have to be told how to deal with their learning process from a teacher seems to be part of more recent thought as this quote apparently shows:

> …adult learners come to many classroom situations with a significant lack of understanding about the nature of language, cross-cultural communication, communication management, and language learning. (Brecht et al, 1995:130)

Holec uses the word 'deconditioning' suggestive of behaviourism whereby an external stimulus may trigger a change of behaviour. One of the underlying assumptions would be, according to Skinner (1959), to control people's behaviour either by an external force or the individual controlling its own behaviour. An implication for the inventory could be the value given to an individual's personal experience and expectations towards learners. They may be expected to reset their views once adequate beliefs are identified. These would then be fostered by teachers in language classrooms in order to support individuals to become effective learners. It seems to imply that there is a right way to learn which should be fostered, which seems influenced by the construction of the good language learner.

The inventory was designed through interviews with teachers whose views on students' beliefs were compiled to generate a questionnaire. Given the way it was developed, the right way to learn is apparently based on teachers' views; students' beliefs also stem from them and not from students. The origin of this could be Wenden's claim that "most teachers will have encountered their learners' knowledge and beliefs in action in their classrooms" (1999:436); this could be a justification of the approach used by Horwitz who interviewed foreign language teachers who were conceived as advanced language learners.

In a more recent study, Horwitz (1999) compares results of the inventory across cultural groups to understand similarities and differences. Rather than focusing on beliefs that individuals may hold, the objective of the study was to find common grounds among students from the same cultural groups and also across cultural groups comparing several studies carried out by herself and other researchers (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Oh, 1996; Park, 1995; Truitt, 1995). By cultural groups, Horwitz apparently refers to nationalities; based on an underlying assumption where "Learner beliefs have the potential to influence both their experiences and actions as language learners" (Horwitz, 1999:558). This investigation set out to find commonalities among cultural groups based on the contention that "teachers cannot tailor instruction to each individual belief of each individual student and must out of necessity deal with groups of language learners" (Horwitz, 1999:558).

Are learner beliefs synonyms of beliefs about language learning?

The terms learner beliefs and beliefs about language learning are used indistinctively apparently assuming they have the same meaning. Learner beliefs refer to individuals who are studying a language. This, however, is problematic because learners are individuals who belong to many social networks where they also hold certain beliefs and which are not left behind as they go into the language classroom. On the other hand, beliefs about language learning could be interpreted as predispositions to actions in a specific context, the language classroom. This isolates the language classroom from the world where other levels and types of learning take place.

In Horwitz's 1999 study, the author demonstrates that comparisons between different cultural groups cannot draw clear conclusions nor in terms of similarities or differences. The same appears to happen when comparing groups within same cultural backgrounds. The author seems aware of some of the limitations of the study and concludes that further research is needed in which the role of context should be assessed.

What did Wenden's (1987) study say about learner beliefs?

Wenden defines twelve "prescriptive beliefs" of metacognitive knowledge which are stable and sometimes incorrect that have been acquired through experience

(1987:163); the author further contends that this knowledge is not always empirically supportable but which nevertheless influences the learning process. These views stem from the group of participants in the study, all of them language learners living in the United States. Beliefs are categorized in three "groups on the basis of the general overall approach to language learning advocated by each one" (Wenden 1987:104). These levels involve (a) the importance of using the language in a natural way: practicing, thinking in the second language, and living and studying in a L2 environment; (b) the importance of learning about the language: its grammar, vocabulary, learning from mistakes and being mentally active; and (c) the importance of personal factors like feelings, self-concepts, attitude, and aptitude (defined as an innate ability).

What did Oxford (1990) say about learner beliefs?

Oxford's work focuses on learning strategies. While Wenden (1987) and Horwitz (1987, 1988) definitely link learning strategies to learner beliefs, this author does not highlight them in those terms. However, she mentions affective factors as emotions, attitudes and motivations as the "biggest influences on language learning success or failure. Good language learners are often those who know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning" (Oxford, 1990:140). Not only that, Oxford also considered that "language learners can gain control over these factors through affective strategies" (1990:140). The affective factors considered are: self-esteem, attitudes, motivation, anxiety, culture shock, inhibition, risk taking, and tolerance of ambiguity.

Affective factors, for this author involve a positive-negative binary; that is, positive affective factors such as self-esteem, "the primary affective element" (Oxford, 1990:141), emotions or anxiety have a positive impact on learning. On the other hand, the negative side of these may hinder progress in the language learning process. Further, the relationship between these factors is intricate suggesting that each factor impinges upon other(s) and influences language learning performance. However, the picture is not just a simple positive-negative relationship as the views on anxiety seem to portray:

> A certain amount of anxiety sometimes helps learners to reach their peak performance levels, but too much anxiety blocks language learning. Harmful anxiety presents itself in many guises: worry, self-doubt, frustration, helplessness, insecurity, fear, and physical symptoms… (Oxford, 1990:142)

Oxford connects affective factors providing a complex picture that impedes a simple and isolated definition of each one. But, despite this complexity, Oxford claims that "Language learners can gain control over these factors through affective strategies" (1990:140). As may be gathered, the factors considered by Oxford are similar to the ones defined by Horwitz and Wenden. Now I will move on to discuss influential studies on motivation.

2.1.3 Influential Studies on Motivation

In this section I will introduce key motivational theories. As before, it is not my intention to review the literature on motivation exhaustively, but to look at influential work done in the area. I will start discussing Gardner's (1985) socioeducational model and Dornyei's (1994).

Gardner's (1985) socioeducational model

The ongoing research by Gardner and his associates has informed and contributed to the understanding of motivation in a powerful way; an example of this is the report published in 1972 (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Ushioda comments on their work:

> They speculated…language learning had important social and psychological dimensions…these had major implications for the nature and role of motivation in … [a] learning situation…these social-psychological dimensions distinguished language learning motivation from other types of motivation. (1996b:4)

Their contention was that there were processes linked to the satisfaction of being able to use a language socially and become an integral part of the second language community which promoted learning. They identified processes linked to language learning related to individual desires that in their completion would involve learning a second language. They termed this *integrative orientation*. They claimed that an integrative orientation would lead to longer lasting motivation than an instrumental orientation:

> [A]n integrative orientation would sustain better long-term motivation needed for the demanding task of second-language learning. (Gardner and Lambert, 1972:132)

Their conception of motivation implicated attitudes towards the target culture and its speakers as well as how the individual identified with the target culture (Skehan, 1989). Their approach focused on individual differences and on the possible influences generated through social interaction. These views created interesting discussions in search of ways to differentiate between these orientations, for example Dornyei and Csizer (2002), Noels (2001), Gardner and MacIntyre (1993). The conceptualization of motivation through the ongoing discussion has become very complex and one of the issues has been to find whether motivation is the cause or the product of learning. Gardner and MacIntyre, for example imply a cyclic relationship where learning outcomes and motivation feed each other, as they put it "reinforcement associated with the act of learning" (1993:4). Motivation is seen "as reciprocal causation between linguistic outcomes and attitudinal-motivational variables" (Ushioda, 1996a:240).

It is interesting to note that the Naiman et al (1995) study is influenced by Gardner's concepts of instrumental and integrative motivational orientations as part of what it takes to become a successful learner. It considers the importance that students assign to the use of the language and their reasons for learning it. For the present study, the concept of instrumental motivation is more relevant than the notion of integrative orientation given that students' reasons for taking a language class is complying with a requirement and not adjusting to living in a second language environment.

Dornyei's early models

Gardner's socio-educational model has been adopted and used as framework by other researchers (Dornyei and Cziser, 2002; Clement et al, 1994; Dornyei & Otto, 1998; MacIntyre et al, 2001; Onwuegbuzie et al, 2000; Vallerand et al, 1993; Noels, 2001; Gardner and Tremblay, 1994; Clement and Noels, 1992; Mori and Gobel, 2006, etc.) to develop other models of motivation. Dornyei (1994) presents a three dimensional model. At language level, integrative and instrumental motivation; at learner level, the model involves need for achievement, self-confidence under which factors such as anxiety, competence, causal attributions and self-efficacy are implicated; and a third level, the learning situation level comprises course, teacher and group motivational components. It is at this last level that the model involves the following

elements: interest, relevance, expectancy, satisfaction, goals, group cohesiveness, classroom structure. Later on, Dornyei and Otto (1998) propose a process model, suggesting motivation as a dynamic sequence of actions that change over time and a dimension of motivational influences such as goals, intention and evaluation. An important difference between Gardner's socioeducational model and Dornyei's model is probably the implied dynamic nature of motivation and the enhanced complexity at different levels.

What learner beliefs/attitudes are considered to be important in studies of motivation?

Gardner mentions beliefs when referring to the ways social scientists measure attitudes as the basis "of individual's reactions to evaluatively-worded belief statements… an individual's attitude is *an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent*" (1985:9) (italics in the original).

Gardner's model seems to suggest interplay between effort and attitude which is translated into motivated action. In language learning motivation refers

> …to the combinations of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language…motivation to learn a second language is seen as referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity. (1985:10)

It is within this interplay that the orientations proposed in this model become visibly relevant. The underlying reasons students may have, instrumental or integrative, are considered as the forces that set into motion effort and attitude. Motivation is shaped

> …by beliefs, expectations, priorities and attributions…although observable outcomes of effort expended or time devoted may not always reflect such qualitative differences. (Ushioda, 1996b: 12)

The idea that there is reciprocal causation between outcomes, attitudes and motivation and other individual differences, portrays the complex endeavour of untangling beliefs and differences to understand them in isolation.

What different theories/positions have included learner beliefs?

Motivation has been researched extensively not only by Gardner's and Dornyei's groups but by other scholars. Among those, interesting concepts have been developed that link beliefs to motivation. Some of these are Weiner's (1992) attribution theory, learned helplessness and self-efficacy. The concepts behind them link directly attitudes and beliefs towards success or failure. Having a positive perception about one's ability may support the learning process of a second language; however, having had a negative experience and believing that one's ability is at fault may impinge negatively upon its learning. Weiner explains

> …success and failure perceived as due to internal causes such as personality, ability or effort respectively raises or lowers self-esteem or self-worth, whereas external attributions for positive or negative outcomes do not influence feelings about the self. (1985:560)

Oxford and Shearing elaborate on this and say that for learners to learn, they must feel a "sense of effectiveness within themselves" (1994:21).

2.1.4 Affective Factors

Arnold (1999) who discusses affect in language learning makes a clear association between emotions, anxiety, motivation, self-esteem and attitudes fostering an integrative approach of cognition and affect. In other words, affect influences cognition. Anxiety is considered the most influential of these individual differences and even though "it is not always clear how foreign language anxiety come into being" (Arnold and Brown, 1999:9), it is linked to negative feelings that may impinge on the learning process claiming that:

> …there is a great deal of vulnerability involved in trying to express oneself before others in a shaky linguistic vehicle… particularly true if … stakes involved are very high, such as in academic settings, where the evaluation of the learner… have consequences" (1999:9).

They further consider that the effect of anxiety on learners is worry which is "intimately connected to the cognitive side of anxiety… Worry wastes energy that should be used for memory and processing on a type of thinking" (1999:9).

How far are beliefs and attitudes linked in literature of affective factors?

The literature suggests that beliefs and attitudes have important influence upon affective factors in the language learning process. Beliefs about personal ability to

learn a language which may derive from anxiety are said to have a direct effect on motivation and success (Oxford, 1999) either for or against. Attitudes which are associated to beliefs are considered a key to the learning process. That is, negative attitudes may deter learning while positive attitudes foster it (Arnold and Brown, 1999).

Do these ideas represent a unified view?

So far, I discussed how learner beliefs and beliefs about language learning have been defined positioning students and the language classroom in isolation. The conceptualizations discussed above suggest that teachers' preconceptions about their students may have a negative effect upon classroom happenings. The same could be said about students' perceptions and attitudes.

Allwright (1987) and Nunan (1995) suggest a mismatch between teachers and students' views as part of the problems a language classroom faces. Block (1994) investigated the gap between teachers and students through an audiotaped oral diary; students and teacher recorded their views on classroom activities, together with classroom observations and interviews. The results of this study are in agreement with the idea that teacher's and students' preconceptions have an effect on their classroom perceptions. Results show an important gap between teachers and students as to the pedagogical purposes of classroom activities. It could be said that this gap was made evident thanks to the emic nature of the research approach used. The gap appeared to be that the teachers' pedagogical purposes were not clearly understood by students; as a result, they could not figure out why they were asked to do those activities. Thus, the assumption that students and teachers share the same beliefs about foreign language is contested by these findings. It seems that some research approaches seeking to understand learner beliefs provide better information than others. While Horwitz' beliefs inventory stemmed from teachers' perceptions about students, Block focuses on students and their teacher. The discussion about the gap between teachers and students may also be linked to tensions between teacher and student interactions addressed by Horwitz, et al (1986), Koch and Terrell (1991), Price (1999), Scarcella and Oxford (1992), Young (1990) and Oxford et al (1991).

Learning strategies have been considered a central factor in students' success. As mentioned above, these ideas stemmed mainly from teachers' perceptions about students' beliefs within the language learning context detaching the learner from other social contexts. Recently, though, despite acknowledging that "teacher practices and perceptions are critically important since they have the potential to influence the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process" (Griffiths, 2007:91) it has become evident that there is a need for teachers to be aware of students' perceptions as the source of those perceptions. Griffiths' (2007) conclusion was that teachers' and students' perceptions about strategies seldom intersect; a conclusion similar to the gap mentioned above. As a result of this, the author considers it necessary to use other research strategies such as interviews to better understand this.

From this standpoint, if learners become the centre piece, understanding them should involve seeing them as full members of different social groups where they interact and not as self contained individuals whose beliefs about language learning may be uncovered in isolation of other social arenas. Thus, this calls for a reassessment of the meaning of their beliefs and beliefs about language learning. This will be the focus of section 2.2.

Relevance of these models for this study

As mentioned in the introduction to 2.1.1, the relevance of Naiman's et al (1995) model for my study lies on the influence that the construction of the "good language learner" has had upon approaches to teaching methodology and teachers' expectations as to how students are to respond to classroom activities. Naiman's et al constructions apparently echo Horwitz's (1988) descriptions of learner beliefs and language learning beliefs. In turn, these concepts are directly linked to affective factors that are said to influence students' learning processes. Now I will move on to introduce an alternative view of learner beliefs or what I have called the social view.

2.2 A Social View

So far in this chapter I discussed how the good learner, learner beliefs and beliefs about learning have been conceptualized based on teachers' perceptions about students which may not always represent students' views; I also mentioned that

students are constructed as self-contained individuals, within language learning classrooms. In this section, I will discuss perspectives where the students' social world and their voices are central to the understanding of these issues; also, I will look into the role of language in the construction of students' realities. The implication of this stance challenges the constructions discussed above. Firth and Wagner point out that language learning

> …is not an individual phenomenon consisting of private thoughts executed and then transferred… but a social and negotiable product of interaction, transcending individual intentions… (1997:290).

Importantly and in agreement with Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), these perspectives should not be seen as replacing traditional approaches, but as enhancing opportunities to better understand the world as informed by social science and not isolating the field of language learning from other disciplines (Block, 2003). These conceptualizations involve an understanding of the world as a non-unitary reality.

A social perspective involves looking at language as negotiating grounds for learners to gain voice and negotiate positions as members of a classroom community and communities beyond the language classroom. It has meant looking at language in social, cultural and historical terms and not only linguistically (Block, 2003), a view that Mitchell and Myles challenge claiming that not enough "attention is paid to the linguistic detail of the learning path being followed" (1998:189) and Waters (2007) who, while acknowledging a "beneficial indirect influence…through helping to draw attention to potential abuses of power…" (2007:355), considers it limited and apparently fosters a view of the teacher as the one who knows the kind of control and structure that is best for students.

2.2.1 Introducing a Social View

It is from the socially grounded perspective that Breen (2001), who draws on authors who contributed to his book (Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Chamot, 2001; Wenden, 2001; Ellis, 2001; Oxford, 2001; Breen, 2001a; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001; Norton, 2001), proposes a profile of learner contributions to language learning (Figure 2.2) where four levels of interaction are implicated. It contemplates the learner as part of a collection of social groups which bear influence upon the realizations of the language

classroom through complex dynamic interaction of the different suggested levels. The four levels of interaction appear to go from the large context to the localized self but not as an individual detached from the social world but as someone that influences and is influenced by it.

Breen's profile problematizes previously presented views. The embeddedness of each layer apparently contemplates constant dialog between them and thus influences cannot be detached from any of these layers; considering any of these layers in isolation from the others would provide a partial view of the social reality of an individual. What happens in one level, affects other levels. Further, the outer layer provides the dynamic dimension that previous and present experiences bring and which establish future expectations.

This suggests a redefinition of learner beliefs, the learner and learning. The significance of context is also an issue; ongoing processes of construction and re-evaluation based on past experiences in the different social arenas where an individual lives also becomes problematic. He calls for a socio-cognitive position. According to Candlin (2001), this position raises questions about the separation of second language acquisition and the self as social entity that need to be addressed. Language, if it is conceived as

> …a social and cultural act…a product of socially situated participants who operate with varying degrees of licensed choice in particular settings, and are constrained individually and in various ways by specific structurings of power, by particular distributions of knowledge and by their own individual investments of energy and commitment… the classroom as a social site for learning, though not to be limited to it… (2001:xvi).

This involves looking at the classroom not as an isolated space where students learn and teachers teach; but, a space where they interact socially. Thus, learning and teaching may be seen as evolving social activities where personal, classroom and external conditions may hinder or facilitate learning (Breen, 2001). The classroom, then, is a place where students and teachers not only exchange information, but dynamically construct knowledge (Candlin, 2001) which is bound to social positions of power and identities. As a result of this, says Candlin, 'the emotional and the affective dimensions of context take priority over the social, certainly over the linguistic' (2001:xvi); then, context is an essential part of a search for understanding

students' realities where communication takes place among people who belong to those groups, which Lave and Wenger (1991) call communities of practice.

Figure 2.2 Breen's (2001) Profile of learner contributions to language learning.

(Adapted from Breen, 2001:180)

Learner attributes, conceptualizations and affects

Innate language acquisition capacity
Psycholinguistic processes
Gender
Age
Aptitude
Cognitive style
Learning disabilities
Personality
Self/social/cultural identity
Agency
Metacognitive knowledge
Beliefs
Attitudes
Motivation
Constructs of self as learner & of teacher, etc.
Conceptualizations of classroom & communities

↕

Learner action in context

Exercise of agency during learning
Autonomy
Self-regulation
Language learning strategies
Participation in overt interaction, discourse, activity

↕

Classroom context: a particular learning community

Active contributor to specific linguistic / communicative environment

↕

Wider community identity and participation
Experienced states of transition

| To which previously belonged | To which currently belongs | To which seeks to belong |

The above views suggest that an understanding of students' preferences should not be sought through isolating them, but "as part of broader and local social organisational conditions which impinge on language choice" (Candlin, 2001:xviii). As a result, "learning to communicate in a second language is not just a matter of becoming a better…learner. It has to do with making the link between the achievement of understanding and the achievement of access to rights and goods" (Candlin, 2001:xix) which may be seen as an "interplay between communication as both a socially and cognitively strategic act…as a means of asserting identity and of getting things done" (2001:xix). This involves processes of constant negotiation, based on values, identities and positions within communities of practice.

Learners are conceptualized as "thinking, feeling, and acting persons in a context of language use grounded in social relationships with other people" (Breen, 2001:172); this view of the learner as a social self broadens previous conceptualizations recognizing that the language classroom is part of students' social life.

If learners are acting persons, then it is necessary to think about their exercising agency. Depending on the stance one takes, agency involves different conceptualizations. For Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), who draw on Vygotskyan views, learners are agents who "actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning" (2001:145) which entails the significance of what is being learned as "socially and historically constructed" (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001:146). From a poststructural position,

> the learners' historical specific needs, desires, and negotiations are not simply distractions from a 'pure', or 'ideal' language learning situation, rather, 'they must be regarded as constituting the very fabric of students' lives and as determining their investment in learning the target language… (McKay and Wong, 1996:603).

In both positions, discourses available to learners through and in their lives are significantly influential when adopting or resisting them "according to the effects they wish to bring about" (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001:146). Thus, human agency is central to the concept of motivation and learning strategies as they relate to the goals or reasons people have for learning a second language.

If agency, a highly controversial term, as a socially and historically constructed concept, is a key factor in students' choice of strategies and motivation, then, positions adopted in communities of practice should necessarily be linked to it. Agency may be seen as a dialogical construction of individuals and those around them where many discursive influences delve. Exercising human agency does not mean acting freely; but while still being constrained by discursive influences (Bakhtin, 1981), it provides spaces to decide and act based on personal constructions of reality. Drawing on Bakhtin, Davies (1990) considers that the bases of agency lie on a discursively constituted individual who "can be constituted as agentic/powerful/gendered… Agency is thus a matter of position or location within or in relation to particular discourses…" (p.346). Similarly, within this stance, conceptualizations about beliefs, attitudes, motivation, students' and teachers' selves are not free of discursive influences and it becomes problematic to define these terms through static models. Such conceptualizations would establish categories where the multiplicity of realities would be denied.

Language classrooms as social arenas challenge common conceptualizations where teachers transmit their knowledge and students receive such knowledge (Freire, 1993). The classroom becomes a space where social interaction is central for the learning process. Language together with other cultural tools is the key negotiation tool (Vygotsky, 1978) to develop an individual's knowledge.

What has research based on a social view involved?

Research approaches drawing on social sciences have involved pushing boundaries and drawing upon views where social worlds are prominent; these enhance the possibility of reaching a more balanced view of language learning processes that is not only based on individual cognition (Firth and Wagner, 1997; Block, 2003; Breen, 2001) to reflect the intricate relationship between language use and social context (Firth and Wagner, 1997:293). Under this view, the conceptualization of the language learner as someone who does not know how to learn; someone who is deficient (Firth and Wagner, 1997) is challenged. It involves the inclusion of discursive influences, a broad view of context, language as a site of identity construction and negotiation which acknowledges that "people do, often, succeed in

communicating (in a FL [Foreign Language]) by using whatever competencies they have at their disposal" (Firth and Wagner, 1997:296). Breen claims,

> …what is likely to be meaningful and significant for learners is threaded with cultural value… what is invested with particular meanings and what becomes significant… derive from their definitions of the layers of context within which they position themselves as learners… meaning and significance is seen as *actively constructed and reconstructed by learners*… processes seen as grounded simultaneously *within* interaction, activity, discourse and communities in which the learners participate… (2001:182, emphasis in original source).

Positioning language as a site of negotiation has involved looking at discourses, power and control issues as part of the construction of positions so that learners may become part of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) where participation in a community of practice conceptualizes learning as a social interactive process where understanding and communication is necessarily situated:

> …meaning, understanding, and learning are all defined relative to actional contexts, not to self-contained structures…learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework…mediated by the differences of perspective among participants. It is the community, or at least those participating in the learning context, who "learn"…learning is not in the acquisition of structure, but in the increased access of learners to participating roles… (foreword by Hanks in Lave and Wenger, 1991:15-17).

Positions are conceptualized as the result of social interaction where "conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation in the world" (Weedon, 1997:32) are at work constantly constructing and reconstructing realities and positions. Thus, the prescriptive former views of learner beliefs appear to be contested as the learner is conceptualized as a "person-in-the-world, as a member of a sociocultural community. This focus…promotes a view of knowing as activity by specific people in specific circumstances" (Lave and Wenger, 1991:52) and learning,

> …involves the whole person…not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities… implies…to master new understandings…not in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning… (1991:53).

Under this perspective, participation is conceived as identity bound membership in communities of practice where identity relates to positions within those communities of a constantly changing self.

Drawing on Foucault (1980), Bourdieu (1977) and Weedon's (1997) poststructural position, integrating language, individual experience and power as subjectivity and a dynamic site of struggle, Norton conceptualizes identity, in terms of power-led relations, where power is

> …to reference the socially constructed relations among individuals, institutions and communities through which symbolic and material resources in a society are produced, distributed and validated… symbolic resources… as language, education and friendship… material resources to include capital goods, real state and money… power is neither monolithic nor invariant…at the macro… and micro level[s]…[in] encounters that are inevitably produced within language (2000:7).

Thus, through language and dynamic power relationships, language learners negotiate their positions. Some power relationships enable learners while others constrain their participation (Norton, 2000). From this stand point, Norton reconceptualised the constructed notion of motivation calling it investment and claiming that investment captures the complex relationship between power, identity and language learning which she observed in her research:

> If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital…. the notion of investment…conceives of the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desires…presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information…they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world…an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity (Norton, 2000:10-11).

As these issues become prominent, so does the role of discourse which Norton defines as

> …the complexes of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction…are constituted in and by language and other sign systems… delimit the range of possible practices under their authority and organize how these practices are realized in time and space… discourse is a particular way of organizing meaning-making practices…while discourses are powerful, they are not completely determined. It is possible…to resist the dominance of a colonising power, and to set up… 'counter-discourses' to the dominant power… (2000:14-15).

Norton proposes several questions of which the following are relevant for this study

> Is Krashen's (1981, 1982) notion of the affective filter adequately theorized? Are there alternative ways of theorizing motivation? Under what conditions is a language learner introverted, sensitive to rejection, inhibited? When will a language learner take risks, and why? (2000:16).

Her challenging constructions are historically situated through research techniques that allow the investigation of relationships between individuals and their social lives and how they make sense of their realities. Students are seen as whole individuals and not only as language learners, their beliefs are the product of their lived constructions where many factors constantly interact and therefore are constantly being constructed and reconstructed.

Vygotsky's influence on language learning research

As part of the social turn in the field of applied linguistics, Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) ideas have impacted views on teaching and learning a second language. Central to these views is the role of language as mediator in the process of understanding social interactions with others and ourselves (Lantolf, 2000). Understanding in terms of Vygotsky's ideas involves a process of internalization; that is, relationships within the self and others are mediated through language and other cultural symbols. Lantolf explains it as:

> Vygostky conceived of the human mind as a functional system in which the properties of the natural, or biologically specified, brain are organized into a higher, or culturally shaped, mind through the integration of symbolic artifacts into thinking. Higher mental capacities include voluntary attention, intentional memory, planning, logical thought and problem solving, learning, and evaluation of the effectiveness of these processes (2000:1-2).

For Vygotsky, social interaction is a key issue in the development of the individual and of all the cultural symbols involved, language is the most important where "humans are not conceived of as autonomous thinkers and actors, but as functional systems" (Lantolf, 2006:69) establishing a dialogical relationship from the outside world to the self. From this perspective, learning a second language involves not only the acquisition of linguistic repertoires but the understanding of cultural patterns and social accepted behaviours, gestures, and all else that might be involved in social interaction through which appropriation takes place:

> Internalization is the process through which members of communities of practice appropriate the symbolic artifacts used in communicative activity and convert them into psychological artifacts that mediate their mental activity…symbolic artifacts lose their unidirectional quality (intended for social others) and take on bidirectional functions (intended for social others and the self)…internalization does not imply that mental activity must be carried out exclusively inside the head (Lantolf, 2006:90).

Thus, appropriation of a new language is placed on the social arena and not within the individual. However, through internalization, it could be said that the social arena becomes part of the self and vice versa. This construction is similar to the discursive construction of the self fostered by poststructuralist positions while being radically different to the views discussed at the beginning of this chapter, where the self was in charge of and responsible for learning as a process within the mind.

The process of internalization in Vygotskian terms is conceptualized through a dialogical relationship between private speech and social speech where private speech is seen as self-controlled linguistic mediation that is influenced by the social grounds where it was initially generated (Lantolf, 1994). Social grounds are appropriated through collaborative interaction with individuals who act as a scaffold for the learner's development. According to Lantolf "without private speech second language acquisition is not likely to occur… it means that private speech is language acquisition" (2006: 96). The implication of these ideas for the conceptualization of learner beliefs and language learning beliefs seems to be that these are socially constructed notions which are dependent on cultural contexts where social interaction and thus learning takes places. The development of mental processes is dialectically constructed and empowers learners to

> …organize and control … processes as voluntary attention, logical problem-solving, planning and evaluation, voluntary memory, and intentional learning… symbolic tools are the means through which humans are able to organize and maintain control over the self and its mental, and even physical activity (Lantolf, 1994:418).

This part of the chapter involved a discussion of the construction of the learner, not as an ideal learner but as an individual whose experiences as a participant of different social groups construct his or her views of the world. Social interaction is central; not only language but other cultural symbols are conceived of as sites of struggle and negotiation in the process of making sense of reality. While discourse, power, control and symbolic value are issues raised by poststructural research; sociocultural Vygotskian research considers also language as a site of struggle for an individual's development. These two approaches challenge traditional constructions which isolate the individual from the social world.

2.2.2 What different approaches to learner beliefs have there been as a result of a social view?

As a result of the social turn research approaches involve factors from the four levels of influence described in Breen's (2001) model which has meant pushing disciplinary boundaries. They are considered relevant in the conceptualization of an individual's belief system because learners are conceptualized as social beings where actions are not free of discursive influences and as such language has become a site to construct realities. Issues related to power and control have become relevant as individuals experience social interaction and construct positions.

An example of the latter is Norton's studies where motivation is conceptualized as investment. Motivation as investment is a conceptualization that places social interaction as part of the construction of learner identity where power issues play a high stake in the process (Norton, 2000). Norton draws on sociological ideas set forward by Bourdieu (1977), West (1992), Cummins (1996) and feminist poststructural perspective by Weedon (1997), to establish her position towards power, identity and language learning. In doing so, Norton establishes that investment is determined not only by the desire or need to learn a language but by the power positions learners construct which are affected by positions held by target language speakers. Positioning appears to be affected by feelings of adequacy, self-confidence and anxiety when negotiating participation in social interaction (Norton, 2000: 123) where anxiety is seen as a social construction rather than a personality trait. This, in turn, is seen as part of the identity construction of each individual. The author draws on Bourdieu's concept of "right to speech" (1977:678 in Norton, 2000: 113) as an issue that can deter learners learning as they probably feel marginalized by the dominant group. Drawing on Weedon's (1997) poststructuralist views, Norton explains,

> The individual – the subject- as diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space (2000:125).

> The subject, in turn, is not conceived of as passive; he or she is conceived of as both subject of and subject to relations if power within a particular site, community and society: the subject has human agency (2000:127).

From this perspective, motivation is not a unified and coherent construct; there are constant conflicts, tensions and contradictions from internal and external sources. Norton contends that:

> A learner's motivation to speak is mediated by other investments that may conflict with the desire to speak –investments that are intimately connected to the ongoing production of the learners' identities and their desires for the future (2000:120).

Norton's conceptualization challenge not only previous motivational models, but views about ideal learners with set beliefs about learning.

2.2.3 What has a social view meant for theories of and research into motivation?

Conceptualizations about motivation, learner beliefs, the meaning of social context and identity are other areas that have been influenced by the social turn. Not only poststructural views like Norton have challenged previous views, but there have been important contributions based on constructivist ideas, in particular the ideas developed by Piaget and Vygotsky from whom several approaches to education have stemmed. While these frameworks share the idea that education should be seen as a social process, there are important differences. For Piaget, cognitive maturational processes are considered a necessary part of the social development of the individual (see for example; Williams and Burden, 1997; Gergen and Wortham, 2001; Hickmann, 1987) and "language is in principle neither necessary nor sufficient for cognitive development" (Hickmann, 1987:3). On the other hand, according to Vygotsky language is "primarily social and a multifunctional system that mediates communicative and cognitive processes simultaneously" (Hickmann, 1987: 3). For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on Vygostky's views about the meaning of social context which involve his position towards the zone of proximal development, mediation, and the role that inner speech may have in motivational processes. These are areas that several researchers have used as framework to their studies, not only related to motivation but to other areas within ELT (Harklau, 2001; Norton and Toohey, 2001; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Miller, 2003; Ellis, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Oxford, 2001; Norton, 2001; Donato, 2004). These theses are encompassed within Socio Cultural Theory (SCT) which has been defined by Ratner as the field that:

…studies the content, mode of operation, and interrelationships of psychological phenomena that are socially constructed and shared, and are rooted in other social artefacts (2002:9).

Vygotsky's contributions add to the understanding of the processes that are continuously constructed within a language classroom and the influence of other social interactions in students' lives that have given to motivation an even more dynamic and complex perspective where previously unforeseen factors appear to play an important role (for example Gan et al, 2004). The latter has made evident the need to look at the individual as part of a social group and not in isolation where emphasis was given to cognitive processes. However, Lantolf (2006) suggests that L2 research should consider the union of SCT and cognitive linguistics which would enhance understanding. This could be problematic as the underlying assumptions of each theory appear to be contradictory.

Research contributions developed under a SCT perspective see social mediation rather than biological maturation processes involved in the development of the individual (Bruner, 1986; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Lantolf and Thorne quoting Vygostky explain

> In contrast to Piaget, we hypothesize that development does not process toward socialization, but toward the conversion of social relations into mental functions (Vygotsky, 1981; 165)… (2006:267).

The meaning of learning and understanding is seen as constant construction mediated by social interaction which then becomes social phenomena:

> …learning and understanding are regarded as inherently social; and cultural activities and tools (ranging from symbol systems to artefacts to language) are regarded as integral to conceptual development (Palincsar, 1998:348).

This means that knowledge is a co-construction where language is central in the promotion of learning. Vygotsky proposed:

> Learning awakens a variety of internal processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and with his peers…[L]earning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. Thus learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions (1978:90).

In other words, Vygotsky proposes that what I can do on my own can develop into more complex cognitive abilities if I interact with someone/people whose cognitive abilities are more developed than mine. This is a dynamic process that involves contextualized and shared engagement. Vygotsky conceptualized this as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In agreement with Vygotsky, Lantolf (2006) claims that gestures and other cultural artefacts are also part of mediation and act as signs of inner speech which involves a process of internalization conceptualized by Shotter (1984) as a process where relations with others are central for the movement back and forth from what one says (words) and what one thinks. Related to ZPD is the idea of scaffolding which according to Lantolf and Thorne,

> [It] involves an interesting reciprocal formulation of the ZPD, where ostensibly the focus is on the learner, but in actual fact, and certainly as an entailment of the scaffolding metaphor, control and power resides primarily in the teacher or expert until such a times as the learner is capable of accepting responsibility for the task or competency at hand (2006: 274).

Scaffolding is a controversial term that for some (Wood et al, 1976; Rogoff and Wertsch, 1984; Bruner, 1986) is directly linked to ZPD while for others (Stone, 1993) it is not. Nonetheless, these frameworks have interested many researchers (McGroarty, 1998; Pedraza and Ayala, 1996; Lantolf and Aljaafreh, 1995; Lantolf, 1993; Ushioda, 2006; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000; Norton and Toohey, 2001; Norton, 1995; Duff, 2002) and their studies have influenced the field leading away from the dominant perspective.

Motivation from a cognitive and sociocultural perspective

Even though SCT is not a theory of motivation, there seems to be a wealth of ideas that could enrich our understanding of motivation. Ushioda (2006b) for example, integrates cognitive motivational ideas with sociocultural theory. This idea of integrating both perspectives, as suggested by Lantolf (2006), considers SCT concepts to enrich the understanding of cognitive concepts developed through the dominant research stream. The concepts Ushioda (ibid) draws on from SCT are mediation, scaffolding, self-regulation and ZPD as a way to analyze the interaction between internal and external motivational forces.

Vygotsky (1978) considered that social interaction promotes internalization of higher-order cognitive functions; this involves a two level process, social and psychological. Within the psychological level, there is a distinction between interpsychological, that is between people and intrapsychological, within the individual. Vygotsky further contends that social mediation "is true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, and the formation of concepts, and the development of volition" (Vygotsky, 1981: 163 in Ushioda, 2006b:3). Within cognitive views of motivation, volition would be a central issue and where Ushioda links the roles of scaffolding, mediation, ZPD and activity with self-determination, self-regulation and intrinsic motivation models. This strategy sets forward a more holistic view of motivation positioning the student as a dialectical social actor. Motivation is under constant construction where social interaction plays an important role while individuals are able to exercise agency. According to the author, using data from language learning at school and language teacher education, this perspective may

> …illuminate the interaction between internal (individual) and external (social) forces in shaping motivation growth and regulation (2006b:1).

The approach parallels concepts from cognitive psychology and sociocultural perspectives to enhance the understanding of socially constructed motivation where "negotiation of shared purposes and understandings between teachers and learners" (Ushioda, 2006b:6) are part of the socially mediated construction of motivation as students become agents when setting their goals and intentions.

In line with Ushioda's (2006b) ideas of the importance of students becoming agents of their own learning, Norton and Toohey's (2001) research suggests that the opportunities students have to socially interact in a second language should be carefully taken into account when defining a good language learner. Drawing on Bakhtin's and Vygotsky's ideas as well as poststructuralism, Norton and Toohey contend that "learners of English participate in particular, local contexts in which specific practices create possibilities for them to learn English." (2001:311). This perspective implies that learning a second language is not "a gradual and neutral process of internalizing the rules, structures, and vocabulary… learners are seen to appropriate the utterances of others in particular… communities." (Norton and

Toohey, 2001:312). This evidence seems to resonate with Dornyei's (2005) theory of possible future selves where the ideas individuals hold about their future seem to trigger their motivation to act upon learning English may not be detached from their social environment. Dornyei's (2005) model "L2 Motivation Self System" links identity, the self and personal experiences representing "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (2005:99). In other words, if individuals picture themselves as future English users, their motivation to learn the language in the present is enhanced by present circumstances or environment as well as personal characteristics. According to Dornyei, there is a dynamic interplay between these factors which constructs a dynamic system of motivation where motivation, language aptitude, learning styles and learning strategies may

> "answer why, how long, how hard, how well, how proactively and in what way the learner engages in the learning process… [which] are neither stable not context-independent, but display a considerable amount of variation from time to time and from situation to situation." (Dornyei, 2008).

2.2.4 Possible Criticisms of Protocols on Learner Beliefs

According to Nikitina and Furuoka (2006), beliefs about language learning are defining factors of students' learning behaviour. They base their discussion on Richardson's (1996:103) definition of beliefs as psychologically held understanding, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true; they also draw on Roekeach (1968:113) who considers beliefs as predispositions towards action.

These studies are hypothesis based, tentative explanations to questions founded on theoretical research frameworks. Objectivity is an important issue in quantitative research. It involves viewing events as independent of the researcher's perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and opinions. Answers to questions are found through objective research. The use of previously tested questionnaires and data analysis instruments becomes part of the objectivity of a study.

As was mentioned above, the context is marginally considered because events are seen as independent from each other. Decontextualization is part of the objectivity of a study. What has been learned in one context is tested in a different one. This seems evident in Horwitz's studies, where little emphasis is given to students' background

and the setting, despite the fact that one of the objectives in Horwitz's studies (1999) was to find commonalities across cultures, an objective that echoes Lankshear and Knobel description, "… quantitative studies are focused on the numerical summaries of regularities that exist in the world…"(2004:145).

Categorization is a characteristic of quantitative studies; each category is further broken down into subcategories. The objective is to unravel the phenomenon being studied and find how categories and subcategories correlate. To investigate how categories correlate, quantitative studies often use questionnaires and interviews. It is not clear how interviews were conducted and the possible influence that the researcher might have had upon students' answers. On the other hand, the use of questionnaires and how they are designed may be challenged. Reicher (1997) explains some implications in the answering of a questionnaire:

> Whether I answer the questionnaire… depends upon my position with respect of the researcher. My range of responses is dictated by the terms in which questions are posed. My actual answers are acts of communication which may therefore be affected by whom I am communicating with and the relations of power that obtain between us…my answers…reflect my internal attitudes – representations, beliefs, attitudes or whatever… (1997:85).

In the case of the BALLI questionnaire, the instrument was designed based on information from foreign language teachers who were assumed to be advanced language learners. Tarone and Yule comment on the use of questionnaires or self-reports:

> …learners may select statements…according to their own values…self-flattering…they may select statements…they believe the questioner would like them to select, regardless of what their personal views are… (1989:135).

Thus, the problem seems to be not only the source of the questions but the positioning of its users. These comments challenge an important contention within quantitative research traditions, the viability of looking at phenomena objectively. Objectivity involves viewing events independently of the researchers' personal perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and opinions which may be translated into unbiased results.

Horwitz's approach has been of concern as statements were not generated by the individuals whose beliefs were being assessed (Kuntz, 1996). There are several

criticisms related to the statistical approach used to generate its themes. The five themes represent a belief structure that teachers think students hold and not one that the sample of students actually revealed (Kuntz, 1996:21); the validity of those themes has been further questioned as they were not the result of statistical analyses (Kuntz, 1996). But the latter has been disregarded by other studies like Nikitina and Furuoka's (2006). For this type of study, a need to prove the validity and reliability of results through replication is of uppermost importance, a characteristic of hypothetico-deductionist approaches. However, results may be reliable, but their authenticity could be challenged given the isolation of the individual and the limited role assigned to the context.

Kuntz states that often instructors and textbook authors make curriculum decisions on the assumption that they and their students share the same beliefs about foreign language learning (1996:5). Horwitz's objective was to find "the prevalence of certain common beliefs about language learning" (1988:284) aiming at the characterization of learners' beliefs, seeking to understand the consequences of those beliefs in the learning process and finally, providing teachers with evidence about the nature and influence of learner beliefs.

Norton Peirce explains:

> Theories of the good language learner have been developed on the premise that language learners can choose under what conditions they will interact with members of the target language community and that the learner's access to the target language community is a function of the learner's motivation… (1995:12).

The conceptualization of context bears the influence of social, political, and linguistic aspects upon learners' motivations and attitudes towards the language; aspects necessarily tied to context. But, considering the psychological theoretical background of the study, the meaning of context should be seen as that of the learners as self-contained individuals in charge of their actions. For Sarason, this assertion means that

> For all practical purposes psychology is ahistorical. It has its subject matter: the individual, all else is commentary – interesting, but commentary. (1981:176)

Thus, the importance or the impact that the context may have is seen as marginal because the learner is isolated. Firth and Wagner who also challenge the psychological position of second language acquisition say that "acquisition is an individual phenomenon, its locus being the individual's mind" (1997:287).

External influences are marginally acknowledged, conceptualizations refer to learners as "self contained entities" (Stainton Rogers, 2003) able to exercise agency and thus, in control of their acts. Contentions in this study are informed by psychological research carried out during the 20th century seeking to understand how to enable individuals to be efficient language learners (Titone, 1975). The fact that these conceptualizations are based on psychological research revolves around a particular view of the world, as Stainton Rogers says:

> Processes and phenomena are seen as operating at a psychological level –that is, at the level of the individual who may be influenced by the social context but who, ultimately, operates as a self contained entity (2003:56).

A recent study by Sharkey and Layzer (2000) on students' success problematizes this construction showing that the meaning of success for an institution probably does not mean that ESL students feel successful. School policies do not always allow them to take classes suitable for their academic aspirations; students are allowed to enrol in classes that suit what the school authorities consider classes where students could be successful. Could it be that fostering this would provide schools with adequate numbers to be seen as successful institutions and gain certain reputation? This is a question that should be addressed. For the authors this raises several questions:

> …who defines success for these students, how that success is defined and what the consequences of such definitions are. When schools equate success with level of comfort rather than with the meeting of students' affective and cognitive learning needs, those schools foreclose students' opportunities for learning… (Sharkey and Layzer, 2000).

This evidence from a recent study seems to challenge the objectives of studies seeking to find learners' beliefs to support teachers' positions. It makes evident that the assumption held by some "that the good learner has or creates" opportunities to learn and "the poorer learner does not" (Rubin, 1975:44) is problematic and has been contested. A second issue that needs to be addressed is the way language learning and the learner are conceptualized within this model.

To conclude, I would argue that these assumptions underlying quantitative studies lie at the core of the construction of the concepts discussed above, as Breen claims:

> 'current theories' prevalent in the last thirty years… have promoted and accounted for language acquisition as primarily the interface between learners' mental processes and the grammatical system of the target language… a research agenda that seeks to account for generalizable patterns of development across all learners (Breen, 2001:173).

The implication of which is that the language classroom is conceived as an environment separate from social grounds where students live and students are able to detach themselves from their lives when they are in the classroom or when they are learning. Further, their beliefs about other things besides language learning are not considered as part of the beliefs impacting their learning process. Now I will discuss the social view of learner beliefs.

2.2.5 Underlying Assumptions Behind a Social View

The constructions discussed under the heading of the social view are based on qualitative research studies. In very general terms, qualitative research in this area seeks to understand the social world rather than find particular truths. This assumption has direct incidence upon the kind of data collection procedures. These should be opportunities to hear multiple voices under the assumption that the world is not unified but pluralistic; they enhance the possibility of gaining in-depth information about participants' views which are seen as in constant construction. As Lankshear and Knobel explain, "qualitative research is centrally concerned with how people experience, understand, interpret and participate in their social and cultural world" (2004:68). Thus, the researcher acts as co-constructer of participants' reality. This position calls for reflective practice to acknowledge personal ideologies, values, and interests.

The assumptions of qualitative research raise some questions about Breen's (2001) profile as a socio-cognitive position. From a social point of view, the centrality of a socially constructed self is in agreement with those assumptions. On the other hand, a cognitive view could be seen as constructing the self as an isolated entity bringing into light the dual position of positivistic views of the world.

An approach to research that focuses on the social world problematizes constructions that have prevailed for many years. For Miller (2003:28), this research approach means contrasting orientations towards the meaning of language; that is, language is seen as discourse where contextualization, situatedness and negotiation are key to understanding how students view their learning and how they situate their selves as part of social groups. It brings to the forefront the importance of the self as agent and the different power positions afforded.

Thus, a social view in the construction of learner beliefs, the meaning of "the good learner" and beliefs about language learner have deep implications for previous conceptualizations about learner and learning and the path to reach competence. These are not prescribed by teachers who know better, but left to the interactive nature of individuals who may understand the world in a different way from that of the teacher and who are active social participants in different social groups.

As a final point, I can conclude this chapter establishing that current discussions celebrate voices that were previously silenced by the research approach used to construct influential discourses that inform the field and which I believe is an unfinished task. These ideas are central for this study as my aim is to enhance my understanding of students' perceptions about their teachers and their language classes. Based on this, in Chapter 3 I explain the research methodology that allowed me to unravel this phenomenon through students' voices.

Chapter 3

Methodological Approach

In Chapter 1 I introduced the research project, the setting and the researcher as part of the context where the study took place. In Chapter 2 I discussed literature related to the phenomenon I investigated, looking first at traditional conceptualizations of some notions and how these have changed through a focus on the social world. The latter has involved a shift in research approaches with a particular emphasis on the social context, previous experiences and complex relationships that being part of social groups involves. In this chapter, I will discuss qualitative and interpretive research approaches and explain the nature of the emergent and interpretive stance I used for the study as this will enhance the credibility and provide rigour to the study. But first, I will present the research questions.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the issues that surfaced with the insertion of English as a compulsory subject is the increasing numbers of students who fail to finish their study programs. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of students' experiences as language learners in these circumstances. To achieve this aim, it became necessary to restate the initial research questions. My first inclination, as explained in Chapter 1, was to research motivational factors that influenced students' learning. As discussed in Chapter 2, the quantitative research approaches used in many motivational studies do not allow researchers to come to deep understandings of language learners' motivation. As my own research proceeded and my understanding developed, I became aware of the limitations of quantitative research and of the possibilities of qualitative research approaches. This led to the main research question evolving into the following:

What is the nature of undergraduate students' experiences as language learners when English is a mandatory subject?

From there, other questions arose as I started the data gathering process and its analysis:

What factors enable or deter students in engaging in learning English?

What is the nature of the difficulties they face?

How do students perceive their teachers, their classes, and the English language?

Is there agreement in teachers' and students' perceptions?

3.1 Qualitative research and the study

In this section I will explain the theoretical framework that informs the research methods used in this study. This draws on the traditions of qualitative research, and an 'interpretive approach more specifically.

Denzin claims:

> In social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself…the qualitative researcher faces the difficult and challenging task of making sense of what has been learned …the art of interpretation (1994:500).

The implication of Denzin's words for the present study is that I did not seek an absolute truth but an understanding of a phenomenon. However, defining an interpretive approach to research is a complex issue as Denzin and Lincoln explain:

> Qualitative research, as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another. As a site of discussion, or discourse, qualitative research is difficult to define clearly. It has no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own… (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003b:9).

Given this complexity, rather than choosing a specific methodological approach, I adopted an eclectic research practice drawing on poststructural views of the world, postmodern thought and social constructionism which support the use of ethnographic methods to gather data, and a discourse analysis approach to interpret it. How I construe poststructuralism, postmodernism and social constructionism provides the theoretical framework to my study. These grand theories reflect my belief that there is not a unified reality, but dynamic constructions of realities which may not be fully understood. I take an understanding of the philosophical position adopted in terms expressed by Seale: "Philosophical positions can be understood by social researchers as resources for thinking rather than taken as problems to be solved" (1999:25).

I am aware that there are tensions between the philosophical positions of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and social constructionism, and that each of these

positions can be contested. Postmodernism opens the door to multiple views of the world and identity, poststructuralism as seen by Weedon (1997) and social constructionism as interpreted by Burr (1995) provide useful theoretical frameworks to conceptualize a dynamic view of power, positions adopted by participants and discourse where language is utterly important. However, drawing on these threads of thought does not privilege any discourse, as Denzin (1994:501) puts it.

A postmodern stance may be contested because all past views are questioned and definitions are problematic (Maclure, 1995). Problematic as this posture may be, Maclure contends that "As far as education is concerned, the most telling question is whether it still makes sense to think of education in essentially modernist term" (1995:108). This is a compelling statement that further supports the idea of constant construction of reality and thus a complex and dynamic social process that cannot be fully explained. As Usher states about postmodernism, "[it] rejects the idea that there is a privileged scientific methods which acts as the methodological guarantee of a true and certain knowledge" (1997:30).

According to Usher (1997) a postmodern alternative may be seen as

> 'world-making' through language, discourses and texts…language is not conceived as a mirror held up to the world, as simply a transparent vehicle for conveying the meaning of an independent external reality… (1997:31).

Usher's conception of postmodernism seems to resonate with the importance poststructuralism places upon language and discourses as sites of struggle, a view that I support as it seems to portray everyday life where individuals have at times contradictory goals and actions. To understand this phenomenon, the research position should allow the researcher to look into such contradictions, not to find a simple answer but to recognise the complexities involved as well as the multiple voices present.

Burr points out that just as postmodernism rejects the idea of an ultimate truth which leads to interpretation that,

> …the terms 'postmodernism' and 'poststructuralism' are sometimes used interchangeably… They offered a way of understanding the entire social world in terms of one all-embracing principle… (1995:13).

According to Burr (1995) as postmodernism and poststructuralism reject structuralism, they "emphasise multiplicity and variety of situation-dependent ways of life" (p.13-14). I believe that these threads of thought and positions provide support to an investigation of a socially constructed reality that seeks not to describe the phenomenon, but to understand it:

> Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning… (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003b:13).

Adopting this approach involved acknowledging that research is value laden. It meant moving away from a research tradition where the researcher's influence is not recognized. The differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to inquiry lead to the acceptance of different assumptions that are irreconcilable. However, following Denzin and Lincoln (2003b:15), "these methods may be no better or worse than any other methods; they just tell different kinds of stories". For the present study, I was interested in stories consisting of detailed rich accounts of the participants' views of the world as social actors.

3.2 Participants as social members of a community

One of the consequences of framing this study as an interpretive and emerging research is the position of students as participants of social communities. In this section, I will discuss how I understand their membership and some of its implications for the study. This discussion also links to Chapter 2 where I considered some of the issues that detaching students from their social communities may provoke.

As stated in Chapter 2, one of the ideas that quantitative studies set forward and which I find problematic, is the isolation of the students from their social worlds. Belonging to a social group involves dynamism and interaction; exchanging ideas and influencing each other. All these happen within a context which is influenced by discourses that shape people's actions through language as well as their language. Through social interaction, we construct our understanding of the world and our reality; therefore, our actions are strongly linked to the discourses around us (Burr, 1995). It is a complex, many times contradictory and problematic issue. As such, the

manner in which we construct our world and reality is part of the positions we adopt which are not unified or static (Burkitt, 1991). In this respect, positions are fluid and dynamic, constantly influenced by the happenings around us which are the result of the influence of the different discourses in which we live. Thus, the view of a static self as it is defined within a positivistic paradigm is challenged when individuals are part of social groups that constantly interact and construct their understanding of reality.

From an interpretive perspective, the conceptualization of the good language learner and learner beliefs underpinned by quantitative research (see Chapter 2) is problematic as it assumes that the self is static and unified. Further, as it departed from assumptions held by teachers about learners, they do not necessarily represent students' views. It is a position that contradicts the notion of a socially constructed reality that is complex and dynamic.

Given the underlying assumptions of a qualitative approach to inquiry, it seems possible to explore emerging aspects of the phenomenon being studied. It provides adequate grounds to understand the processes that take place when people learn a foreign language under circumstances that are not necessarily ideal. The implications are a holistic approach, the individual as part of society, people who are influenced and influence others. Also, the ever changing self that is constantly interacting in complex social groups may also be studied in-depth to understand how participants create new positions that a second language learning process appears to involve (Norton, 1995). An understanding of students' constructions is not a completed assignment but a dynamic dialogical process, a position that seems to be in agreement with Shotter's view:

> For although we all may draw upon resources (to an extent) held in common, every voice, every way of speaking, embodies a different evaluative stance, a different way of being or position in the world, with a differential access to such resources. It is this that keeps everyone in permanent dialogue with everyone else, and gives all the processes of interest to us their intrinsic dynamic. And by studying the different ways in which different people, at different times in different contexts, resolve the dilemmas they face in practice, we can both characterize the resources available to them in those contexts at those times… (1993c:15).

From this stance, the meaning that participants give to their acts is a way of understanding the influence of being part of a social group at a specific point in time

and in a specific situation and not restricting the search to objective views expected within a positivistic view of the world.

Credibility and rigour

Questions of subjectivity and objectivity and of the researcher's position are central to qualitative research. The absence of recognition of the researcher's influence has been one of the criticisms of interpretive research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003b), and it is perceived by some quantitative researchers as lacking rigour and credibility (Becker, 1996). This is acknowledged by Hammersley and Atkinson who write that qualitative research:

> …does not match…positivist canons and as a result it came under criticism as lacking scientific rigour. It was sometimes dismissed as quite inappropriate to social science, on the grounds that the data and findings it produces are 'subjective… and cannot provide a solid foundation for rigorous scientific analysis' (1995:6).

The issue of rigour and credibility has been a key issue in discussions of qualitative research. Mays and Pope, for example, believe that rigour involves "a systematic and self conscious research design, data collection, interpretation, and communication" (1995:110), while Polkinghorne (1988) considers that verisimilitude is achieved through research that is well grounded and supportable.

Rigour and credibility in qualitative research can be achieved through detailed description of the phenomenon and context being investigated, detailed descriptions of participants a detailed account of how the project developed, how the data gathering took place, and a clear and detailed account of the data analysis process and its interpretation. Including different sources of data also strengthens the conclusions reached.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity and the acknowledgement of the researcher's subjectivity are also factors that have been seen to provide rigour and credibility to a qualitative study. Denzin (1989) contends:

> When a writer writes… he or she writes him[self] or herself into the life of the subject written about. When the reader reads a biographical text, that text is read

through the life of the reader. Hence, writers and readers conspire to create the lives they write and read about. Along the way, the produced text is cluttered by the traces of the life of the "real" person being written about… (p.26).

Reflexivity, for interpretive studies however, brings to the forefront the contextualized nature of research where social interaction between researcher and participants is perceived as a means to understand social phenomena. Hammersley and Atkinson explain the role of the researcher as

> …active participant in the research process…the research instrument par excellence…Data should not be taken at face value, but treated as a field of inferences in which hypothetical patterns can be identified… explored… compared with a view to drawing theoretical conclusions. Interpretations need to be made explicit and full advantage should be taken of any opportunities to test their limit and to assess alternatives… (1995:19).

Therefore, this study is only a search for an understanding of realities constructed by participants acknowledging my own subjectivity. However, this brings in more tensions. The world becomes relative. Thus, I have taken Seale's advice towards this issue:

> Once one is faced with the problem of multiple versions... One person's version may be as good as any other's; all is relative to the perspective of the beholder… relativism can be adopted as an interesting way of thinking, of particular value if one is trying to understand another person or culture (Hacking, 1982). This does not require the thinker to subscribe to relativism… but simply to adopt it as an attitude of mind when, for example, doing fieldwork (1999:24).

Realities are bounded to a specific setting where there are dialogical relationships between social groups, needs, previous experiences, and future expectations. These relationships are complex and problematic; participants are influenced by dynamic power forces dictated by different discourses (Bakhtin, 1981).

It is for these reasons that including my personal story and other possible sources of my views are important aspects of this study (Alvermann, 2000). To be able to understand how participants constructed their desire to continue studying regardless of the difficulties that they were facing, I also used ethnographic research techniques that gave voice to participants. In the next section I will explain how this emergent interpretive study made use of ethnographic techniques.

3.3 How my study became interpretive and ethnographic

At the beginning of the research project I was not fully aware of the philosophical issues surrounding interpretive research reasons nor fully conversant with the procedures which characterise interpretive research and which I chose to employ. These procedures included ethnographic techniques such as participant and non-participant observations, unstructured interviews, field notes and keeping a research journal, which I will describe more fully below. The struggle of becoming aware of the gaps in my understanding and knowledge about these philosophical issues and their implications for the research methods was an important part of the research process. As the study developed I started questioning and valuing what was happening, what I was doing, how I was doing it and why I was doing it. My understanding developed through this process of questioning and valuing, as well as articulating my developing insights through writing. This echoes Seale's preface to his book on qualitative research:

> …methodological writing is… in large part learned 'on the job', through apprenticeship, experience, trial and error, rather than by studying general accounts of method'. (1999:IX).

Writing became part of the reflective practice. All along the research process, writing was a space to reflect and understand. It was a process that involved drafting, erasing, re-writing and re-thinking which acted as a propeller in the process of making sense of the phenomenon where no clear path was visible. Writing was a means to engage with the literature and the data; a way to make sense of what I was trying to achieve. It acted as a channel to see beyond myself and the construction of a researcher self. While writing, I tried to keep the meaning that I sensed in the students' interviews through careful reflection about my wording and trying to understand my own prejudices. When the complexity of the discussion became evident, this became difficult. These ideas seem to resonate with Hammersley and Atkinson who say

> …writing is at the heart of the ethnographic enterprise. It is, therefore, important that a disciplined approach to ethnographic work should incorporate a critical awareness of writing itself. The discipline of writing is not just about the practical demands of getting words on paper; it requires the cultivation of a critical and theoretical orientation to textual practices… (1995:239-240).

Within this boundary and closely linked to the writing process is that I struggled to structure my thesis. I had envisioned a linear structure. I was going to write chapters in a foreseen order; I conceived them as grounds for the discussion of the literature, methodology, data, analysis, interpretation and conclusions. It was a naïve and

simple structure that did not take into consideration the complexity of an emerging research project or the development of the researcher nor the understanding and awareness of what doing research involved. Through writing, I was able to understand the complexity of the world and my own constantly changing complexity; I became aware of the tensions that my previous views and experiences were causing, particularly my experience within chemistry, a highly truth-seeking field. The process made me realize that I resist linearity. Nothing in my life has gone through a direct linear process.

I moved form a deterministic view of the self realizing that I constantly shift positions as I interact socially; the shifts involved reflection influenced and mediated in Vygotskian terms by readings, writing and discussions. My views about social interaction changed as I made sense of students' discourses being influenced and influencing others. I realized that interaction meant more than language as other symbolic systems interact creating novel grounds to construct a researcher self. I came to see this process a dialogical where there is constant shift of power positions.

The ethnographic techniques I employed drew on the tenets of ethnographic research which was first favoured by anthropologists; however, nowadays researchers from different disciplines have become advocates of this approach. Ethnographic research involves a holistic approach to the understanding of daily life and is seen by Kincheloe & McLaren as one of "the "emergent" schools of social inquiry" (2005:305) influenced by postmodernism and poststructuralism. For Atkinson and Hammersley,

> "…ethnography usually refers to forms of social research … (with) a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them… a tendency to work primarily with "unstructured" data… investigation of a small number of cases… in detail…" (1994:248)

My research was ethnographic in a number of ways. One of them was the use of conversation in the form of structured or non-structured interviews, allowing the researcher to learn about the participants' worlds in-depth. Another ethnographic characteristic of this study was the use of group interviews that were unstructured and informal and sought to obtain rich data through providing participants with

opportunities to elaborate on relevant issues and perspectives. A third aspect that I consider ethnographic was the use of observations.

The use of observations has been described by many researchers from different standpoints. For Angrosino, for example,

> Observation has been characterized as "the fundamental base of all research methods" in the social and behavioural sciences (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 389) and as "the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise" (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987, p257). Even studies that rely mainly on interviewing as a data collection technique employ observational methods to note body language and other gestural cues… (2005:729)

Taking this point of view into consideration, observations provided further data to understand students' constructions. Using the ethnographic tools mentioned above allowed me as researcher not to view participants as the "other" but as integral actors who have voices and interact with the researcher in the construction of my interpretation of their constructions. In other words, a research approach that values participants' voices (Vidich and Lyman, 1994). This involves a deep analysis of their views of the world (Silverman, 1993) and its interpretation. Or, as Bakhtin (1981) sees it, as establishing a dialogical relationship where one word uttered on one side of the dialogue became the trigger for the response on the other side of the dialogue. Thus, the researcher's voice is an influence that needs to be considered and identified in the data collection process, analysis and interpretation of participants' reality as the "vision of an objective observer is untenable" (Seale, 1999:21). Now I will examine in more detail the rationale for and practicalities of the different data gathering tools that I employed.

Field observations

Field observations are opportunities for direct and first hand observation of daily life; this may be in the form of participant or non-participant observation. According to Atkinson & Hammersley (1994), observation may be seen on a continuum from "complete observer, observed as participant, participant as observed to complete participant". 'For them participant observation represents 'a uniquely humanistic, interpretive approach" (1994:249) since it "…gives us access to the meanings that guide (that) behaviour… (and) learn the culture or subculture of the people we are studying" (1994:8). This 'access to the meanings that guide behaviour' resonates

with Spradley's (1980) view that people are not aware of key aspects of everyday social life; things are "usually blocked out to avoid overload' (1980:55). Participant observation can help the researcher become aware of these aspects of everyday social life and 'overcome years of selective inattention…" (Spradley: ibid). The process, according to Spradley, is aided by consciously shifting between insider and outsider positions of the situation that one is observing. It should also involve an increasing level of "introspectiveness… to use yourself as a research instrument" (1980:57). As result of these processes, things that are usually taken for granted emerge. It is necessary, however, to be aware of the possibility that participants "can change their behaviors in ways that would not have occurred in the absence of such interaction" involved in participant observation (Angrosino and Mays de Pérez 2003:111) and that the presence of the researcher bears different degrees of influence on the context where observations take place.

The continuum defined by Hammersley and Atkinson implies that the researcher may adopt different positions while observing which may enrich the field notes taken through the process. On one hand, the researcher's opportunity to become a complete participant provides opportunities to achieve through hand-on experiences a better understanding of participants' realities while still remaining an outsider. On the other hand, the complete observer may have the opportunity to record in the form of field notes, details that would be difficult to notice if engaged as a participant observer.

 Even though observation as a data gathering technique could be considered limited for a large scale project, for a small scale study, like this one, it provides opportunities to get insights into individual and group behaviour.

Interviews

Interviews are considered by some researchers as "the most common and powerful way in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (Fontana and Frey, 2003:62). There are others who are critical and consider them "slippery, unstable and ambiguous" (Scheurich, 1997:62). Like observations, they are not neutral tools. Researcher and participants produce narratives that reflect each other's views but where different power positions create context specific texts. It is a negotiated activity where "rules and roles are known and shared" (Fontana and Frey, 2003:64).

Unstructured interviews provide participants with more opportunities to develop topics that were probably not foreseen by the researcher. Thus, I would say that interviewing is an activity that improves as one experiences it and which requires careful consideration of what is being said without jumping into what the researcher would like to hear. Potter (1996) explains the usefulness of interviews and issues that could arise:

> …they allow a relatively standard range of themes to be addressed with different participants…. They are conceptualized as an arena in which one can identify and explore the participants' interpretive practices…Despite the virtues… there are problems in relating the practices that happen in interviews to what goes on elsewhere and avoiding the interaction being swamped by the interviewer's own categories and constructions… (1996:134).

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:132) a researcher's log also helps the discovery process of the data analysis. Even though information from a researcher's log is problematic given that its records are biased by the researcher's subjectivity, it could be used as a means to understand the researcher's subjectivity and thus be able to acknowledge it. Furthermore, as records are usually written soon after events took place, the action of time over memory, that is retrospection, may not become an issue. It provides important evidence of the researcher's changes across time as well as a trail to see how interests change and views evolve. Thus, results of a data analysis process is based on the researcher's subjectivity and Kouritzin's (2002:121) statement about fieldnotes and journal notes may be seen as an "active creation of cultural artefacts" that should not be considered neutral and which reflect decisions based on live stories. Having defined my understanding of the data gathering techniques that provide ethnographic characteristics to this emergent study, in section 3.3 I will explain the data gathering process.

3.4 The data gathering process

In this section I will explain in detail how I gathered the data that helped me understand the phenomenon of this study. I will first provide information about the data collection events. Then I will give an account of the process of making contact; this will lead to an explanation of the data analysis approach.

3.4.1 Data collection events

In section 3.3 I mentioned that I used ethnographic tools to gather data: unstructured interviews, observations and the researcher's diary, as well as e-mail messages. In this section I will provide information about these events. The purpose of this is to enhance the credibility of the project.

The data collection process was carried out in three stages as Table 3.1 shows. The stages overlap as they represent events that involved different objectives as I explain below. These stages involved meeting students and teachers as well as classroom, patio and CAADI observations as shown in Table 3.2. During the first stage of the data collection I taught three classes in a BA program and I tutored several students. These activities diverted my attention and time from the gathering of data. There were moments when I found it difficult to concentrate on the data before moving on. At the time of the second stage of data collection, I did not have to teach and I could fully concentrate on the research. By that time, I had started the initial data analysis and my understanding of the research process was better. This influenced my approach to the interviews and observations; I was more careful about issues such as interfering, distracting, interrupting and asking questions. I would say that this second stage led to richer data and a better understanding of what social interaction means and the construction of students' reality.

In the first column of Table 3.1 I have identified the three stages that these involved and the time span involved, while the second column provides the different techniques used including the number of observations and interviews carried out. Stage 1 involved meeting teachers and inviting students. Stage 2 overlapped with Stage 1 because once I contacted students during the first classroom observation, I continued observing their classes and began interviewing them. In Stage 3 the focus was on a smaller group of participants whose participation in group interviews and individual interviews provided rich data as well as a range of individual needs and personal conditions. This third stage overlapped with the second one because at that point I was still identifying the students who became the focus of the study. These events are explained in detail under the stage headings below as I relate the order of the events and the conditions.

Table 3.1 Research procedures

Research procedures Stage One: August, 2005.	1. Classroom observation (16) 2. Teacher interviews (8)
Stage Two: August to November, 2005.	1. Individual interviews with students (51) 2. Classroom observations (10) 3. Observations and work with students at the Self Access Centre (21) 4. Patio observations
Stage Three: November 2005 to August, 2006.	1. Individual student interviews (7) 2. Classroom observations (3) 3. Group interviews (2) 4. Observations and work with students at Self Access Centre (6) 5. Informal conversations with teachers (2) 6. Patio observations

Table 3.2 presents the schedule I followed to carry out individual and group interviews with students and individual interviews with teachers. It makes evident that interviewing, during the first two months of the data gathering process, was the main activity. While interviews during the first month were mainly used to identify participants, the objectives of some interviews, particularly students' interviews during the second month began changing as will be discussed later.

Table 3.2 Schedule of students' and teachers' interviews

There were fifty seven individual student interviews and two group interviews distributed as follows:

Month Student	August 2005	September 2005	October 2005	November 2005	December 2005	July/August 2006
Raul	16-08-05 23-08-05	6-09-05 20-09-05	4-10-05	29-11-05		26-07-06
Alondra	25-08-05				6-12-05	28-07-06
Rolando				8-11-05	5-12-05	9-08-06
Evaristo			27-10-05			11-08-06
Itzimba	24-08-05	1-09-05				

Jovita	22-08-05 30-08-05					
Lulu			4-10-05	29-11-05		
Ana	25-08-05	6-09-05 20-09-05	5-10-05			
Jenny		2-09-05 14-09-05 30-09-05				
Kate	17-08-05 24-08-05	7-09-05 14-09-05				
Lisa	31-08-05	2-09-05 9-09-05 23-09-05	3-10-05			
Mirsa	18-08-05 25-08-05					
Greta	23-08-05 31-08-05	12-09-05 21-09-05	5-10-05 26-10-05			
Laura		22-09-05		11-11-05		
Ettienne	26-08-05	5-09-05 23-09-05	7-10-05 19-10-05	8-11-05		
Paula	29-08-05	12-09-05 27-09-05	10-10-05			
Group interviews				15-11-05 22-11-05		
Teacher						
T1	9-08-05	23-08-05				
T2	9-08-05	22-08-05				
T3	9-08-05	24-08-05				
T4	9-08-05		6-09-05			
T5	9-08-05		19-09-05			

T6		5-09-05				
T7		13-09-05		16-11-05		
T8	12-08-05	31-08-05				

Table 3.3 provides information about three different observation sites. While there was a reduction on the number of classroom observations as the study developed, patio and CAADI tutorials increased. This table also offers a condensed view of participant observations (CAADI tutorials), classroom non-participant observations and observations at the patio where the level of participation varied. Samples of the field notes I took while observing may be found in Appendix 6.

Table 3.3 Schedule of classroom, CAADI and patio observations

29 Classroom observations

Month / Teacher	August 2005	September 2005	October 2005	November 2005	December 2005	July/August 2006
T1	18-08-05 24-08-05	6-09-05				
T2	19-08-05 22-08-05 24-08-05	13-09-05 19-09-05		3-11-05		
T3	22-08-05		30-10-05	16-11-05		
T4	23-08-05 29-08-05	6-09-05				
T5	23-08-05	13-09-05	3-10-05			
T6	29-08-05	5-09-05 19-09-05		16-11-05		
T7		9-09-05 13-09-05 27-09-05		16-11-05		22-08-06 31-08-06 21-08-06
T8	31-08-05					

Patio Observation		21-09-05	19-10-05	14-11-05 29-11-05	5-12-05 14-12-05	22-08-06
CAADI tutorials		6	9	9	3	

Stage 1: Gaining entrance

This first stage started when I gained entrance through the gatekeeper, the director of the school. Gaining access with the gatekeeper was not problematic; after a meeting to explain my plans and an overall view of my project, I got permission to collect my data at the Language School. I wrote a letter asking for permission explaining the kind of data that I needed and how long the process would be. The next step was to contact the coordinators of the English Program to ask for their permission to talk to teachers and observe classes. At that level I did not have problems either and a letter asking for their permission was all I needed. It was when I tried to contact teachers that I found myself in a strange position.

Even though I had worked at the Language School for nine years, having spent a semester away from the Language School preparing for the data gathering process involved distancing from co-workers. To some teachers I had become a familiar outsider; that is, I was not part of the English program anymore. To new teachers, I was a complete stranger. To all of them, I was someone who was not working in the English program and who did not have much in common with them. At that moment, my view of the world was rather deterministic and unproblematic without taking into consideration that people I had not seen for six months had been constructing their own world while I was doing the same elsewhere. I had thought that I was part of this community; I had a sense of belonging and I considered English teaching part of my position and belonging to the Language School was also part of it. I was seen as a lecturer by those who had been my students in the BA program and who had become teachers.

To some extent, I had become a stranger. To become part of the community again, I attended meetings and gatherings that usually take place at the beginning of a new term. This was an opportunity to meet new teachers and be seen as someone who, if

not a part of the community, at least someone with similar interests and a familiar face. I gained entrance and explained my research to twelve teachers. Eight of them agreed to collaborate after explaining the project and the implications of their participation. While I was planning strategies to find participants, I thought I would ask teachers about their students' proficiency levels and they would tell me who I could invite to participate. Then, I would make contact with students. My idea proved difficult and naïve, as I explain below.

I set up individual meetings with eight teachers according to their schedules, trying to be sensitive towards their workload and not imposing my own timetable. This part of the process was informal in that it was done when everybody was standing in the room where we had a meeting and we were talking to each other casually.

Meeting teachers

The first formal individual interview with teachers took place in the Teachers' Common Room, a week before classes started. I chose this place because it is a space where teachers feel comfortable and it is usually quiet. The place is cramped and there is little space for teachers to work. Lockers, two computers, three filing cabinets and a small metallic bookcase were placed along the walls, leaving space in the centre of the room where a round table and three chairs served the purpose of working space (Appendix 1 shows a picture of the room). I explained the project again and how they would be involved; I told them that I wanted to observe their classes.

My perception about observations in the Language School was that of an intimidating experience, part of the teacher evaluation scheme of the institution; I did not want teachers to get the same perception from my observations. Being observed meant to me being disempowered in a space where teachers usually build a position of power and control. I tried to make clear that my purpose was not to evaluate them. I emphasized my interest in observing students in the classroom rather than the teacher. However, in reality, it seems impossible to not observe the teacher while observing a classroom. I suppose that my intention was really to ease my entrance into the classroom.

As I write this, I now realize that this poses an ethical problem of which I was not aware at that moment. However, I mentioned, as casually as possible, the probability of focusing on the teacher as well. One of the teachers was not happy about this and said he did not feel comfortable, so I did not observe his classes and that left me with only seven teachers. The others did not voice their concerns. For some teachers I was an expert and they expected me to give them advice on ways to deal with classroom issues I found in their classes.

Each teacher filled out a form of consent that both of us signed (Appendix 3) to assure them of the confidentiality and anonymity of their participation. I believe that from this point on I began to build a trusting relationship with some of them. For other teachers, I remained a suspicious researcher as their answers were short and they did not want to expand on things like their relationship with students or their personal views about teaching. They only wanted to share hard facts about the classroom. I obtained permission to record interviews and observe classes. I observed seven different classes, several times each one, searching for possible student-participants.

Except for the first formal interview that lasted only fifteen minutes and took place in the teachers' room, the following interviews lasted on average 45 minutes and took place in my office, a very small cubicle I share with another teacher (Appendix 1 shows photographs of the cubicle). The interviews in my cubicle allowed me to sit in front of the interviewee without a desk between us stressing the fact that I was in charge of the conversation; still, the ground could not be considered neutral because it was my office.

I began interviews with the open questions 'How are you doing?' and 'How do you see your classes?' I had chosen unstructured interviews because I did not want to lead the conversation through preconceived areas; I wanted teachers to bring up their own ideas. When teachers mentioned things that I thought were important or interesting, I asked them to expand on the topic. However, there were aspects that when I listened to the recording, I regretted not having asked for some form of elaboration. My lack of experience interviewing and doing research, forced me to interview some teachers several times to ask for further information. Teachers talked

about their classes, students, workload, problems with the book or the exams and their feelings.

Even though the beginning of the interviews with teachers involved topics that were not the main focus of the interview, the information that they provided placed them not only within the classroom but as part of social networks. Some of my objectives were to make teachers feel valued and taken into consideration. One of the teachers mentioned that I had a superior rank, which technically speaking cannot happen; the only people above both of us were the Academic Secretary and the Director of the School; and I did not hold either position. However, it seems that this perception had to do with academic achievement and he apparently felt at a loss.

The informal interview with teachers took place before classes started. I agreed with them that during the first two weeks of classes they would observe their groups and I would do the same. Thus, by mid August, they gave me some ideas and I had built a list of possible candidates from my own observations. The criteria they used to decide about their students varied. Some teachers told me about students perceived as motivated and others told me about students they knew had problems in previous terms; there was no consensus between our criteria. I observed 16 classes from a variety of levels, and at different times of the day. Dates were set by teachers. In the exploratory phase, I observed without following a structure and I did not participate trying to keep a low profile. Some teachers introduced me to their groups while others did not mention anything to the students. I found that problematic because I thought it was unethical not to clarify my objectives. On the other hand, I also wanted teachers to be in charge of the situation; so, I acted as I was told by teachers. In retrospect, I still believe that there are ethical issues involved in my decision. I should have told students who I was and explain what my objective was.

When I met with teachers I found that students they were suggesting were all different but for one, from the ones I had considered as possible candidates. After the first observation and when I tried to decide on possible participants, I realized that my criteria were not clear at all. I did not know how to go about choosing students. I had taken for granted aspects that I think are related to my preconceived idea of being an insider and knowing the type of students that the school caters for.

Contacting students

The criteria to choose participants were more complex than I first thought. One of them was that they should be university students who had to take English as a compulsory subject. My first thought was to get in touch with the students I knew had problems with English; this proved very difficult as I did not know where I could find them. Then, I thought that given my experience in the language classroom, I could find people only through my observations and that my criteria would be, if not the same as that of the teachers, a similar one; this also proved wrong; I was becoming aware of my own prejudices about students and my simplistic view of the world where different people from the same school would see things in similar ways. My previous experience as a teacher was interfering. My perceptions about students were based on that. To distance myself, I decided to take teachers' suggestions. They had more contact with students than me and therefore could learn more about students; some teachers had asked direct questions to students and got a better sense of who their students were. In the end I contacted some students that teachers suggested which was based on their understanding of what my research was about. Some of them I contacted directly, they had previously been my students. In other instances I made contact with them through their teachers. A third way of contacting them was through students I had already interviewed. In total, I interviewed 17 students, some did not fulfil my initial expectations, that is, I considered them successful students or they were not tertiary learners; in the end, some were initially interviewed but I did not have follow up interviews.

The second round of non-participant classroom observations during the first stage had a very specific objective: identify students that teachers had suggested and invite them to participate. While observing classes, I paid attention to students' seating arrangements, how they related to each other and students' responses to teachers' directions; sometimes, I paid attention to how teachers addressed their students (Appendix 5). When classes finished, I contacted eleven students suggested by teachers, introducing myself and explaining my objective. I also made direct contact with three participants who had been my students in the past. Those who accepted signed the consent form and we set a date for the first individual interview.

My objective at that point was to understand students' motivation, but students had other reasons for participating. Because I told every one that I was willing to help them in any way I could with their difficulties in English, some were interested in the support that participating would bring.

Students' reasons for getting involved in the project

While I was gathering data I did not pay much attention to how I had met the participants. However, afterwards, while reflecting on the process, besides each individual's views, I realized that students who had been contacted through other students had expectations that were different from students I had contacted through teachers. These differences had an impact on our interactions.

I met Raul and Alondra through their teacher. One was studying English at the Language School in level 3, while the other was studying in her department registered in level 6. However, they had the same teacher. Alondra wanted to participate in the study because she was not satisfied with her own learning process and said that she wanted to help future students; she felt that she had valuable information that could enlighten the problems that taking English as a compulsory subject involved. Raul saw the project as a way to understand his own problems and a way out; he felt that I could help him.

Students had very different reasons to engage in conversation with the researcher. Alondra perceived her experience and knowledge of the institution useful for my research to such an extent that the first two interviews dealt more with structural issues within the university than her experience in the language classroom. On the other hand, Raul wanted to find a counsellor who could help him deal with the difficulties he was having. Some differences between these two participants were also noticeable during classroom observations. While Alondra appeared as a confident, talkative and relaxed student in class, Raul seemed anxious and nervous.

Students that I invited directly to participate apparently decided to do so because I had been their teacher. I think that they accepted because of the different power positions that we held. One of them said that she needed some help with translations and this became her main reason for collaborating with me. However, as the

interviews progressed, personal issues emerged and she used the interviews as a space to talk about them. She assigned me a counsellor's role; but, such a position was different from the one Raul had given me. I would say that while Raul was seeking some sort of psychological help to understand why he had not been able to learn English, this other participant had personal issues that she needed to talk about in a safe space (see 5.4).

Students I contacted through teachers were more challenging. They seemed curious about the project, but during interviews they appeared elusive. As I found them difficult to interview, I decided to focus my attention on those students who seemed more participative and willing. I would say that they saw themselves in a difficult position and maybe thought that refusing to participate directly would cause some problems with their teachers.

Finding a suitable schedule

As I observed morning, afternoon and late afternoon classes, finding a suitable schedule for individual interviews was difficult. I also had to set up a schedule to tutor them. I established three sessions a week at the CAADI, each day from 10 to 12. I tutored five students throughout the semester; they were keen interviewees. Three of them became main informers and a fourth participant was a very dedicated learner who was not really facing difficulties with his learning. The other students did not ask for tutoring except for one who asked for some help translating documents. Actually, she expected me to translate documents for her. This caused me some conflict, but I assumed the responsibility of having said, "I'll help you in any way I can," and spent time translating a document for her.

Second Stage

The second stage of the data collection process overlaps with the first one as I started to have individual interviews with students and classroom observations while still trying to identify participants. The objective of the events in this second stage was not identifying participants, anymore as is explained below. At this point I also started working with students at the CAADI and carrying out Patio observations.

Observations

After making contact with students I observed 10 classes. I took as detailed notes as possible of what was happening (see observation fieldnotes in Appendix 5). I paid attention to student and teacher behaviour, facial expressions, and interaction. I observed how students moved in their places, their silence, and use of body movement, how close they were to each other. This was a rewarding and learning experience. Before the data collection process, my experience as classroom observer had been as evaluator of a teacher training course and as coordinator of a language program where my role was to assess teachers' performance.

Observing classes and distancing myself from my previous roles was challenging and involved trying to be constantly aware of my role. I had to bear in mind that I was not there to assess teachers but to understand students' learning process. Even though I made an effort to detach myself from my previous role, my observation notes had a tinge of my previous role as I noted down how teachers managed the classroom as well as how *communicative* classes were. Nonetheless, when reading my observation notes I could see evidence of the process involved as I tried to look at the classroom from a stranger's perspective. For example, I started to look at the classroom as a place where different power forces were at work and how these forces were to an extent driving the social interaction that took place.

As my perceptions about my role as observer developed, objectives of the observations also changed; but, my strategy of unstructured observations changed because I had in mind aspects that came up during individual interviews with the students. Depending on what they told me, I paid more attention to those topics rather than establishing an agenda based on my own preconceptions. Establishing my own agenda would only enhance my views and would not allow me to let the data drive the process. As there were so many things happening, I decided to observe classes as many times as possible and as many times as teachers allowed me to.

I carried out many classroom observations and I believe that there are several reasons for doing this. One of them was my lack of confidence as an observer whose objective was not to assess. While observing classes, I had to constantly remind myself what the objective of the observation was. Drawing away from this

previously adopted role took a considerable conscious effort. A second reason was the changes in students' attitudes and perceptions about learning English that I had identified while interviewing them. My intention was to corroborate if those changes were also present in the classroom. While observing, I looked for instances where participants were more interactive; I wanted to see if they had changed, if they appeared more confident.

Individual interviews

Throughout Stage 2 I observed classes and I also interviewed students individually. Most interviews took place in my office (see Appendix 1). Even though it was evident that students felt that I was in charge, a private room gave them the feeling that they could talk safely and not be overheard by other people sharing information that otherwise they would not have mentioned. There were instances when students lowered their voice as not to be heard by people outside. This was especially obvious with one student who was having problems with her teacher. Her teacher had labelled her as a failing student; she explained how she felt about it. Her voice lowered so much that it was difficult for me to follow her conversation. Later on, reflecting on the interview, I decided to interview her in a place where she could feel at ease without worrying about being heard. The following interview with this specific student took place at the CAADI where she apparently felt safer. When my office was busy I interviewed students in empty classrooms. When being interviewed in a classroom, students seemed more confident; in retrospective, this was a space that they were familiar with, it was part of their grounds and not mine.

Individual interviews began with a general question: How are you doing? Once students answered this question, I explained the objective of the project again followed by an open question: 'Tell me about yourself'. I did not want to lead the conversation through preconceived areas. When students mentioned things that I thought were important or interesting, I asked them to expand their comments (se Appendix 3 for a sample interview).

My lack of experience interviewing and doing research led to the need to ask for further elaboration of topics mentioned during previous interviews. But, I do not

consider this a drawback, on the contrary, I think that to a certain extent this allowed students drive the direction of the information they shared with me and prevented me from adjusting the conversation to suit my preconceived ideas about what was relevant.

During the first interview with students, I asked them how they felt about keeping a diary. While some of them resisted the idea, others did not express their true feelings towards the activity and so they committed themselves to an activity that was not of their choice but that they felt they had to do to please me, probably. Those who were honest at the beginning did not write anything. Those who agreed accepted a small notebook and told me that they would bring it to our next meeting. This rarely happened and therefore I dropped the idea of using diaries as data sources. Students either said to have forgotten it or that they had not written anything. Only one of them was constant in her writing and explained that she had always wanted to keep a diary but had never taken the steps to do so. She saw this as her opportunity to start something that appealed to her. I realized that some students were resisting my idea, but, they were careful as to not offend me. The student who kept a diary was one of the most motivated students that I interviewed. My decision at that point was to continue interviewing all students regardless of their success as language learners. The main reason for doing so was that once the semester was over I would not have as easy access to students as I had at that moment. Also, having information from *successful* students would give me the opportunity to reflect on the idea of broadening my project and consider both groups of students, in case I needed to change something from my original plan.

At the CAADI

During the second stage I spent 20 hours working with students at the CAADI. The activities were decided by students and I tried to accommodate to their needs. Together we worked on grammar, writing and speaking. Listening was also part of the activities, but I did not actually set tasks. We discussed the type of activities that they could find at the CAADI and after that, they decided which were more suitable for their needs and likes. During these sessions, I adopted a variety of roles; I helped them to find their needs, we discussed the difficulties they were facing; we talked

about the different strategies they found useful, and I provided some ideas, and we also laughed quite a lot as we built a friendly atmosphere where students and researcher felt at ease. Conversations usually started in English and ended up in Spanish when students talked about how they felt in class and why they thought they were having difficulties. Reflecting on this switch of languages, I would say that it enhanced the possibility of understanding each other and building a dialogue that was a response to each other.

Students asked for help with their writing several times, usually before a writing exam. Most of the time students showed me their compositions and we discussed what they wanted to say and what they had actually written. My idea was for them to become aware of the existing link between meaning and structure. However, there were many instances when students wanted rules; this was an issue that became part of the data discussion in Chapters 4 and 5.

In every session at the CAADI, students wanted to practice conversation. When that happened, everybody made an effort to use only English. We spent several sessions discussing the oral exam; they were interested in understanding the general set up of the exam and the roles of the two teachers who would assess them; they were also eager to understand what they were expected to do. As there were usually two or three students working with me, it was possible to practice for the exam in pairs or trios in a way similar to the actual exam (see 4.2.1.2). The notes I took as participant observer in the CAADI were based on what I remembered of the work done with students (see Appendix 5). I wrote about the kind of support students wanted and also my reaction towards that kind of work. I also kept a record of who attended these sessions. These notes helped me to understand and become aware of my own views about interaction and structure, the role of the oral exam and my beliefs about preparing for the oral exam.

Patio Observations

Another source of data that I collected came from the observations at the school's patio (Appendix 1). The patio is an outdoor area where students spend time before or after classes. There are round tables with chairs near trees. Sometimes, students meet

friends there and other times they study or do their homework. People were allowed to smoke in this part of the school and teachers and students would share the space for this activity. The area provided a space to interact with students learning other languages. Many Mexican students took the opportunity of spending time at the patio to meet foreign students and practice the language(s) they were learning. Sometimes, teachers celebrated students' birthdays and a whole group sat around tables to socialize. Even though it was outside the classroom, some teachers promoted the use of English during those celebrations.

I observed at the patio six times. On three occasions three participants joined me and we had informal conversations for about an hour. I did not record them but after the events wrote down as much as I could remember. The other three times I sat on my own and observed how students interacted socially. While I observed I took notes. Students were noisy and much laughter could be heard. However, the number of people that sat at the patio varied as well as the amount of noise. I noticed that when there was going to be an exam, there were fewer people talking with friends and more people working on their books and notes. Throughout the process I kept a researcher's dairy that helped me keep a record of what I did as well as note down comments immediately after each event. My notes helped me to reflect about questions I should ask participants and aspects that I wanted to pay attention to during observations. In this way, my research diary acted as a key element to the emergent topics.

So far I have described in detail the first two stages of the data gathering process. During these two stages I had several interviews with seventeen students. However, when I began transcribing the recorded interviews, I noticed that the information from several interviews was not relevant in the sense that they were repeating the same thing over and over again (two students). I also noted that some students I had contacted were not registered in a tertiary program and should not be included as data for the study (three students). Another student was obviously looking for the opportunity to obtain free support for some translation work she had to do. From the rest (eleven students) four were able to arrange their schedule to meet with me regularly at the CAADI while the rest met with me sporadically as they had a rather

complicated class schedule. As a result, four students became the focus of the study and given that they had various reasons for being there and were seriously interested on passing the subject, the data stemming from their interviews appeared to be richer. Furthermore, the four students that became key participants had characteristics which allowed me to see different realities. For example, one of them had a rather disengaged attitude towards tertiary education; a second one had to drop out twice as he was too concerned about his ability to learn English; a third participant who perceived herself as a committed student appeared truly concerned by her lack of success in learning English; finally, the last student was interested not only in finishing his first degree, but in keeping up with other activities that apparently diverted his attention. I do not mean to diminish the importance of the data that stem from the other participants. What I mean is that some interviews provided richer data than others and became more relevant for my discussion; as Mays and Pope (1995) say, researchers choose relevant data from the wealth of data gathered to suit the needs posed by research questions. Bearing this in mind I called some participants' stories 'core data' while the other stories remain as 'secondary data' which provided useful accounts that enriched and supported the narrative that I created. Core sources are four participants who faced difficulties and with whom I spent more time in individual interviews and at the CAADI. Secondary data arises from participants who were not necessarily facing difficulties in their learning process. Now I will explain the third stage of the data gathering process.

Third stage

The third stage of the data collection process involved the last few weeks of the fall semester in 2005 up to August 2006. It overlaps with the second stage because while I was still trying to sort out the kind of information students were sharing with me, I realized that there were four participants willing to engage in deeper conversations with me. It was at that point that the study focused on only four students.

I noticed that their views about learning English were changing and they were voicing more their successes and less their concerns about the process (see 5.3). I also noticed that they were looking for me without an appointment and I interpreted that as bridging the social distance between students and researcher. During those

three weeks I had two interviews with Raul, one with Alondra and one with Rolando. Also, there was a group interview with Raul, Rolando and Evaristo at the CAADI, two CAADI tutoring sessions with Raul and Rolando, and 2 patio informal conversations with Raul and Rolando.

Raul and Rolando also looked for me at times when I was busy doing something else and I could not meet with them. We had not set an appointment. Later, both students told me that they only wanted to say hello and chat informally.

I met Alondra, Raul and Rolando after they had their final exams. Rolando and Raul passed without a problem and looked for me to let me know their results. Alondra did not pass her exams and started preparing for an extraordinary exam that would take place in January, 2006. Evaristo did not pass the oral exam and he did not want to meet with me.

After the semester was over, I had contact with Raul, Rolando and Alondra through e mail. I had not considered keeping in touch with students; it was an unexpected situation that served as an alternative source of information. In a way, it became a substitute of the journals students did not want to write. They sent several messages telling me how they were doing and how they felt during the semester. In average, they sent four messages each. Alondra passed her extraordinary exam and could continue in her BA program as a regular student. Even though she did not have to take more English courses, she took another course because she wanted to reach an adequate level to register in an MA program in September.

I went back to the field in July 2006. By the time I engaged myself in this third stage I was familiar with the data that I had collected the previous year and had already found topics that could be developed further. I also had a better understanding of the project. I interviewed four participants. Even though I had some specific questions to start the conversations with them, the interviews were unstructured as I allowed the conversation to move to areas set by students.

Interviews

The first interview of the third stages was with Alondra. It took place at the end of July in a quiet corner of a restaurant. My objective was to make her feel at ease in a

place that she chose. I had contacted her through e-mail and later she called me to set the time and place of our meeting.

The second interview was with Raul and it took place on the first week of August in a noisy coffee shop close to the university. The student chose this place because he was busy enrolling for the new semester. Even though it was a busy place, we found a table far from the rest of the people and managed to have our conversation without any interruptions. I had contacted Raul through e mail.

The third interview took place at a small restaurant where I invited Evaristo to have breakfast. The first time I set up the interview Evaristo got sick and cancelled the meeting. However, we managed to arrange a second meeting during the second week of classes. Contacting him was difficult; I had tried to get in touch with Evaristo but he did not answer my e-mails so I talked to his teacher and observed his class. When he saw me, he greeted me enthusiastically and told me that he had passed third level but failed fourth level.

The fourth interview took place in my office. He had had an accident and was in the hospital when I first contacted him; he looked for me when he was better and was very excited about his experiences as an English student; by then, he was not considering the language classroom and the CAADI only, but expanded his opportunities to learn the language to his holidays.

Classroom observations

Classroom observations took place during the first and second week of English classes, in August 2006. As explained above, my objective at this point was to see if the changes that transpired from the interview data could also be seen through classroom observations.

The fourth participant, Rolando, had an accident and was in hospital when I called him. He was registered in the same class as Raul and when I went to observe the class for the second time, I met him and set up a date for the interview. He had a broken arm and had missed several classes. However, he participated in all the activities and changed places quickly when needed. The interview took place in my

cubicle. With these four interviews, four classroom observations and one patio observation carried out in August, 2006 I finished the data collection process at the university. However, while I was away, students contacted me through e mail messages.

E-mail messages

 E-mail messages were an unexpected source of data that I welcomed as the data *gathering* process developed. They provide a "particular view of reality…that involves value –what to produce,… what the relationship between the producers…" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005:960). In other words, students' e-mail messages could be seen as providing another angle to understand the meaning of being a language learner. In my opinion, this is important because the decision to communicate with the researcher came from the participants. In this sense, while content is influenced by the power positions of each participant and the researcher, their initiative of contacting the researcher may suggest that this format of communication bridged those power differences in a way that other form did not.

Participants' reasons for keeping in touch were not only to contribute with information about their experience as language learners, but also for personal reasons. The messages they sent me were at times unrelated to their learning process. I became aware of the level of trust we had constructed as the exchanges became more personal and some participants asked for moral support to deal with personal issues. E-mail was an interesting and valuable source of information that was relevant to students and which further informed existing tensions in their experiences. The formality and directness of students' language was evident in their messages. They did not elaborate much, there was a taken for granted understanding of what they were trying to say. They did not address me as an equal; there was social distance in their writing. However, the data is different from that obtained from an interview because the first messages are co-constructions in the sense that they had positioned me as a researcher supporting them; it was the students' initiative to let me know of their happenings. These co-constructions were different from those in interviews. Subsequent messages became different co-constructions as I asked for further information or explanation where my research agenda was obviously different from

their reasons to communicate with me. The data gathering process provided me with a sea of information that I had to analyse and which eventually helped me make sense of the phenomenon I investigated.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have established that this study followed an interpretive and emergent approach to research. I believe that the methodological stance described in Chapter 3 offered the opportunity to look into the complexity of students' perceptions and the research procedures employed provided some rich data relating to the research questions. In Chapter 4 I will turn to the data itself but, I will first provide a detailed account of the data analysis process.

Chapter 4

Unravelling students' and teachers' experiences: process and evidence

In the previous chapter, Chapter 3, I explained the research approach for this study; I also provided a detailed account of the data gathering process. The data that stemmed from that process and the process I followed for its analysis is presented in this chapter. Before discussing the data, however, I will explain how initial categories became key words that helped me to make sense of emergent issues. At the beginning of the chapter I describe in detail the data analysis process I used. By providing a detailed explanation of how initial categories became key words that became the backbone of this chapter, I am trying to demonstrate the rigour of the study. Following this introduction, I will look at students' perceptions of: themselves as language learners, their language classes, needs to learn English, and about their teachers, in other words their thinking, and teachers' perceptions about themselves, their classes and their students. This will allow me to understand the construction of their positions as language teachers. After that, I will discuss how students' and teachers' positions agree and/or disagree.

The data analysis was a complex endeavour which could be conceived as a hybrid analysis approach. I drew on different discursive traditions; according to Jaworski and Coupland "multiple perspectives enhance the possibility of reaching good explanations" (1999:37). Discourse analysis is suitable for interpretive research as it aims to enhance the understanding of social processes and opens possibilities of understanding multiple realities through the way language is used and seen as "social practice which actively orders and shapes people's relation to their social world" Related to 'multiple perspectives' that Jaworski and Coupland refer to, is Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical conception of discourse as a multivoiced phenomenon. This theoretical stance became significant when I realized that even though students and teachers shared the same spaces within a classroom, they did not understand each other. Similarly, the research was informed by Vygotsky's view that language is central to the development of knowledge. In Vygotskyan terms, speech assists the intellect as thoughts are spoken which could be said to translate into mutual development. Thus, one cannot develop in the absence of the other (Vygostsky,

1986). Another tradition I drew on in analysing the data was narrative analysis as conceived by Gergen (1994) a social constructionist, who sees participants as language users. That is, individuals make sense of their realities through language and it is through language that their realities may be understood. Gergen and Gergen's explain,

> "…the individual's account of the relationship among self-relevant events across time….the individual attempts to establish coherent connections among life events… systematically related… Using this analysis as grounding we can turn to the relationship of self-narratives to social interaction…a construction undergoing continuous alteration as interaction progresses…constructed and reconstructed by people in relationships, and employed… to sustain, enhance, or impede various actions…"(Gergen and Gergen, 1997:162-163)

4.1 The Process of Data Analysis: from initial categories to themes discussed in this chapter

In this section I will look at the process I followed to analyse the data obtained for the study. The data collection techniques that I used afforded information to understand students' experiences as language learners. These sources as explained in Chapter 3 included notes from observations (classroom, patio and CAADI) (Appendix 5), interviews (individual and in group) (Appendix 2), e-mail messages, researcher's journal (Appendix 4) as well as personal reflections and information about my personal development as researcher.

Figure 4.1 Data Analysis Process

Data collection techniques:
Interviews
Participant observations
Researcher's field notes
Researcher's journal
E mail messages

Initial Categories: Words taken from data (first phase of data collection process) collection sources

First categories

Continuous dialogue with data sources, initial categories and explored themes

Refinement of initial themes

Exploration through second phase of data collection process and continuous visits to first phase data

The process I followed involved careful reading of all data sources, Figure 4.1 shows the data analysis process, and constant visiting of previously seen sources (double arrows) that allowed me to refine the first categories as I found new links within data. As Tonkiss (1998) suggests, I chose data excerpts that I considered rich, detailed and related to the topics I was investigating. Further, I was selective and extracted sections that at times were contradictory but which enriched the analysis. Under a different paradigm, contradictory data may be an inconvenience; but for interpretive research, it is part of the inconsistencies and multiplicity of realities. Based on the objectives of this research study, I considered that this analytic approach would help me unravel and interpret students' narratives. However, within my interpretation of the data lies my own subjectivity; thus the interpretation may be seen as a reconstruction of their reality.

To make sense of the large body of data gathered, I designed a set of codes to help me keep trace of who was saying what, when and where.

Interview data

- I identify interview data through the name of the student, then the page within the transcribed interview and finally the year when the interview took place, i.e. Raul 14'05. Data extracts from the first and second stage are tagged '05 while those from the third stage are tagged '06.

- Teachers' interview data identifies teachers with numbers: T1'06; or T4, 11-12-06 (the date)

- Group interviews, I use the acronym RER that stands for the first letters of the students that participated in the interview, the pages and the year, i.e. RER 3'05. When the data refers to a particular participant then it becomes Rolando RER 4'05

Data from observations

- Field notes: field notes, page number within the transcription and the year: field notes,11'05; or field notes, 08-23-05 (Picture 1, Appendix 6 for an example)

- Researcher's journal extracts: researcher's journal/log, September 22, 2005; or researcher's journal, 09-22-05

E mail data

- Student's name, message number, acronym for e mail and year: Alondra 2em'06

At the onset of the process, during the second stage of data gathering, I identified several categories (labelled as initial categories in Figure 4.1) as I explored the data I had gathered. Picture 1 in Appendix 6 provides a sample of the field notes where I identified words in the data at that initial stage; I underlined words that were repeated in my observation notes and present in recorded interviews. Thus, initial categories were defined by the recurrent appearance of words. From there, I organized lists of words into categories (First categories in Figure 4.1); mind maps (Picture 2 in Appendix 6) helped me in this process. I used these first categories as guidance during subsequent observations and interviews. As the process evolved I began

organizing these words and related data in columns with colour coding, as Pictures 3 and 4 show in Appendix 6. This allowed me to distinguish the following categories:

- Students' personal strategies to deal with the learning of a second language as a requirement.

- Teachers' attitudes towards students

- Making sense of classroom happenings

- Fear

- Safe spaces

- Changing attitudes.

The identification of these categories provided the basis for further exploration of the data in search for additional connections (re-visiting data sources, Fig. 4.1). These categories also served as the basis for the final leg of the second stage of the data gathering process. As I gathered new data, I explored previously obtained data along with new data. This process allowed me to refine the initial categories as I added new information to the initial categories (see Appendix 6).

Once I identified these categories, I looked for information that crossed over different categories. The latter meant that themes became more complicated (Picture 5, Appendix 6). As I began interconnecting data, the themes that I discuss in Chapter 4 emerged (Picture 6, Appendix 6). Through the interconnections I found within the initial categories presented above were the following and ended up being the themes discussed in this chapter:

1) Students' perceptions of themselves as language learners (4.2)

Included under this theme were the following sub-themes:
- The importance of learning English
- The impact of the mandatory nature of English
- Emotions entangled in the experience of learning English
- Convincing the self

2) Students' thinking (4.3).

Included under this theme was the following sub-theme:

- Experiences learning English.

3) Students' perceptions of their language teachers (4.4).

Included under this theme were the following sub-themes:
- Communication between students and teachers
- The meaning of responding
- Whose authority and control?
- A path towards change

4) What teachers say about their students (4.5)

Included under this theme were the following sub-themes:
- Teachers' perceptions of their students
- Teachers' construction of interested students
- How are teachers' and students' discourses related?

Given that I did not have a set agenda when the data analysis began and the way initial categories emerge, I would say that the project was emergent, as Maykut and Morehouse state,

> Important leads are identified in the early phases of data analysis and pursued by asking new questions, observing new situations or previous situations with a slightly different lens… (1994: 44).

Even though the categorization of the themes was influenced by my subjectivity, emerging themes were not determined by the researcher, but based on students' constructions of their experiences. Maykut and Morehouse explain:

> Within the broad boundaries of the researcher's focus of inquiry, the data are studied for what is meaningful to the participants in the study, or what Bogdan and Biklen (1982) refer to as 'participant perspectives'. The outcomes of the research study evolve from the systematic building of the homogeneous categories of meaning inductively derived from the data. (1994:46-47).

The process involved an awareness of my preconceptions about motivation in the language classroom. I would say that being an experienced language teacher and influenced by a hard science background, I was initially drawn to search for words that I linked with my previous knowledge about motivation. Finding recurrent words

that did not match my preconceptions made me realize that I was not searching with an open mind but with certain expectations in mind. Katz explicates the process as follows:

> …a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation…helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open view without prejudgment or imposing meaning…requires the setting aside of the researcher's personal viewpoint in order to see the experience for itself. (Katz, 1987: 36-37).

The decision to revisit data was part of becoming aware as I tried to identify what was important for students and not to search for my own expectations, as Maykut and Morehouse contend,

> The goal of this initial step is to identify a large array of potentially important experiences, ideas, concepts, themes, etc. in the data. Discovery occurs throughout data collection, as recurring ideas are recorded in one's journal, and begins the formal process of data analysis (1994: 132).

Writing the data chapters became an important part of the data analysis process. It involved drafting and redrafting as I tried to make sense of the findings and my interpretation. The central role of writing lies on the role it played on raising my awareness and understanding of the phenomenon I was investigating. It became a reflective tool. Taking a Bakhtinian stance of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), through writing, the researcher constructed a dialogue with the data. In Vygotskian terms, writing acted as mediator in my awareness (Vygotsky, 1986) of what carrying out research involves and my understanding of the data and the meaning of doing discourse analysis.

Writing about emergent themes and coding the data involved translating the information I had. Translating into English what participants shared in Spanish was a worrisome issue as I tried to keep as close to their words and meaning as possible. However, this in itself appeared an impossible achievement. My interpretation of what students were telling me in Spanish was based on my own subjectivity.

I am aware that translating is a value laden activity that needs to be acknowledged; something to consider when translating data. According to Temple and Edwards,

> …there is no one correct translation…Rather than there being an exact match, word for word, in different languages, the translator is faced with a dazzling array of possible word combinations that could be used to convey meaning (2002).

Translating data raises ethical issues as to the veracity of the views being translated. It seems that no matter how carefully this is done, there will always be some level of interpretation which may not truly reflect the views of the original source, but the bias of the translator. In these terms, I take the responsibility of having translated and therefore interpreted the views of all the participants involved in this study. I would argue that in Bakhtinian terms, when I translated data I appropriated someone else's words which are influenced by my own discourses and many other discourses (Bakhtin, 1981). However hard I try to acknowledge my own subjectivity, it is always there. Translating data is problematic. It does not represent transparently participants' views, it could be said to be contaminated (Lather, 2000):

> Translation is always producing rather than merely reflecting or imitating some "original." Given the transformative nature of translation /interpretation/reading, our hope is practices that enlarge both our own language and that of the original through echoes that reverberate the original's claim on you to engage with history in a way that puts the original in new motion, ripe to this present (p.159)

Translating data does not mean translating words; it means more than that because language involves much more. It involves histories, cultures, discourses, contexts. I believe that there is not an answer to this issue; I consider that a constant reflective attitude while translating data is necessary to keep aware of the different possible meanings as well as one's subjectivity where different cultures come face to face which may mean that ideas worded in one language may not reflect clearly or directly what participants wanted to say.

Having explained how initial themes became the topics discussed in this chapter, now I will look at data that informs students' perceptions of themselves as language learners and which I organized as I explained above.

4.2 Students' perceptions of themselves as language learners

In this section I shall look into data that reveals how students see themselves as language learners and how their needs, ability and emotions are constructed within these perceptions and by these perceptions. Some of these constructions come from how they remember their experiences in secondary and high school; however, most

data refer to experiences at tertiary level. The section deals with the importance of learning English, the impact of the mandatory nature of English, emotions that may be entangled in the experience of learning English and finally how students change their positions.

4.2.1 The importance of learning English.

The learning of English, as I stated in Chapter 1, is mandatory for all students at the university. Attitudes towards it are affected by perceptions of the importance of learning English. Alondra, a young participant who faced difficulties to complete her English credits at tertiary level stated that:

> My plan is to finish a BA and then continue studying something related to my major…English, for me, was a fundamental subject before I started my BA. I was aware that it was important, but I never convinced myself that I had to study it; it was a requirement… for that reason … I studied English; otherwise, I wouldn't have studied it. (Alondra 4'05)

And that:

> I don't make as big an effort in English as I do for other subjects. In other subjects… I give 100%. In English, I don't, I spend time doing other things that I consider more important…(Alondra 4'05)

Another participant stated that:

> Maybe I lack interest [to learn English]… being able to speak Spanish is not enough to develop ourselves in many areas… I'm a musician, English steals a lot of my time; time that I could be spending on what I consider my thing [music], apart from school. (Rolando '05)

These excerpts raise several interesting points. The first is that English is not necessarily a priority, despite a possible future usefulness. Students resist an engaged position to learn it while showing interest in covering the demand set by the institution.

While Alondra perceives that within her family education is a highly valuable path to improve her life, another respondent said that:

> I'm not going to dedicate a 100% to studying because I still can get away from this and I haven't done so bad…Being an undergrad grants me possibilities that I won't have in the future… when I'll have to take things seriously. (Evaristo 4'06)

And that:

> I don't like English much… I haven't been able to see it as fun… another subject
> that will be useful. … I don't study … I rather leave English aside and pass other
> subjects … I simply want to pass. (Evaristo 25'06)

Learning English is placed on the margins of present academic commitments and, in the second case, the position includes all academic activities. English as an unexpected or unwelcome issue could be linked to the influence of previous experiences:

> [In secondary and high school] English was not important… the last subject… a
> filler (Alondra, 3'05)… not even teachers took it seriously; like not demanding… a
> subject we had to take …(Alondra 15'05)

The priority seems to be the validation of a requirement which may be translated into learning as a marginal event. This may explain why Evaristo registered in English classes after finishing his first academic year. When I first interviewed him, he was having problems and was worried about the possibility of failing English which would prevent him from finishing his studies.

Students' use of the word time demonstrates the marginalized position given to learning English:

> I don't have enough time. If I were only learning English it would be easier but we
> have to take it to finish our studies. Many of us have the idea that after finishing the
> program we will take an intensive English course to dedicate to its learning and then
> become proficient (Etienne10'05)

And that:

> I read and try to understand what we see in class. I don't have time to do more for
> the English class (Etienne 23'05).

Evaristo in our last interview said 'I haven't learned to manage my time…' (Evaristo'06) suggesting that studying involves learning to handle different levels of commitment to administer time. Time is an issue which problematizes performance and becomes a waste if not handled adequately in terms of priorities. On the other hand, lack of efficiency of a language learner may cause awkward feelings (section 4.2.3, Alondra'05). Being an efficient learner in class gives time to deal with more important issues because for Rolando 'English steals my time' (Rolando 1'05).

Discursive influences seem to be related to perceptions about their future as well as the influence of past and present situations. For several participants it is important to make the most of their academic experiences, while for others, there are activities

which are not necessarily academic, that are more important. A third position would be that of finding learning English a central process for present and future. All students seem interested in obtaining English credits; but, some lack interest in learning the language when they consider other subjects more relevant at present. Time is a factor that apparently involves being an efficient administrator; that is, to deal with subjects that are more important, it is necessary to find ways of spending the least amount of time dealing with issues related to English.

4.2.2 The impact of the mandatory nature of English.

The mandatory nature of English is bound to have an effect on the attitudes and motivation of students in their language classes. Rolando, stated that:

> …I have always refused to speak English… I have to pass. I like what I'm studying… English is an obligation that may be the reason for not having learned… (Rolando 1'05)

And that:

> I used to go to my English classes with, like, a negative feeling that meant doing something that I had to do. Feeling that it was not worth making an effort, doing the least possible, just enough to pass. (Rolando'06)

Alondra stated that:

> I hand in my English homework, more as an obligatory activity than a conviction…very different to the attitude I have towards other subjects… (Alondra1em'06)

Evaristo said that:

> I've always thought that as long as I pass English, even if I didn't learn the language, that's fine… (Evaristo'05)

These comments raise a number of interesting points. The first is that students already enter the English classroom with a negative mindset, and, rather than engaging with the learning of English, bring with them a mental block or resistance to learning of English. This involves 'passing without learning'. In other words they are interested in the university-validated 'product' rather than the 'processes' of actually learning English.

The point made by Alondra raises the question of the relationship between 'obligation' and 'conviction'. Is it possible for students to have 'conviction' when a subject is obligatory? The issue of conviction goes beyond the 'conviction' of

individual students and relates to how far other departments display 'conviction' towards making English a central subject. Alondra also stated that:

> …it is a subject that in my case, they [the authorities] don't consider inside the study program; I mean, when I register I don't include it in the project form; what's more, the grade you get is not important, the objective for the university is only to pass English. It doesn't matter if you have 7[6] in all the levels (Alondra 2em'06)

She demonstrates here her awareness of how students' perceptions of the low priority of learning English is reflected in the apparent low priority given to the learning of English by academics in different departments in the university. Arguably, this institutional discourse[7] shapes the attitude of students. The evidence would support the idea that the institution controls students' behaviour through grades and not necessarily making sure they engage in learning. It is a common complaint from students that some other-subject-teachers change class schedules. Several students I interviewed (Itzimba'05, Greta'05, Evaristo'05, Alondra 2em'06) mentioned that those lecturers do not take into consideration students who for such a change would have to drop their English class[8]. According to students, one of the arguments those lecturers use is that their classes are more relevant for the program because their content directly relates to their major. Students cannot progress in their major programmes if they do not demonstrate that they reached the objectives set in their English courses. Meeting these objectives means receiving grades which reflect certain discourses within a discipline since classroom attendance, participation, and handing in homework are themselves given credits. The complex examination practice also puts the students at the mercy of the institution with the result that language learning comes to be seen as the accumulation of knowledge that can be accounted for and which is orderly distributed.

This has an impact on the motivation that students have for learning English, as evidenced by data from my researcher's log:

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[6] The grading system at the institution goes from 5 to 10, 7 being the minimum passing grade.

[7] By institutional discourse, I mean discourses that are enforced by the university at management level and which affect the different departments of the institution. It does not mean that it is a discourse used across the university and which comes from the different departments. I will use this term in the same sense throughout the thesis.

[8] This is not unusual practice in many of the institution's departments and it is common knowledge among students and lecturers.

> I face a difficult scene… talking about motivation, I think that instead of focusing a bit more on finishing our studies, we are really entangled trying to pass the famous language, so much that we don't enjoy it and it complicates our studies (researcher's log '06)

This excerpt supports the influence of discourses mentioned above. The student perceives English not as something that is useful, but as something that diverts his attention from the main focus of study. Learning English (mockingly referred to as the famous language) is not an obstruction but a complication and means that students are 'entangled' like fish caught in a net. In another interview extract Rolando mentioned that:

> Learning English means opening doors in many areas, profession, exchange [study] programs, alternatives for bilingual people. My resistance towards English is because of the institution. Demanding, oblige/force me … under pressure saying that I won't be able to continue studying if I don't reach certain level… (Rolando em'06)

At one level, Rolando accepts these potential advantages that a second language may bring for a future professional life. Nevertheless, he 'resists' English, not just the learning of English but the English language itself.

Summing up, resistance towards the language classes is apparently reinforced by practices at different levels. Some students resist the idea of being coerced into learning English and this may even lead students to resist the English language itself. Others contest perceived contradictory practices from administrators and lecturers that apparently devalue the significance of learning a second language.

4.2.3 Emotions entangled in the experience of learning English

The uncertainty that learning a new language involves does not always have the same meaning (see safe spaces in Chapter 5). For some, as was mentioned above, there are feelings of inefficiency involved which students sometimes relate to issues of time management. But, inefficiency and deficiency may relate to confidence. Alondra states that:

> English makes me feel inefficient because I feel that something is missing to feel confident. In my other classes I feel good; I know what is being said in class, I mean the topic. I participate, I like giving my opinion contrary to what happens in my English classes. I always hoped for the teacher not to ask me because it was too difficult. I felt insecure; I could see people who were not as constant as I was; who had problems with other subjects, it was easy for them. I asked myself, why? Why is it difficult for me? (Alondra 2em'06)

And that:

> …when the teacher asked me I was afraid. I felt nervous and didn't want to be asked because as I couldn't speak English well, and even less, pronounce words correctly, I felt ashamed and embarrassed. I felt bad at times; how could it be that being a participative student in my other classes, I wasn't in the English class? Truly, I felt inferior to other classmates that knew English. (Alondra 3em'06)

Becoming invisible for the teacher is a way to deal with vulnerability and lack of confidence which is perceived as 'an enemy, an obstacle to learn' (Alondra 2em'06); these positions range from being at the margins as an incomplete self, without voice and lacking ability to being a full participant of a community where she has voice and is able to deal with difficulties. This suggests that lack of confidence is not a static construct and as an enemy may be defeated.

Choosing a marginalized position as a result of perceptions such as lack of ability may be similar to positions where students perceive teachers and peers who marginalize them because they do not understand (4.2.1.1). This could be linked to the perception of losing face:

> Sometimes I feel insecure because some [students] understand what the teacher says perfectly well (Alondra 3'06)

Raul said that:

> I'm afraid of people making fun of me…I always try to hide it. (Raul 6'05)… I feel powerless. When I'm afraid I can't think… I don't know what to do… (Raul 4'05)… If a teacher asks a question to the class, I never answer, even if I know the answer…I think he will make fun of me…(Raul 17'05)

And he said that:

> I started missing classes, almost a whole week… I used to go home for breakfast and I stayed there. I said to myself 'I'm tired'. I invented excuses inside myself: 'you'd better go tomorrow and make an effort and everything will be fine'. So, I stayed. (Raul 4'05)

And:

> English makes me fearful maybe because I am with lots of people…specifically if they make fun of me. It's panic, it's fear, it's an exaggerated fear, a lot, too much fear…not knowing, not being absolutely sure of what I'm saying, what is happening in class, makes me fearful. Like, that's what I can't defeat… (Raul 6'05)

Uncertainty and fear seem powerful enough to make Raul drop his class twice even though he is apparently aware of having learned something. Fear is constructed seemingly around drawing attention to his self and being close to other students in

the classroom. The latter is an interesting perception because I observed his classes on three occasions and these were not crowded; rooms are large enough with more empty chairs in his classroom than occupied ones.

When Raul said this, he was explaining how he felt about making mistakes in the English class. Experiencing this, as I witnessed it during classroom observations, also has physical effects on Raul:

> …he sweats and stammers, he rocks his whole body and rubs his hands one against the other…he takes his jacket off and continues sweating… (Field notes, 9-09-05; 22-08-05).

During a classroom observation, I could see how he took time to get together with peers when the teacher invited students to work in pairs, this was especially noticeable when they had to stand up (field notes, 27-09-05); he would look for something in his briefcase or would move slowly to find a partner. When Raul is asked a question in class, he says that his usual answer is 'I don't know' (Raul'05) even if he knows the answer, a strategy to keep a low profile to prevent losing face or further questions and wanting to be invisible.

Rolando draws on a family member for support:

> …I swear each weekend, when I said good bye to my mum... on Sunday [she] would say 'my dear, I hope you have a good week in the English class.'… that was my level of suffering with English. It was like bearing a load. (Rolando 11'06)

However, his resistance involved the use of strategies to avoid engaging. These positions seem contradictory and his words may actually be a way of justifying his resistance while at the same time making evident that he was preoccupied about the subject. But, the support of a close family member may be vital to construct a position of confidence which may impede others to deal with difficulties as was Raul's case who did not tell anyone about the problems he was facing and decided to drop out.

Yet, positions adopted are part of a more complex reality. After a writing exam I interviewed Raul and he said:

> The teacher said that there had been, like if I had been the lowest grade [Raul was talking about his grade] and I felt humiliated. I said to myself, maybe I won't make it and I dropped out. The teacher did not expose me, he exposed the grade, like saying that it was the lowest in the group (Raul 4'05)

After this event he decided to drop out. His decision is not only triggered by personal marginalization of the self, but by social events that apparently question the individual's ability.

In this section the dynamism of emotions involved in the process of learning English entangle several aspects of the language classroom which trigger at times and for some, marginalized positions; these could be influenced by the support of significant others where they act as buffers in the construction of confidence. However, marginalization may also be self imposed.

In section 4.2.3, I discussed issues that are usually linked to anxiety and other factors like the positions adopted in a classroom as well as issues they experience outside the language classroom. These are the result of social interaction. Thus far, the discussion evidences some of the complexity of students' positions in the language classroom; the discussion serves to locate social influences.

4.2.4 Convincing the self

Aside from the support that a close family member may provide, positions of resistance and engagement seem be to be influenced by personal dialogues. Students apparently talked to their selves as part of making sense of their experience of learning English:

> At the beginning, I don't know, it's like no, you'd better prepare yourself, right, now prepare yourself, I told myself, I'll take a course and the coming semester I'll be fine … you'd better prepare, right now, just prepare yourself, I told myself. I'll take a course and everything will be fine… (Raul 5'05)

And that:

> I tell myself 'I'm going to make an effort', but then I say, I haven't learned anything.… I generate 'don't be afraid, don't be afraid…(Raul 8'05)

> It helps me to say to repeat to myself that I like to understand English because I have to like it… (Raul 25'05)

I would argue that these excerpts make evident the position of an interested student, but, also show the private dialogue that this individual used to assure his position as an able person while still being afraid of ridicule because he stammers and sweats when talking about the language class. These are conversations between two selves,

you and *I*. Each self adopts contrasting positions; one acts as a counsellor or adviser while the other apparently listens.

The response to the question "What if I fail?" (Raul'06) could be considered part of intrapersonal negotiation. As the individual answers, he appears to assert his ability justifying lack of understanding and low commitment:

> …calm down, don't worry. Maybe you didn't work hard enough… (Raul '06)

Keeping in mind that this participant overreacted to a teacher's commentary (4.2.3), this conversation with the self acts as buffer between his ability and his lack of confidence, like a crutch to keep on working on something that is challenging. It also opens possibility to blame his self for not engaging. This position contrasts with evidence presented above where participants apparently blame the institution (4.2.2). Personal dialogues could be considered self reassuring but at the same time show how students negotiate perceptions about learning which at times are contradictory.

Summing up, inner dialogues seem to support the self in the learning process as part of making sense of contradictions and personal uncertainties like lack of confidence and ability. The discussion in sections 4.2 allows the reader to draw a partial portray of the phenomenon. In the following section, I will show data that will enhance its understanding as I look into students' thinking.

4.3 Students' thinking

In section 4.2 and its subsections, I introduced data that inform how students see themselves as language learners. In this section I will present data that provide an insight of students' thinking about their language learning experiences as they deal with lack of understanding, issues related to the development of linguistic knowledge, perceptions related to evaluation practices, memorization, copying and learning

This discussion deals with the micro level of students' experiences in the language classroom, however, it should be considered as part of the macro level discussed above. But, for practical reasons leading towards an understanding of the phenomenon, it has been necessary to separate issues involved.

4.3.1 Experiences learning English

As mentioned in section 4.2.1 students' experiences at pre-tertiary levels of language classes were apparently based on grammatical rules, lists of vocabulary words and neatly divided language skills with little or no use of the language. Evidence from interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and personal experiences in the language classroom reveals a conflict between the complexity of a first language and the experience of compartmentalized learning of a second language which appears to simplify the meaning of language. It is under these assumptions that I start looking at data about a process that for some is long:

> …I still have a long way to go, like 10000 steps and I have only gone through one… step by step… difficult, complicated… (Raul 17'05)

And that:
> I tell myself 'I'm going to make an effort', but then, I say I haven't learned anything. (Raul 3'05)

And Evaristo said "there is far too much I need to learn" (Evaristo RER1'05). These fragments transpire difficulty and linearity as well as compartmentalized knowledge. Perceiving learning English as a long process may be an additional factor that complicates issues related to time (4.2.1) and others connected to earning credits. However, this is not a unified view. The same participant mentioned that at the beginning of his tertiary studies, he thought he would be able to speak English after a year of classes (Raul'05); but, this idea seems to contradict the excerpts presented above.

While there are perceptions of difficulty, linearity and compartmentalization that reveal a simplistic view of language. Alondra said that learning grammatical rules would provide her with the necessary knowledge to speak the language (Alondra'05) so when she attended the CAADI she worked with her friend on grammar exercises (fieldnotes'05). Also, Rolando and Evaristo considered necessary to learn vocabulary and formulas to be able to communicate in English (Rolando and Evaristo'05) as was my observation when they asked for advice to prepare for the oral exam (section 4.3.1.2).

There is also evidence of a perceived lack of continuity in the English courses and advancing which apparently impact negatively the interest to learn:

> … there is no continuity … you learn something; you get a good grade and then lose everything after several months and again you are in zeros. You learn very little. This has been my experience and I have not advanced… (Evaristo RER'05)

And I wrote:

> A student told me that some teachers do not go in-depth and there is not continuity in the process [of learning English]… (Researcher's log, September 8, 2005)

Raul said that:

> One thinks that with a daily hour class one will learn, but that's not true. One doesn't learn and maybe it's fear…one doesn't ask the teacher…one leaves it…the teacher will say that I didn't study…will ask things about first level and if I'm in third level…I should know that and he is the authority…I will have to learn it alone…(Raul 14'06)

These perceptions demonstrate an emphasis on linearity of progression; grades do not guarantee learning or advancing enough to be encouraged to continue learning; a factor that seems to add to the discussion in section 4.2. On the same train of thought, the lack of strong basic linguistic knowledge may be a factor that hinders advancing:

> All those years of English classes and I can't speak it. I pass the exams, but I'm aware that I don't know anything… every year English, English!… [always] the same… (Alondra 2'05)

Raul mentioned that:

> I don't know anything. I feel very deficient when I compare myself to other peers (Raul 3'05)

In a group interview Rolando stated that:

> I lack basic English. It's limited… I took a placement test and ended up in level 3… maybe I knew what was in the exam… but as a result, what was seen in levels 1 and 2 is missing… maybe that's why I feel that I can't, it's very difficult… there are empty spaces [gaps] (Rolando RER'05)

Despite all the language classes[9] that students take before starting their tertiary education, data suggest a rather static process where learning English occupies a marginal position.

Data indicate that experiences in the language classroom could be partly responsible for linear and compartmentalized perceptions. T8 wrote on the board:

> *It is important to know if the hearer is the direct object.
>
>   Tell verbs   Say verbs

---

[9]The school curriculum in secondary school demands three English courses of approximately 80 hours each. High school programs vary, but all of them demand at least two English courses. The approximate total of class hours is 400.

Ex. She convinced us   (the hearer is not the direct object)
                   To vote for her   If you mention the hearer use
                   Reassured…   to + hearer + that clause
                   (me, us, him/her, you)   (Field notes, 22-08-05)

The teacher gave an extensive explanation about the rule and I wrote:

> …students have different attitudes: some look interested but they bite their nails or
> pencil. One of them moves constantly and nervously… teacher invites them to
> participate, but gets no response (Field notes, 22-08-05)

The evidence suggests that students were interested in the grammatical explanations;
but, at the same time, gestures and body movements show nervousness, an aspect
that adds to the discussion in section 4.2.3 on emotions entangled in students'
experiences. Lack of participation may also be interpreted as not knowing what to
make of the information given by the teacher as seems to be the case (section 4.2.1).

When the teacher invites students to participate asking questions, he does not give
them time to think. He immediately gives instructions for another activity:

> He [teacher] asks and answers everything. Students seem to know that there isn't a
> need to participate or follow his instructions (Field notes, 22-08-05)

Students apparently adopt the role of recipients of knowledge where the teacher, as
expert, controls what they should learn; there is no evident need for student
participation. However, there are some contradictions; first, the teacher tells students
to work in pairs, an action that disagrees with previous behaviour; second, not giving
students time to think when he first asked questions could mean that the teacher is
not really expecting answers. Students seem to adopt roles that a controlling teacher
finds acceptable to process the input transmitted; where participation or engagement
is not necessary. Display or rhetorical questions used by the teacher are directed to
students when he already knows the answer. Teachers actually tell students about
linguistic information they consider important. A commentary in my researcher's log
says:

> …in several classroom observations ss ignore the teacher. I think these are linked to
> the teacher's speeches, he spoke endlessly! … too many questions could be another
> reason for ignoring the T, but also when they don't understand the T and when they
> don't want to do what T wants them to do… seldom do ss ask for further
> explanation… (Researcher's log, September 20, 2005)

This log entry shows that my perception is that students resist positions where the
teacher is in control. This could be interpreted as situations where the teacher is

marginalized by students. I would argue that these positions do not promote language development because there is limited interaction to clarify aspects that may not be well understood. It seems that as the expert, the teacher does not open opportunities for clarification or negotiation of understanding, as in a teacher fronted teaching situation (Forman et al, 1998) where students apparently accept the lack of opportunity to negotiate. However, the position seems more complicated and not exclusive of teachers. During an interview, Raul explained that he found group work intimidating (Raul 5'06), not only in the English class but in other classes:

> I'm not afraid of working on my own… I'm afraid… when I have to say something in English…I feel less than others. I'd rather work on my own. (Raul 2-4'05)

This evidence suggests that a transmission model suits this participant because he does not have to take risks negotiating understanding when other students are perceived more knowledgeable than him; if this is so, then the position of being invisible to the teacher and others becomes part of the issue (see 4.2.3). Group or pair work are threatening and cause tension and some students, under these circumstances seek marginalized positions where they feel safe like Raul who has serious difficulties dealing with the strong feelings triggered:

> I dropped out three weeks into the semester. I used to go to classes. [But] I was afraid; I didn't understand anything, absolutely nothing. I started feeling the pressure… I imagined what I would not be able, what I would not be able to do. It was very difficult and I didn't understand anything. (Raul 4'05).

In this section data show evidence that the language classroom may be responsible for perceptions about English as a long, difficult, shallow and linear process that sometimes is not perceived continuous and at times may be a move backwards. It seems that positions of controlling and teachers as experts foster and allow limited engaging of students who while being nervous, could be interested in learning. Students, as a response to the latter, adopt positions that controlling teachers find acceptable to continue transmitting their knowledge. For some students, such position apparently means standing in a safe space. The evidence also shows that in some instances students resist teacher control and they apparently marginalize the teacher. All these positions seem not to promote language development.

4.3.1.1 Dealing with lack of understanding

Even though some students are apparently not interested in learning English, they seem to seek ways of clarifying what they do not understand:

> They are supposed to work in pairs and don't do anything! Of the whole group (21 ss) only four people ask each other. I cannot hear what they say, but by their gestures and the way they see their notes, they seem to explain to each other…(Field notes, 22-08-05)

This evidence suggests that when students adopt a role where a need to participate is absent, as above, and there are aspects they do not understand, they find ways of clarifying them that exclude the teacher. If this is so, it could be said that students use peer interaction as a strategy to understand taught material. This appears to be the case when the position held by the teacher is too controlling and there are little spaces to ask for clarification. Given the number of students that took the opportunity to act in this way, it could be a strategy mainly used by students interested in learning the language.

Expectations as to when and how to learn English apparently dismiss the complexity of language. It could be argued that class experiences where rules such as those presented in section 4.3.1 send the message: "memorize the rule and you will be able to learn English". However, the issue is not that simple because while observing classes I saw many instances where students were expected to use those rules when working in pairs discussing, answering questions or describing (to mention some activities observed) and they were not able to apply the rules teachers had taught and thus expect students to have learned. This is a common complaint from language teachers at the Language School:

> Students do not study…(T8). They are too lazy and demotivated… (T2). I explain things many times and they don't get them…(T3). It's a waste of time to correct their work, it's always the same mistakes (T5). There are very lazy students who only drink during the semester and study like mad two nights before the exams (T7)

Teachers apparently miss students' reasons for not participating in class as Evaristo explained:

> …we still have too much to learn before feeling the <u>confidence</u> to be able to participate in class and be <u>confident</u> of what we are saying. Because sometimes, I'm afraid of participating and… yes I've made mistakes or sometimes you feel <u>insecure</u> and even more because the other students, sometimes they are little more advanced and sometimes like, maybe they don't make fun of you, but you can see in their

faces the "this one doesn't know". Well, this is what makes me feel bad… (Evaristo RER1'05).

There are several issues raised in this excerpt. The first one seems to be the relationship this participant constructs between being confident and language learning (4.3.3). Confidence seems to be a key aspect to participation and also the key to not being afraid in class. His fear appears to be based on how other individuals in class may perceive him and thus he becomes invisible (4.2.3). This attitude positions him at the margin where others, being peers or teachers are more able individuals.

The conflict between rules and the use of the language is problematic for students and teachers. Teachers appear upset about students' lack of learning and apparent lack of interest (I will discuss this issue in Chapter 5, 5.1.1); it seems that students do not make a connection when practicing the language with the rules explained by the teacher. Further evidence of this could be Alondra's complaint who said that she did not know what to study for her English exams:

> If there is going to be an English exam I ask myself what should I study??? There isn't a guarantee that what I study will be in the exam as it is in my other subjects. [In other subjects] what I study guarantees passing the exam (Alondra 1em'06)

This excerpt shows confusion which is in agreement with her teacher's commentary (Researcher's log, October 4, 2005) and could be interpreted as lack of understanding of discourses within the language classroom and their intersections. On one hand, the contention that metalinguistic explanations are necessary for students to internalize rules; on the other, the importance of communicative activities where rules explained are to be applied and practiced. As a result of students' lack of understanding, I would argue that teachers construct views about their students that do not necessarily agree with students' attitudes towards the language class. As I argue in Chapter 5, teachers' and students' interpretation of class objectives and activities are not in agreement. As a result it becomes difficult to understand the connection(s) between discourses when exams come (4.2.1). This is presumably an issue in the English class but not in other subjects. My personal experience as a language teacher is that the objectives of activities used in class are not always easy to identify. Further, those objectives even if they seem straightforward, are interpreted differently by different individuals as seemed to be the case when

students asked me for questions and answers to practice for their oral exam. In this case, I took for granted that the objective of practicing was to develop conversational abilities; but for students, it meant memorizing sequences (section 4.3.1.2).

Structural aspects of the language seem to be important aspects that many students try to practice, not only in the language classroom, but at the CAADI and sometimes on the patio, especially a day previous to an exam:

> When you get to class, you practice mainly oral conversation and, grammar; well that I think I could practice it another day… (Alondra 2em'06)

> … A ss asked me for help with the verb to be… she reads the grammar handbook but does not want to ask for help… she feels lost … says that she needs to reflect. There is a writing exam tomorrow and there are more students at the CAADI working with an assessor than usual. On the patio there were more people working in their notebooks also. There was an American student helping two Mexican students with their writing. Maybe they help each other, I don't know. (Researcher's log, September 22, 2005)

While my description of a language classroom emphasises grammar and conversation; it leaves out other activities observed in the classroom, such as listening comprehension activities and writing practice (Field notes T7, 9-09-05,13-09-05, 27-09-05, 16-11-05, 22-08-06, 31-08-06, 21-11-06). The second excerpt suggests other spaces where social networks act as mediators of issues that may arise in the classroom and which perhaps are not clarified in class. Another aspect that seems relevant in the second fragment is the apparent interest in preparing a writing exam. This seems to contradict teachers' constructions of the lazy and uninterested student. This links directly with the discussion in section 4.3.1.2.

Summarizing, data suggest that some students look for spaces and strategies to clarify their understanding that sometimes marginalize the teacher. This seems to be an attitude missed by some teachers who construct students as lazy and uninterested. The influence of a structural view of language seems to permeate students' work in the classroom and outside of it. Class objectives are apparently problematic and for some, these are not clear enough to focus when preparing exams; that is, objectives may be interpreted differently by different people. It seems that discourses about a need to provide metalinguistic information and the use of communicative activities do not converge; this may be due to few opportunities to negotiate meaning and understanding.

4.3.1.2 Developing linguistic knowledge

As shown above, the process of learning English is perceived in terms of amounts of language to learn, difficulty, length of time, ability, feelings of learning or lack of it for some, developing linguistic knowledge involves paying attention to vocabulary and verbs:

> Rolando and Evaristo went to the CAADI today. They asked me for a list of questions that they could memorize for the oral exam. They wanted to prepare the answers for those questions… (Field notes, 11'05)

I remember thinking that it was strange to expect passing an oral exam memorizing questions and answers. At present, however, my view of this is that of an artificial dialogue where real communication and understanding are absent. Students were seeking support for their oral exam; they requested a list of questions that could be used during oral interviews. They wanted to memorize questions and answers to build up a script for their exam. Reflecting on this event made me realize that my own attitude towards language had been similar. Moreover, this issue apparently links with intersections of the discourses mentioned in section 4.3.1.1. In other words, the researcher as a language teacher and some participants had difficulties finding expected intersections of these two discourses. Further, each of us apparently interpreted each other's actions differently and we did not understand each other's positions.

I recall explaining at the CAADI how the oral exam worked. At those moments, I thought that students would benefit from a detailed description of each stage. I explained what teachers expected. I would argue that my views about language were similar to those held by many colleagues at the Language School. I thought that I was giving students strategies to learn English; but in fact, I was depositing what I thought students should use to pass the exam. I was not involved and did not involve students deeper than the structural level of language.

It could be said that these actions reinforced students' constructions about the meaning of English courses (4.2.1, 4.2.2); working towards passing exams where they do not have the opportunity or the need to negotiate meaning and understanding. At the beginning of a group interview, a student said that if he could remember the words I used to describe a picture with him while working at the CAADI, he would

pass his oral exam (RER,'05). I would argue that the objective of the oral exam, that is to assess students' communicative spoken ability, is missed given that oral exam preparation is not seen as opportunities to negotiate mutual understanding.

Developing linguistic knowledge is perceived as:

> …to go to the next step, I need to understand everything, to know everything (Raul 12'05)

This suggests that it is not possible to continue onto the next step if complete understanding of previous material is not reached. From this perspective, facing difficulties and feeling uncertain and/or afraid, as was discussed in section 4.2.3 may explain feelings of not learning and perhaps frustration as the following fragment shows:

> As always, I can't say what I want. I can't express myself. I think I understand but I also think that I can say more. I feel desperate. I want to say so much… (Lulu, 3'05)

Being in the English class does not seem to provide what it takes not only to speak, but to express the complexity involved in social communication. A low level of English, as that of this participant, does not allow the construction of positions where individuals could show other people who they are in other contexts, like for example, selling things: 'I've got a great ability to sell things, that's why I do that' (Lulu 3'05). This fragment suggests resistance towards a marginalized position through asserting her self as an able individual in a setting where she is in control and negotiation to understand and avoid misunderstandings with others is a possibility. These positions appear to keep students silent and marginalized where asymmetrical power positions are evident and a sense of shared responsibility, that from the teacher and the student to establish communication is not present. As a result of the lack of negotiating grounds and understanding of teachers and students, linguistic development apparently remains at structural levels.

The above discussion links with students' perceptions of pair and group work. For some, it is threatening (4.2.3) and they go to extremes to avoid it:

> I don't like group work. I'd rather work alone. When I was in secondary school and we had to do something together, I used to give money to my classmates so that I didn't have to work with them. (Raul'05 and '06)

This evidence shows fear and marginalized positions chosen by the self (4.2.3) which demonstrates not having reached a level of automaticity to feel comfortable using the language. But looking at this evidence from a different perspective, I would argue that within a personal niche, a safe space is constructed (see 4.2.3, 4.3.1.3). The position does not allow room for negotiating meaning and understanding but open the possibility for the student to exercise his human agency and adopt a marginalized position. Further, this evidence also shows that the objective of this type of activity does not coincide with that of language teachers who promote it as part of the strategies to develop linguistic proficiency. It is believed among English teachers at the school that pair and group work enable students to use structural linguistic knowledge.

4.3.1.3 Perceptions of exams and assessment exercises

> I see… many mistakes. The teacher uses codes. He doesn't tell us; we have to find them [the mistakes]. I see too many. I pay more attention to the number of crosses… (Raul 28'05)

This was the answer to my question: how do you feel about being corrected in class? Raul perceived the use of correction codes to identify mistakes in compositions not as useful as his teacher did. The use of correction codes is a generalized practice at the language school. Teachers encourage students to discover and correct their mistakes using codes. It is thought that if students are able to identify their mistakes and correct them, in future opportunities they will pay attention and not make the same mistakes. However, some students think otherwise:

> I'm not convinced that one can learn from mistakes (Raul 25'05)

This excerpt suggests that to learn something, it is necessary to be told how things work or be shown correct pieces of language. This is a discourse that transpires not only here but in other parts of the discussion (section 4.2.1). The teacher decides the type of mistake to be pointed out; students are expected to recognize them and from the rules and structures learned/taught, they are to act upon them. Thus, the actual objective of letting students discover and learn from their mistakes apparently has a hidden controlling level. As previously mentioned, the teacher acts as the expert (4.2.1) that apparently knows and controls students' way of dealing with mistakes as well as the kind of mistakes they should correct.

Raul explained that he did not dare to say anything to the teacher when talking about grades. He felt humiliated by a teacher's remark despite the fact that the teacher did not name anybody in particular:

> The teacher said "there was only one grade", as if it were the lowest grade and I felt humiliated…the teacher didn't mention my name, he mentioned my grade…I didn't say anything. (Raul 8'05)

The data suggest being oversensitive about teachers' attitudes or remarks. Not daring to say anything to the teacher may imply a gap between student and teacher; an issue that may also be linked to not knowing what to study for an exam (4.3.1.1). A gap that Raul felt being bridged when the teacher asked him how he was doing (Raul 13'06) and on being praised for his improvement. However, he mentioned also that if a teacher asked him something:

> If a teacher, any teacher, asked me something, I would answer 'I don't know', but I always say 'I don't know'…I always answer this, but I don't believe it [that he does not know anything]…although sometimes it's true (Raul 20'05)

And that:

> If a teacher asks a question and I know the answer, I don't answer. (Raul 15'05)

In these fragments, it is possible to perceive distance between student and teacher. The student chooses a position where he may not be judged by the teacher, a safe space where he chooses to be seen as lacking knowledge, but which will not involve getting into situations where he may become the centre of attention. This position seems to resonate with earlier discussions (4.2.3.).

These extreme positions seem to be emphasised by the individual's perception of corrections made with a red pen:

> Corrections in my compositions are done with red ink; I find this colour too aggressive. In fact, I almost never wear red clothes…I don't like it…(Raul 24'05)

This evidence suggests a kind of protest, probably resisting an aggressive and controlling action. As a result the student does not pay attention to his errors but to the amount of corrections.

When students work in small groups or in pairs and the teacher cannot follow what is happening, they do not think they are learning because peers are supposed to correct them. During the last class observation in 2006, I overheard a conversation of two

students who had been working with a respondent. Their task was to ask each other a list of questions given by the teacher. After the activity, these students complained to a friend because their partner could hardly speak. After class I talked to the participant informally and he said that it was a good class; he felt that he had had the opportunity to work with people who knew enough to correct him. I would argue that this is an instance where classroom discourses influence opportunities to open a dialogue and students do not seem to value them. Both sides involved in the conversation held opposite views of the opportunity to negotiate understanding. While for Evaristo, the experience was perceived as useful, for the others it was not. Even though it could be said that there were unnoticed gains for both sides, given that the more advanced students did not trust their partner as a knowledgeable individual, the activity was not appreciated. Thus, as above (4.3.1.1 and 4.3.1.2), social interactions are apparently seen as opportunities to memorize questions and answers to prepare oral exams. Had the teacher given students some space to discuss topics relevant to them, perhaps they would be actively involved finding the language classroom more meaningful than practicing linguistically correct questions and answers where the main voice is the teacher's interest in correct linguistic products. As it is, students seem to be agents of the teacher's voice.

In sections 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.1.3, I voiced the emphasis some students and teachers give to a linear and compartmentalized approach to language learning where apparently both feel safe and thus foster. I also mentioned that pair or group work seems to be problematic for some and not always fostered in the classroom. There appears to be lack of social interaction to negotiate meaning and so, may not be perceived important for language development. Another issue discussed was the influence of asymmetrical power positions between teachers and students. This discussion has also served the purpose of showing my lack of awareness and understanding of classroom events as well as the importance of negotiation through language and in language as a key to language development. Also, the way classroom discourses which are usually expected to intersect are understood by teachers and students in ways that do not necessarily intersect. Lack of intersection of these discourses may be due to the influence of aspects discussed within the

different sections. Now I will move on to discuss issues related to memorization, copying and learning.

4.3.1.4 Memorization, copying and learning

> I used to try to learn a paragraph with a classmate…we got together and I took notes…I memorized it without knowing what I was saying. Now, when I study…really, I know what I'm trying to say (Raul 3'06)

The first part of this excerpt describes a process where joint activity is apparently happening, the writing of a paragraph as part of exam preparation (students have to take four writing exams every term. They have to write a composition based on a topic given by the teacher; it is carried out in class and it is individual with no access to any kind of support). Raul says that he tried to learn through memorization apparently without understanding, which could mean that he perceived his partner as a more proficient learner. He seems to differentiate between memorization and studying where studying would involve *knowing and understanding*. Raul mentioned that he would memorize the work done with a classmate (Raul 2'06) a day before an exam; apparently, the partner was doing most of the work and he only copied. Thus, the meaning of memorization would be knowing without understanding. Memorizing may be equated to input, a classroom discourse where opportunities to negotiate understanding through joint writing are not always present and maybe it means mechanical knowledge. Although Raul takes notes, these are not his words; he has not negotiated their meaning. It could be argued that even though the activity is not valuable, it supports the learning process; it apparently allowed him later to reach a linguistic level to understand. In the process, Raul managed to make sense of other people's words. It was at this stage, if it can be called a stage, that he apparently appropriated words that became meaningful and where negotiation to achieve understanding took place:

> Studying English helps me. Understanding what I study motivates me…I see other people …I more or less understand…it helps me…(Raul 7'06)

This excerpt shows an interesting aspect of this learning process: it is not necessary to fully understand, a position that is contrastingly different to positions where lack of understanding affects confidence (4.2.3). I would argue that because there is an open dialogue in this case, the uncertainty that learning a second language involves

has become a negotiating ground similar to experiences in a mother tongue where seeking understanding is more prone to be present. This student managed to negotiate the level of assistance that was optimal for his development.

The meaning of studying seems to be closely linked to understanding as the excerpt presented in section 4.3.1.1 suggests:

> If there was going to be an English exam I asked myself what should I study??? There wasn't a guarantee that what I studied would be in the exam as it was in my other subjects; what I studied guaranteed passing the exam (Alondra 1em'06)

As a committed student, Alondra tried to study. However, I would argue that given the compartmentalized nature of the courses and the approach to learning that this student used, she tried to learn individual aspects taught in class supported by the textbook where objectives for each unit are stated. However, she apparently did not engage in the negotiation of meaning; perhaps, there was little understanding and her studying was not fruitful enough given the uncertainty that language involves and the umpteen possibilities open when having to deal with language.

Even though studying seems to have a different meaning for these students, the evidence above suggests that the lack of opportunities students have to gain ownership of the language they are learning seems to influence the learning process. The complexity of a language as it is experienced in everyday life's interaction in a first language situation seems to challenge the experience of learning a second language that a narrow structural view of language cannot hide and this could be a reason for perceiving difficulties when trying to prepare for exams. Learning lists of questions and possible answers does not guarantee passing an exam (4.3.1.2) and may be reason enough to feel stressed out.

Summarizing, it seems that the difference between memorization and studying relates to knowing and understanding. While memorization involves knowing without understanding, studying apparently means knowing and understanding. It also became evident that some students can deal with uncertainty and still engage learning the language. But, this position appears to be linked to the presence of negotiation grounds to make sense of the complexity of language use. The discussion

thus far has involved students' perceptions; to improve the understanding of the phenomenon, now I will examine how students perceive their language teachers.

4.4 Students' perceptions of their language teachers

In sections 4.2.2 and 4.3 I mentioned that language teachers fostered a discourse that apparently encouraged students to learn English evidencing some level of interest towards learning and some contradictions in teachers' behaviour. This section will provide insights as to the way students perceive their teachers in terms of the way they communicate, their way of responding, challenges of authority and control as well as changes taking place.

4.4.1 Communication between students and teachers

Data in section 4.3.1 show a probable gap between teachers and students. The level of control exercised by teachers may be accepted or challenged. In view of this evidence, not asking for clarification may mean lack of understanding of each other's discourses:

> I didn't understand and… they [his classmates] didn't understand either… it was too difficult. We never told the teacher and we didn't understand. (Raul 8'05)

This fragment evidences distance between teacher and students where asking for clarification becomes problematic for students (sections 4.2.3 and 4.3.1). Lack of understanding on the part of students keeps students quiet and apparently opens spaces for teachers to remain in control. Students' attitude could be the influence of teachers' use of questions as discussed in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.1.1 but also some level of fear as discussed in 4.2.3. A gap between teachers and students suggests that opening negotiating grounds does not happen easily. However, there is evidence that this gap may also exist between students:

> Even the teacher gets desperate with you because you don't know how to pronounce; how can one be motivated to make an effort? (RER 3'05)

The excerpt suggests marginalization of those who cannot keep the group's pace. This evidence brings to mind the discussion on fear (section 4.2.3) when an individual's ability and desire to participate and/or engage seems to be questioned. The distance between these students and their teacher and peers suggests positioning far from a learning process. Further, it could be said that these students are more

worried about survival than learning. If this were the case, learning and survival would be competing positions and therefore influence attitude in the classroom.

Some students felt that they could come close to the teacher while others felt some kind of unfriendliness or alienation in their presence. A participant mentioned that:

> Confidence towards the teacher depends on the teacher's attitude towards students…if the teacher gets too close to the students, I don't like it. She makes inappropriate jokes. My classmates laugh, but I don't like it. The teacher prepares games and if you understand what you have to do, great! If you don't, too bad! If someone understands, she won't stop. If I have questions, she grumbles in Spanish and then we don't ask…it's not fair. (Lulu 2'05)

The student apparently placed the teacher in a position of control. It is not possible to define what the student found unfair: the teacher's grumbling, not feeling safe to ask the teacher, the teacher not stopping when students do not understand, or perhaps all these aspects because she feels powerless.

For Raul, teachers are not friends:

> The teacher doesn't joke with me. I don't like him to joke with me; if he were my friend it would be different in the classroom. I'm very serious in class… (Raul 6'05)

Raul's teacher apparently likes to joke with the students because according to the teacher, students feel at ease. While jokes are not always appropriate for students, for this teacher it is a means to break the ice and help students to relax in class (Informal conversation, field notes December'05).

Conflicts between teachers and students appear to involve other issues as well:

> …the teacher sometimes… it's not right for me to say it; but, maybe she knows English, but sometimes the way she teaches; maybe it's not the right one, adequate for the type of people like us… (Evaristo RER3'05)

Adopting such a critical stance could be a reaction of the marginalized position Evaristo finds his self in where the teacher is not particularly taking into account his needs and they are not equals. He seems to seek a position where he and other students he perceives similar to him would like to be treated in a particular way. I would argue that Evaristo is actually saying something similar to what is mentioned below about a *more personal* teacher where the student felt cared for or taken into consideration. This seems to be a claim for attention to his needs in the classroom. Without this attention he seems to say that he cannot make an effort.

Other perceptions seem to point to teachers interested in students' learning. Such teachers apparently foster a confidence building space that allows students to ask questions (4.3.1.4). For example:

> I felt more confidence with the second teacher, his teaching was more personal. I know that other classmates felt the same way and we used to say that we felt closer to the second teacher. (Alondra 1'05)

On this matter Raul said that:

> The fact that the teacher asked me if I had understood, just that, makes me feel confident. Or if the teacher asks me "how are you doing?" then, I dare to ask. (Raul 26'05)

Being *personal* and asking students translates into attention of a caring teacher and this increases the student's confidence. This may involve taking the time to find out how an individual feels and not only being satisfied with the covering of teaching material, an issue raised in a group interview (RER'05). The teachers' attitude apparently empowers students and enables them to ask questions.

Showing interest in the students' learning process apparently bridges the gap between them. Teachers and students construct a dialogue. However, there are some contradictions around this issue. For some, a teacher who takes personal interest is not always perceived as helpful or supportive:

> The teacher told me that what I have advanced in these two weeks is equivalent to what one normally advances in three months…I feel good, but I'm confused, it's confusing…I have made an effort…it's worth it, but it's contradictory…I don't believe it…it makes me wonder…(Raul 17'05)

While Raul seems pleased by the teacher's comment and acknowledges that he has worked hard, some level of disbelief and confusion is present. I would argue that given the lack of negotiation grounds in the language classroom made evident above, it may be difficult for students to construct some level of certainty of what someone who many times adopts a position of control and authority with little emphasis on negotiation says.

Classroom atmosphere sometimes does not foster confidence or encourage students to engage in learning (4.3.1). Also, respect towards different levels of proficiency is not necessarily cultivated. Rolando mentioned that as the teacher continued teaching at a pace where more able students had no difficulty, they were left behind:

> Those of us who know less are left behind, more and more…it's really uncomfortable to not understand something and that your classmates don't help you. I mean, there isn't comradeship; I mean, some make fun of you, laugh at you. And one does not dare to talk because they instantly start criticising [you]. (Rolando RER3'05)

This fragment shows concern about ridicule and losing face in front of peers, a probable reason for not participating in class. It is an instance where individualism is apparently fostered while the support of each other seems not to be encouraged; this could be an influence stemming from dualist assumptions underlying teaching practices where social interaction apparently competes with it. Not having spaces to promote mutual support, according to these students, are intimidating and provoke lack of confidence (Rolando and Evaristo, RER3'05).

Summing up, teachers and students do not seem to understand each other's positions and discourses. This lack of understanding seems to construct a gap between them. However, the gap is not only between them but also could be present between students if lack of support from peers is perceived. The gap between teachers and students may inflict negatively upon the level of engagement; as a result, learning and surviving could be seen as competing positions. While some students expect teachers to bridge the gap between them and thus position teachers in control, other students consider that the distance between them should remain because they belong to different groups. For some students, teachers' strategies to bridge the gap are not necessarily appropriate.

The gap between them is apparently bridged when the teacher takes an interest in individual students' development which is apparently translated into confidence building means. Not fostering collaboration among students apparently deters possibilities to engage in learning and is perceived by some as lack of support.

4.4.2 The meaning of responding

It would seem natural to believe that a position students adopt would involve answering questions coming from the teacher. However, as mentioned previously (4.3.1), in several observations students did not answer teachers' questions or they did not act when asked to do something:

> T tells students to write down and only two of them do so…T asks questions, three students participate …one student yawns…(Field notes, 08-23-05)

There were 18 students in the classroom, only three participated and one yawned which could be indicative of boredom, tiredness or lack of interest. This attitude could be interpreted as resistance; a way to challenge the teacher's controlling position as seems to be the case not only in the language classroom but in other classes:

> In my other classes when the teacher explains and asks a question, always open questions…any question, even if I know the answer, I don't answer. I always remain quiet…I never participate, only…when it's an obligation, when I have to present something to the group and it's not my choice…otherwise, seldom do I participate (Raul 5'05)
>
> …if a teacher asks me a question I answer 'I don't know', but I always say that, even if I know the answer…it's like a cliché…I always use it…for everything. And I don't really believe it…but sometimes it's true…(Raul 20'05)

Given a choice, class participation would be nil. This presents a strategy that challenges teachers' control that empowers the individual student without openly breaking culturally accepted order in the classroom. I would argue that students make a conscious decision to adopt such position (4.2.3) and draw a line where the use of monologues may be reified as seems to be the case when students do not resist teachers who do not open spaces for negotiating understanding (4.3.1 and 4.3.1.1).

I discussed previously that some teachers do not necessarily expect answers (4.3.1), part of their transmission teaching mode, they use rhetorical questions. Students' resistance as above could be seen as an exercise of agency that empowers them in front of the controlling authority. Similarly, not answering teachers when they make questions, did not necessarily mean not knowing, or being uninterested in the class or the topic, but being worried about other issues such as losing face in front of peers, not being confident about the answer, or not being confident enough to interact with the teacher which seems to be the case when a gap is not bridged between them:

> Teacher asks questions but prompts in. He does not give time for students to answer. As he talks, another student talks aloud; sounds like mumbling. The rest are quiet, they only stare at teacher. (Field notes, 22-08-05)

This excerpt could be interpreted in different ways. Either the teacher wants to give his own answers, not finding relevant or interesting what students have to say; or he may want to spare students feeling awkward for not knowing the answers; or he may

have only asked a rhetorical question expecting no answer at all. I am inclined to think that the teacher was not interested in students' answers. One student answered mumbling but the teacher did not ask for clarification or tried to understand what the student mumbled to open a possibility for negotiating understanding. In this class, students did not participate. The teacher held the floor constantly and wrote on the board everything that he considered important: grammatical rules, new words, expressions, announcements, the day's agenda, the day's homework. He expected students to copy all this information but not one student took the time to do so as the teacher did not provide the space for such task.

Students, on the other hand, seem to have understood the teacher's role and adopted a culturally appropriate role for this context. They did not try to answer; they listened to the teacher making eye contact or read in their book while the teacher talked. Very few students did their homework and the teacher admonished them. While the teacher was checking homework, I wrote:

> Reactions among students are strange; they do not look upset, as if they did not care. (Field notes, 22-08-05)

Interestingly, students sitting close to me did not have difficulties answering the teacher's questions, but they did not answer loud enough for anybody but those close to them to hear, which, as was mentioned above could be a way of marginalizing the teacher (4.3.1). On the other hand, if there were students who had not understood what was being said, they did not ask for clarification. The lack of response from a reprimand from a controlling teacher seems evidence of resistance which could be interpreted as having constructed a small discourse community where roles are tacitly understood and adopted. As a consequence, however, linguistic development seems to be endangered given that negotiation is not fostered or sought by either party. Further, these attitudes seem to give a meaning to engaging at a level that involves attending classes but not necessarily participating at other levels.

4.4.3 Whose authority and control?

Participants construct their relationships with teachers based on a complex array of factors as evidence shows in previous sections (4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.3.1); it seems that the level of control and authority and the possibilities to establish a dialogue are part of

them. However, there appears to be evidence of other possibilities where students and teachers compete for a position of authority. This seems to be the case in a class I observed where a small group of young students constantly challenged the teacher's authority and her power position. Students did not seem to pay attention to her after she interrupted an activity; they continued talking loudly in Spanish:

> Teacher interrupts [the] activity. Students sit down and some continue talking in Spanish with their friends. There are four very young students who are playing, fooling around and not paying attention to T who is calling the roll. The two sitting next to me are also chitchatting in Spanish. T calls ss' name and someone says 'presente'; then she calls another name and the same student says 'presente'. He fools the teacher and plays with his mobile phone (Field notes 23-08-05)

The teacher in this classroom seemed not to pay attention to students who were disrupting her class. Later, she said that she only pretended not to be bothered by their attitude; she did not want them to notice how she felt. She felt powerless and did not dare to confront the small group of students (there were a total of 20 students in the classroom) challenging her authority. However, students' reaction towards her attitude was to further challenge her authority:

> The four rowdy students laugh at T and talk constantly, ignoring her. Teacher talks to them directly and they joke in Spanish. (Field notes 23-08-05)

While these instances happened, some ignored them and worked as told by the teacher; others observed and did not work; another group seemed to do something in the book.

Other ways of challenging teacher's authority happened when the teacher decided who should go to the board to write something dictated by her:

> T decides who writes where on the board. She tells a student who passed voluntarily; but, the student does what she wants to do and not what the teacher tells her to do (Field notes, 23-08-05)

Resistance and eagerness to participate seem to conjugate in this fragment and the student seemed to have her own idea. On the other hand, the teacher seems to allow this to happen as she does not say anything further undermining her authority and control. In this classroom, a small group of students laughed at the teacher and did not follow instructions while the rest of the group was apparently and partially, observant of the expected behaviour.

In T3's first classroom observation, there was a student who corrected her peers' homework. Teacher, student and peers apparently felt at ease with a role that usually falls on a teacher. I interviewed them afterwards (separately) and found that T3 considered this particular student to have a level higher than the rest of the group. In agreement with the teacher's perception, the student felt that her level was higher than her peers' and sought spaces during class to exercise her acquired role and her position of power. While working in groups I noticed:

> A pair finished very quickly. She compares her answers with her partner. They make changes. The girl in green has established herself as the one who knows…apparently, her partner corrects her work based on the answers provided by the girl in green. (Field notes 22-08-05)

There are several interesting aspects in this fragment. The teacher apparently manages to empower one student without marginalizing the rest. T3 did not consciously assign this role to the student; but, the student adopted it and the rest of the group apparently accepted her. This position provided the student with opportunities to check her understanding of things she already knew and thus have a mediational impact. This role seems to be central for her well being in the classroom as she explained in the first interview:

> The teacher thinks I should be in another level. I don't want to be promoted... helping my peers helps me see what I understand (Ana 27-08-05)

Ana was placed in level one and she disliked this because she thought that she deserved being in a higher level. The position adopted in class allowed this participant to negotiate her own understanding and probably also supported her peers' development. It could be said that because they were all students, they were equals. In terms of the teacher, I would say that her approach shows a classroom with spaces that seem to be closed to students in other classrooms. Students and teacher constructed spaces that allow for negotiation of positions beneficial to all parties. This teacher's approach seems to bridge the gap discussed above where understanding of needs does not appear to compete with positions of power.

It is interesting to see that Ana did not consider that the placement test was the problem and blamed her self. I would like to think that given the opportunities that she had to negotiate understanding with others, she became aware of her own development and this may cause her to see that the exam result was her fault. But,

she waited several semesters after taking the placement test, before deciding to enrol in a language class. While attending a class at a low level, this student took advantage of a position of power as a more advanced student and together with the teacher helped her classmates and they helped her development.

There is another contrasting position where it seems that students push boundaries around positions adopted by their teacher. A classroom observation at 7 am, presents a variety of such instances. When the class started, there were seven students sitting at the back of the room as far away as possible from the front of the classroom and the teacher's desk. I wrote:

> There are seven students sitting at the back of the room. Everyone is smiling and looking at T. Some of them have wet hair, they look fresh and awake. (Field notes 08-18-05)

It seemed that students made an effort to arrive on time to this early class. Arriving on time could be taken as evidence of interest; the same could be said of their facial expression. On the other hand, sitting at the back of the classroom, could be interpreted as resistance to go to class or to be in class. However, this could also be interpreted as evidence of the gap between teacher and students. Another issue that seems to transpire from this observation is resistance towards class activities and being in class to fulfil a requirement:

> T tells students to talk about friendship. They take out their photographs and converse in pairs (I can hardly hear them). No eye contact while talking; they don't look engaged. They seem to just talk because they were told to talk. (Field notes 08-18-05)

This extract could be taken as evidence of students' lack of interest in the topic, or the class, or to talking to their peers as part of the controlling role of the teacher. Another possibility may be not finding the activity relevant for their learning. The teacher is imposing not only the activity, but the topic and the person they have to talk to. The following entry seems to point towards students' resistance to teacher's initiatives:

> There's a pair of students talking enthusiastically (loudly, I can hear some Spanish), they look at each other's pictures and there is laughter. They are facing each other. Teacher interrupts the activity. Students look disappointed but continue looking at the photographs. They talk to each other quietly…T talks and students don't pay attention …T hits the board with a pen to call their attention. (Field notes, 08-18-05)

The level of noise, students' laughter and making eye contact could be indicative of students' interest towards the topic or the activity; the same could be said about the use of Spanish, the more Spanish they appeared to use the more engaged in the activity they seemed to be. This brings the question of the role of Spanish in the negotiation ground as mediator in the learning process of a second language which would challenge common practice at the Language School where the use of Spanish in the classroom is discouraged assuming that it will encourage students to use English to negotiate understanding.

In this particular observation, students chose their partners; they worked with people they apparently felt comfortable with and I would dare say that they were probably more than casual classroom acquaintances. Students' quiet conversation could suggest resistance towards teacher's interruption. On the other hand, teacher seems to react to students' resistance hitting the board to call their attention as her authority was challenged and a reaction toward each other's resistance. The teacher apparently conceived her role in a way that demanded students' attention and they were not complying with the norms that in her experience and within personal expectations, students should follow challenging classroom role and control discourses where freedom to move away from those positions may prove difficult.

I would argue that the controlling and authority positions that teachers adopt and where dialogue seems not to be the rule but the exception, and the transmission teaching approach are grounds to position the teacher as a far to reach figure, hence the gap felt by students. This view of the teacher has been constructed through experiences where spaces to negotiate positions and understanding are not available or fostered.

4.4.4 A path towards change

In this section I will present data that evidence students' changing positions as their interest in learning English changes. Being able to engage and demarginalize the self apparently has an important impact on students:

> I don't copy the answers anymore. Now, I try to do it. I feel different… I am a participant. (Raul 9'06)

The tone of these words seems to show understanding and belonging to a group and thus not alienated from the rest of the students (4.2.3). In my journal (September 20, 2005) I wrote:

> …found Raul at the CAADI, he was cheerful, a big smile on his face…he said to feel well and happy; he didn't stammer and said that he had noticed that he knew something and that he was not in zero!

And that:

> …as I talked to you, I realized that I could do it…and I did it! I passed all my English courses… (January, 2008)

These fragments evidence changes from initial positions. They seem to take place when beliefs about personal ability are reconstructed through experience. While at the start of the project Raul appeared highly nervous, during interviews and class observations I noticed changes in his stammering and nervousness and satisfaction in our last casual meeting (January, 2008). He found that engaging, or understanding and negotiating meaning, made a difference (4.2.3, 4.3.1.4, 4.4.1) and he decided to attend CAADI workshops and participate in conversational activities in class:

> I've learned through practice. What I learn in class, I work it out at the CAADI; that helps me. (Raul, field notes, October, 2005)

And that:

> I need a lot of practice…I'll go to the CAADI to listen to music, watch videos, maybe even go to conversation workshops. (Raul 3'05)

Raul was afraid of participating and went to extremes to avoid being in class (4.2.3). My contention is that through interaction with the researcher and participating in group interviews, individual tutoring and talking about his personal situation opened spaces where he was able to negotiate with his self through inner dialogues, other positions. In this way, these opportunities became mediators that raised his consciousness about the need to engage in learning to achieve his ultimate goal: finish a tertiary program. This is a contrastingly opposite position to those seeking invisibility (4.2.3, 4.3.1.3) and he was not the exception. Rolando also changed his non-engaged position after his vacation and this meant securing finishing his BA.

Almost at the end of the first phase of data collection, I began to notice that students' attitude towards the language was changing. This was further confirmed during the second phase. It seems that the influence the researcher had upon their constructions as language learners was important and mediated as an opportunity to talk about their

experiences learning English and developing their consciousness as we had to negotiate our understanding during our conversations. If this is the case, then the relevance of constructing an environment where dialogical communication is fostered is enhanced.

It seems that once students come to the realization that it is preferable to engage in learning English to warrant a successful experience, some search for opportunities to learn outside the classroom, such as the CAADI or fostering friendships with foreign students and visitors (Mirsa, Elena and Jovita). Rolando looked for opportunities to meet foreign young people during his holiday. He found that such practice was more fulfilling than classroom work and welcomed the opportunities to assess his linguistic development:

> I spent a lot of time in conversation workshops, this helped me a lot to build up my confidence then…when I went on holiday, I befriended a group of American tourists and had a good time with them, we went dancing and everything. I felt part of the group and this made me realize that I had learned. (Rolando 10'06)

And that:

> [At the hotel where he was staying] There were only Americans, just Americans. That's when practiced a lot [me di vuelo]…because I like girls [ ]…at bars, disco, well at the hotel. I communicated, I said I can communicate with them, with their little Spanish and my little English we understood each other perfectly well and we even laughed because there were things that both of us didn't know how to say…(Rolando 13'06)

Equal positions that Rolando and his American acquaintances held during the interaction positions him as part of a community of practice of limited second language speakers, being their L1 different for each one; they managed to communicate. This became more evident in the following:

> … while on holiday, when there were Americans at the hotel…if you don't know English, they don't pay attention to you… they talk to you for a short while, but they notice that, well, like you can't and thanks, bye and you get desperate. As if they were desperate…(Rolando 13'06)

This quote appears to show that partners-to-be held different positions. Even though he was willing to make an effort and make friends, the others were not able to position themselves as partners with unequal linguistic abilities. Thus, communication could not be sustained. As a result, Rolando felt desperate and compared his feelings to those of the American tourists he was trying to befriend.

The path that Rolando followed to achieve this stage was complex. At the beginning of his BA he only wanted to pass the subject without learning:

> Two semesters ago I was only complaining; but I didn't do much to improve. I complained and now I don't… about the language, why do we have to learn a language that no [ ]? But I said, I have to get the credits [to finish a BA]. English is not a question of academic borderline passing because you are risking a lot, no. In other subjects you can and at the end you study like crazy and pass. But in English, you study from one day to the next and it's useless (Rolando 4'06)

Understanding that English was different than other subjects was the moment he apparently began engaging in learning English. I would argue that his change of attitude was triggered not only by the realization that English was a subject that needed a different treatment, and its obligatory nature among others but by the experience of socializing and the opportunities to negotiate understanding and appropriate words that previously belonged to others. At the beginning, he insisted on learning lists of formulas and vocabulary which would enable him to ask questions (CAADI Field notes, October'05). As this strategy did not work, he became desperate because he was failing the class and blamed the teacher and his peers, but he did not do much. At that point, he was apparently distancing from the responsibility that learning involved. He had considered spending some time working in the US (Rolando, RER3'05); this would mean taking time off from his studies. He recalled reflecting on the impact that this would have on his life. He apparently decided to learn English and not just pass the subject:

> I had to change. From going to class with a negative attitude, just looking for excuses for not going to school, I decided to learn and pass English. With this change I began to enjoy the class and I started going to the CAADI. (Rolando 10'06)

He attributed his changed attitude to a feeling of awkwardness and desperation of not knowing how to deal with the problem:

> When the teacher almost told me not to come back to class, I said, what's the motivation? ...I have to go to class. I registered in the CAADI and I said there's nothing but discipline and making an effort…before, it was the least effort. I tried to get it [the English class] out of my life, away from my head. But I got to a point where I said, no way and I registered at the CAADI and got V's support…(Rolando 5'06)

Finding himself at a point of being dismissed from class was critical and brings into perspective the role of the teacher in his learning process where there seems to be lack of understanding of both positions. It is interesting that a student, who resisted so strongly learning English, changed his attitude and became interested. Bringing

back the argument of opening spaces to negotiate and also the consciousness that is developed through them, it seems that strong attitudes are social constructed and reconstructed continuously, an idea that challenges teachers' views.

It seems that it is not only positive comments as the following excerpt suggests, that may act as mediators:

> At the beginning of the semester the teacher told me that I would not pass. He didn't even know me…that hurt. I decided to make an effort. (Rolando 4'06)

The negative attitude of the teacher was apparently a factor that influenced a change of attitude. Interestingly, I would say that V's support (an assessor at the CAADI) was not only a sustaining force but another factor that influenced his change:

> V…my assessor…he pushed me to go to conversation workshops not for beginners but for intermediate students… I got desperate, but I went and it was very difficult but little by little… V used to say "to learn it you have to go to conversation, to pass it only, yes, you can come here and [work with] the books and your notes …(Rolando 6'06)

This excerpt shows a docile side of Rolando; while he resisted the teacher's attitude, V was perceived as a positive force who asked for challenging activities. Interestingly, while V was in a position of power, the classroom teacher influenced Rolando to take action as he resisted the teacher's suggestions.

Once Rolando realized he was learning English, he began enjoying the language class and the extra time he spent working at the CAADI, particularly, attending conversation workshops where he had the opportunity to socialize in English which apparently makes him feel content:

> Now, well, I feel like fish in the water at the CAADI, in the [conversation] groups. (Rolando 9'06)

Once Rolando changed his attitude, the language classroom is perceived as a place that does not always foster learning:

> I'd take more than just my required levels. Not here because I feel that levels 7 and 8 [ ] I know guys from level 8 that can't speak or who speak like me or that don't even know what's going on. So, not here. (Rolando 11'06)

This was the first time that he compares his level to that of people who are considered more advanced; this suggests that his position as language learner is not on the margins anymore, but as part of an engaged community. He talks about the

language requirement using a possessive *my* which could be interpreted as a position of responsibility and appropriation.

The following fragment where he talks about adequate spaces like the CAADI or going out with American friends or with his *buddies* to develop as a language learner further support the argument that he took responsibility and does not resist:

> …the strategy to pass English is just echarle ganas [make an effort] and enjoy it more …at places like the CAADI… and out with American friends or my buddies and say today we'll speak English all day and $5.00 for every word in Spanish. (Rolando 11'06)

There is an apparent link between making an effort and enjoyment; this supports an argument posed earlier (4.2.3). This evidence adds to the argument that a resisting position does not necessarily mean not liking English, being lazy or lacking motivation. It could be argued that finding alternative strategies to learn and becoming aware of an ability to learn a second language require not only taking charge of the responsibility which involves liberating the teacher of it but also some kind of satisfaction which triggers willingness to continue learning.

The changed attitude was not only towards the class but also towards the teacher; whereas earlier the teacher was perceived negatively, now suggestions became advice:

> I don't skip classes anymore… I enjoy the class very much… I leave the class I'm happy, I mean, I enjoy his class… It's fun, I learn, I'm fascinated. (Rolando 9'06)

This attitude seems to be associated to a range of positive feelings. Among these feelings, there is a desire to not only pass with a good grade, but to learn the language and be able to interact socially as the time when he went on holiday.

Alondra's story developed differently. At the beginning of her BA she felt that she was wrongly placed. Even though she felt insecure and lacked confidence, she did not do anything to change the situation and blamed the institution and the system for it. She blamed herself for not being able to learn a language after having studied it for about four years. Like Rolando, she acknowledged not making an effort to learn English. Her objective was to pass the class and was not interested in learning the language. Even though she failed one level, she did not change her attitude towards

the language class and kept trying to get her credits without engaging. But, she was not satisfied with her attitude or the outcome:

> Well, I have lots of problems; at the beginning…I didn't feel that bad, really. I was aware of my mistakes but I said things happen for a reason…(Alondra 1'05)

Voicing her concerns could be taken as negotiation ground of the internalization of her position and as part of the process of developing her consciousness. She seems to detach herself from the responsibility of acting as if that reason was a decision taken by an external source that decides her destiny. But, in the same interview she said:

> I was aware that English was important, but I never said 'I'm going to study.' (Alondra 2'05)

I observed Alondra at the CAADI. She spent several hours a week working with another student, and I wrote in my journal:

> Alondra was at the CAADI today. She was answering a grammar exercise book with her friend. She spent about half an hour. They answered the exercises and checked each other's work. Later, when I finished working with Raul, I saw them playing … I wonder, why don't they go to conversation workshops? (Field notes, October'05)

Alondra's attitude changed constantly. Sometimes, she seemed to engage in a passing-the-subject-only objective. Other times, she appeared to engage in learning. This could be evidence of negotiation of positions with the self in the process of making sense of different discursive influences that were contradictory.

It is interesting to note that even though she spent time at the CAADI, her objective was very different from Rolando's. She was interested in learning grammar and practicing the language in the safe space offered by working with her friend. This strategy not only offered a safe space, but can also be seen as mediating in her linguistic development.

Evaristo also engaged in learning outside the classroom. He decided to go to the CAADI two months before the end of the semester. One of the reasons for going there was to get some practice for an oral exam. He was Raul's classmate in their department and they met at the CAADI when Raul and I were conversing. He joined us. In that particular occasion I gave them a detailed explanation about the oral exam (refer to 5.3.2). Raul had practiced for the exam before and he was more articulate than Evaristo when it came to describing a photograph. I hardly said anything while

he was talking. However, when Evaristo tried to describe his photograph, he was using isolated words. Seeing that he could not say much, Raul asked him questions and was expecting him to answer. As he could not answer those questions, then I prompted the answers (Field notes October, 2005). It was after this event during the first group interview that he said:

> If you pay attention to the words we use and the way we use the verbs… pay attention to those things and then in the future we will be able to go higher. (Evaristo RER 1'05)

His apparent aim was to improve and like the ladder metaphor involves moving to a higher level. These words sound like a piece of advice given to others; it could be interpreted as a transitional moment in his developed consciousness where he seems to negotiate engaging with the language. In the second part of the sentence, he insists on an action taken by another person. Keeping in mind that this participant resisted learning English throughout the data gathering process, it does not seem surprising to see that he expects others to learn and then share their knowledge with him so that he, as part of their group, can go higher. I would argue that he was expecting to learn formulas (see 4.3.1) and use them to describe the picture; if this were the case, then this would be further evidence of resistance.

Thus far, I have examined data to suggest that engaging in learning English is far more complicated than it may appear to be on the surface; there appear to be many factors that foster or hinder engagement. In the next section, I will look into teachers' constructions of their students to further explore the phenomenon.

4.5 What teachers say about their students

In this section I will present data to understand teachers' constructions of their language students. I will look first at teachers' overgeneralizations of tertiary students. Then I will provide data about their perceptions of students who they consider motivated. Finally, I will present data to understand how students and teachers discourses are related.

4.5.1 Teachers' perceptions about their students

Section 4.2.2 evidenced perceived contradictions and unclear policies within the institution and its academics. Teachers stated being interested in students' learning and mentioned that many tertiary students do not want to learn the language and are only interested in earning credits. Such perceptions are bound to influence teachers' attitude towards students and their classes. T3 claimed that:

> I make my effort so that they do their best, reach their objective. But, I'm not going to spoon feed them, right? They have to do their part (T3'06).

A second teacher said that:
> …young students are lazy and irresponsible, taking English only as a compulsory subject and without motivation at all…I'm there to provide learning opportunities (T2'05)

A third teacher mentioned:

> If students want to learn they should not blame teachers for their lack of learning… It bothers me that students answer the workbook carelessly… I expect them to be like me, well, I know they are different, but that is what I expect from them. (T4'05)

As individuals who consider to be doing their best, expectations towards students are disappointing. T3 warrants a position of power and control as provider of knowledge and adequate grounds for students to learn. This seems to further demonstrate gaps between teachers and students (4.4.1). T3 apparently does not make contact with the responses she gets from students because these responses are not what she expects. On the other hand, there is evidence of some level of interest on the part of the students and thus, there is some misunderstanding between them. This seems to be more evident when looking at the linguistic separation made by T3 and T4; *I* and *they* could mean that teachers and students act as two separate entities where the role of the teacher is to transmit knowledge and the student becomes the receptor of that knowledge (4.3.1, 4.4.1). In an informal conversation, a teacher said

> …I believe it is important to set boundaries between teacher and students. I'm not saying that teachers should not be friends with students or the other way around; but, there is certain boundary inside the classroom that will allow learning [to take place]…(Researcher's journal, 2008)

The teacher's position does not seem to open a space for mutual understanding. Aside from a gap created by lack of understanding this fragment demonstrates the constructed gap mentioned above where power given by the teacher's knowledge is

suggested as a key reason. Some of the issues mentioned above seem to be corroborated by T4 who explained that:

> Study habits, students cannot notice things on their own... The teacher needs to punish… it's bad, but… students do not have good study habits… some students expect teachers to give them everything but there are others who make their own effort. They complain about lack of time and I think it's lack of discipline. It's their attitude…most students come because they have to be in class. … we have to tell them what their problems are… and you can tell them what they have to do, but they also have to think what they want to do. (Interview with T4, 6-09'05)

While T4 appears to support a position as a teacher who should tell students how and what to study, she brings in students' agency as a factor which would enable them to take in teachers' suggestions. She further said "students who are passionate about English learn despite their teacher…" (Interview with T4, 6'09'05). The evidence provided shows that the responsibilities to learn falls on students while teachers are responsible of providing adequate learning opportunities.

For some teachers, laziness and lack of responsibility seem to be attached to the reason for taking English only as a compulsory subject. Thus, for these teachers, the responsibility seems to fall on the students because teachers already do their part.

T4 mentioned her experience with students she perceived as weak, saying:

> I worry and feel that they [students] become my personal challenge… I try to help them… before I used to complain about them… now I've changed and pay more attention to them… I ask myself what am I doing to help them?... We should not have prejudices against students… personality, being shy, insecure, etc. influences my perceptions about students. (Interview with T4, 6-09'05)

This is an interesting excerpt which positions the teacher as someone who cares and thus shares the responsibility to learn with the students. The excerpt seems to point out a teacher who had raised her awareness. Thus, it contradicts views of a language teacher detached of the language learner; in this way, the meaning of being a language learner is more complex and appears to involve a process of becoming more aware of who the students are and their needs. This excerpt shows that for a language teacher being a language learner may not be as simple as being the one responsible for learning; for teachers, there appears to be a position of responsibility that involves preparing adequate material for all students and as T4 explains, paying attention to students which may involve engaging with students and caring for them.

Contradictions in teachers' perceptions, such as teachers and students sharing responsibility or teachers expecting students to be the only ones responsible for their learning process, for example; or the following contradiction: "I have to remind myself that we are all different… I expect students to be like me…" (Interview with T4, 6-09-05) could be interpreted as influences from ELT literature where individual differences are important in the language classroom. As an example, on this topic Stern's influential discussion on the individual language learner reminds teachers that "In exploring this area it is useful to begin with introspection, retrospection, and observation and to think about ourselves as language learners and our pupils or students in that role…" (1983:289). The latter resonates with the discussion in Chapter 2, on how such learner factors have been seen as reasons that explain learner differences (e.g. Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Long, 1990; Skehan, 1989; Strong, 1983).

Another possible influence from ELT literature seems to point towards the role that age and personality traits play on the process of language learning. Several excerpts from teachers' interviews presented above suggest that some teachers consider age as a factor that may determine language development. This, in my experience, is a common belief among people. For trained teachers, however, it seems that Krashen's et al (1979) contention that personality and age as factors that may support or deter the learning process of a second language strengthens such a belief when they are introduced to the Critical Period Hypothesis (Krashen et al, 1979).

In section 4.3.1 I presented data which suggest that some teachers support views of grammar fostered by influential voices like Stern (1983), to mention one, that most teachers working at the institution are familiar with; if Stern's views have influenced teachers, then teachers appear to expect students to master linguistic structures to become competent language users as defined by Savignon (1991) or as explained by Harmer (2001). For some authors the latter implies that students need to focus on form to be able to notice how structures work (Schmidt, 1990; Skehan, 1998). As I It may imply introducing language in context and then focussing on form to enable individuals to personalize it later on, following a PPP sequence (Harmer, 2001) or

isolating the structure as evidence from one of the classroom observations suggests (4.3).

CLT approaches encourage teachers to provide students with opportunities to learn (Littlewood, 1981; Nunan, 1987; Brumfit and Johnson, 1979); data provide evidence of such responsibility falling upon the teacher as the following fragments suggest: "…I'm there to provide learning opportunities" (T2'05, Field notes 22'08'05, 23-08'05) and " … we have to tell them what their problems are… and you can tell them what they have to do, but they also have to think what they want to do." (Interview with T4, 6-09'05). Related to the teacher's responsibility to provide students with opportunities to learn seems to be the following comment I wrote on my research journal "…they [two teachers] said that students are immature and for that reason they do not know what is best for them," (Researcher's journal, 05-07). As above, it seems that the responsibility falls on the students; maturity seems to mean that students ought to reach a point of development that allows them to take responsibilities. Some of the teachers' responsibilities, according to Harmer (2001) whose textbook is influential in the teacher training courses where most of the institution's English teachers begin their professional development, are to provide students with the means to correct themselves and sometimes correct them; teachers should also foster opportunities to communicate and present language at the appropriate level. In my opinion, these ideas could be influencing teachers' perceptions about their students.

A third teacher perceived motivation and interest linked to age which seems to have a component of the discourse of being mature people who know what they want and work towards their goals (4.5.1) . For T4 older students were more interested and motivated than younger ones, which could be considered an influence of the age factor, a discourse fostered by many researchers as was explained above; also, she considered that the reasons for being in the classroom are factors that affect students' motivation and interest:

> I don't know why, but it depends on the age of the students. I had some students, older women, who were the best students, but the reasons for being here [in the classroom] is because they want to be here… it also depends on their personal situation… if you're here because you want to… (T4, 11-12-06)

There are several aspects in this fragment that seem relevant. Reasons for taking a class is commonly perceived as an influence on students' attitude towards English, an aspect that may be linked to motivational constructs in ELT. T4 seems to imply that students do not want to be there and she says it as a matter of fact; a rather deterministic and problematic perception. This fragment suggests that students are stagnated and unable to become interested. Identifying gender and age as reasons for being good students seems also part of what makes a motivated good student and again point towards an essentialist view of the world, defined by Ellis as a view of the world that 'what happens in the world depends essentially on what the laws of nature happen to be' (2001:1). Based on this, such discourses in a language classroom would probably mean that students have little opportunities to negotiate who they are in the language classroom and this in turn would mean that teachers' attitudes towards the classes would be to an extent set before classes start or meeting students:

> The youngsters who come to class to cover a requirement…are the ones that really, I don't know but they don't make an effort [no le echan ganas]. (T4, 11-12-06)

Age groups and interest in learning English are problematic because younger students are perceived as not making an effort. This evidence seems to link with the concept of mature students discussed above. Importantly, it seems that the position of this teacher are the set expectations before events take place which seems to go hand in hand with prescribed classroom approaches (4.3) with little room for unexpected happenings coming from students. Furthermore, being mature could be also interpreted as involving a discourse where tertiary students should be able to define their future and take the necessary action to achieve their goals, as was suggested above by T4. Being a *mature student* apparently means being responsible and knowing how to act in specific situations. These teachers seem to say that because they are mature, they know what is best for others and that maturity provides that knowledge. It seems that the social meaning attached to what being a tertiary student is and what is expected of tertiary students defines a tertiary student. Teachers perceive that students lack the attributes described above. But, perhaps mature students are those who understand the discourse communities at tertiary level and therefore can respond in ways that agree with teachers' expectations.

4.5.2 Teachers' construction of interested students

In this section I will look at data that relates interest to learn English to an individual's motivation. Language teachers I interviewed consider motivation an important aspect in the learning process. Its conceptualization could stem from long standing traditions (see Chapter 2) mainly from dualist ontologies where the realization of the role played by the social aspects of life are very different from ontologies that foster an understanding of socially constructed selves. The implications of these differences are enormous for the meaning of motivation and it seems that teachers' perceptions are based on dualist conceptions of the world. For instance, T8 (31-08-05) mentioned that many students are not motivated because they do not show interest in the English class; T2 (22-08-05) considered that interest and laziness were signs of lack of motivation. The following excerpts further exemplify how a teacher constructs interested and uninterested students:

> I like this group. They work nice, they work fast… they ask me after class when they don't understand. They have different background…it's like a fresh group… they are interested, arrive on time, they come to class constantly…they participate. (T3, 24-08-05)

She also said:

> Last semester I had an extremely lazy group… they had many conflicts among peers and it was a bad group. There were three leaders and they didn't want to work with some people in the class… I couldn't use group work…ss wouldn't work with everybody. (T3, 24-08-05)

It appears that for T3 a good group of students works hard, fast, asks questions and follows instructions from the teacher; on the other hand, a "bad" group is perceived as lazy and with conflicting views, unable to follow teacher's instructions or decisions.

A third teacher perceived motivation and interest linked to age which seems to have a hidden component of the discourse of being mature, people who know what they want and work towards their goals (4.5.1) . For T4 older students were more interested and motivated than younger ones, which could be considered an influence of the age factor, a discourse fostered by many researchers as was explained above; also, she considered that the reasons for being in the classroom are factors that affect students' motivation and interest:

> I don't know why, but it depends on the age of the students. I had some students, older women, who were the best students, but the reasons for being here [in the

classroom] is because they want to be here... it also depends on their personal situation... if you're here because you want to... (T4, 11-12-06)

There are several aspects in this fragment that seem relevant. T4 seems to imply that students do not want to be there and she says it as a matter of fact; a rather deterministic and problematic perception. This fragment suggests that students are stagnated and unable to become interested. Identifying gender and age as reasons for being good students seems also part of what makes a motivated good student and again point towards an essentialist view of the world, defined by Ellis as a view of the world that 'what happens in the world depends essentially on what the laws of nature happen to be' (2001:1). Based on this, such discourses in a language classroom would probably mean that students have little opportunities to negotiate who they are in the language classroom and this in turn would mean that teachers' attitudes towards the classes would be to an extent set before classes start or meeting students:

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Teachers' perceptions about students seem to contrast with students' experiences; some students search for places where they may be able to learn and not an easy path:

> I'm taking English classes at the Language School in level 6, again. The truth is that it's different than the classes I took last semester outside the language school. Here [at the Language School] it's more difficult for me, because classes are only in English, instructions, conversations. I'm not saying that the other classes were in Spanish. What happened was that my classmates used to speak Spanish when the teacher left the room; or they would talk about personal issues, or about other issues (Alondra 2em'06)

Another student said that:

> I'm here [at the Language School] because it's better than there [another department within the university], but the time and distance makes it difficult (Etienne2'05)

This evidence further supports my perception of lack of understanding of both parties; values and expectations because they are not voiced or made evident or negotiated, become silent and are prone to interfere with the learning process.

The above discussion calls for an examination of classroom interaction and teachers' attitudes about students' lives to enhance opportunities to construct a better relationship with possibilities to bridge gaps between teachers and students.

4.5.3 How are teachers' and students' discourses related?

In sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 I presented evidence that would support lack of understanding between teachers and their students. Teachers' constructions do not correlate with students' positions. For example:

> Rolando: …it's apathy, because she gives us an exercise, we're only half way through [an activity], beginning to understand and they [the group] start another one. I think it's the main problem with many teachers that they go along with those [students] who have a better level; they [the teachers] advance at the pace of those who understand.
>
> Evaristo: Teachers say, well if one [student] understands me, I don't care, I see that I'm teaching well. And that is not always true.
>
> Raul: Or maybe not so much that. Maybe because they want to finish, I mean, cover the entire course.
>
> Rolando: Yeah, that's a mistake; they are determined to finish the course.
>
> Raul: Yes, they want to finish the course (RER 2'05)

A common ground for these three participants is an apparent dissatisfaction and lack of interest. Leaving a classroom task feeling that they still need to work on it triggers those feelings. Views on teachers' reasons are not unified, but students seem to agree on the end result of an empowered teacher who is in control and marginalizes students who do not finish fast or understand everything. They raise an issue that teachers constantly confront: meeting institutional goals (4.5.1); also, the marginalization of students whose levels are lower (4.2.3). This perception contradicts teachers' claims and demonstrates lack of mutual understanding which could lie behind some of the contradictions in teachers' discourses. One of them said:

> I get very frustrated; it's a waste of time to check compositions that don't say anything. I realize that they don't know verbs, adjectives, they are confused. (T2'05)

Another teacher stated that:

> I give my e mail address to students so that they can send me their compositions. I try to answer their questions (T5'05)

The second teacher seems to believe that the distance between teachers and students is not problematic for students. Intentions to bridge the gap between students and teachers are sought in terms of the teachers only and students' views are not considered. A narrow view of language (4.3.1) and the problems attached to it transpire these fragments. Feeling frustrated could be interpreted as not being satisfied with the results obtained (4.5.1). Teachers seem to see their job as doing it for students and not as doing it with them which would mean a shared responsibility. Lack of understanding involves dissatisfaction and at the same time contradicts the apparent awareness of a need to do something about students' confusion as well as their linguistic knowledge; these are apparently problematized by the perception of lazy and irresponsible students. The teacher's effort is seen as a waste because the teacher's expectations are not met and as mentioned above, it is the students' responsibility. As mentioned above, teachers seem to act as transmitters of valuable possessions, knowledge.

Some students seem to disagree with the teacher's position:

> …not having very clear objectives for the class. They [teachers] don't give us all the objectives. That's what was happening to me at the beginning. I went to class and I didn't know what was going on, I didn't learn anything. (Raul 12'05)

This fragment shows a conflict between teachers' perceptions of providing learning opportunities and a student who apparently does not perceive those opportunities. Thus, students' attitude towards teachers' views should not be seen as separate from teachers' constructions of students and vice-versa; they are the result of each other (and other discourses). Teachers and students respond to each others' values. That is, if teachers expect to set boundaries in their classrooms, a gap between them and their students is part of a classroom. But, because they do not seem to notice the differences between them, interactions are problematic:

> The teacher didn't motivate me much and in general there were many classmates at the Language School that no, no, in fact, I didn't understand anything and they said that no, that it wasn't, that it was too difficult for them. We never told the teacher that we didn't understand. (Raul 8'05)

In this fragment it is possible to see the impact that lack of understanding between teachers' and students' views and needs may have on students' attitude towards the language. There is an indication that this participant, as part of a collective group of students, did not negotiate with the teacher their lack of understanding evidencing the

gap discussed (4.3.1, 4.3.1.2) and a broken dialogue; these actors take sides and they do not seem to acknowledge each other's positions disrupting possible understanding between them.

As mentioned above, teachers' efforts are apparently based on their perceptions of what students need and not on an actual dialogue with students which could ground their efforts to help them; this may be an influence from discourses fostered by influential studies as discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter Summary:

At the beginning of the chapter, I explained how initial themes evolved into the themes developed in Chapter 4. Data presented showed evidence of complex issues that are apparently related to processes of teaching-learning English in the specific context where the study took place.

- In 4.2 I presented data at a level that does not deal with linguistic development in the classroom; but which impacts learning in different ways and at different levels, present and future attitudes towards the language.
- Then, I presented data that shows students' views about the language and which are usually linked to linguistic development. However, these are influenced by discursive contradictions identified in the previous level.
- And finally, I presented data that deals with students' and teachers' constructions of each other.

Students' constructions are apparently contradictory discursive influences. These influences come from perceptions about past and present experiences at the university and in other social arenas as well as perceptions about future opportunities.

While for some making the most of academic opportunities at present is relevant, the importance of subjects that are related to the field of study seems to marginalize current learning opportunities of a second language, but which nonetheless may be important in the future. On the other hand, for students whose interest may lie somewhere else, positions seem to marginalize academic opportunities at large.

These two positions apparently involve searching for strategies to gain credits that do not necessarily involve learning English which was one of the initial themes I identified at the beginning of the data analysis process. A third position is apparently held by students who perceive English as a central subject in present realities and also for their future.

Among discursive influences identified are perceptions of contradictory practices at the institution. While administrative practices and other subject teachers, as discourse communities, apparently devalue the need to learn English, language teachers and the institution foster discourses that validate a need to learn a second language. These competing positions cause tensions and resistance towards this specific requirement to finish BA programs. Resistance apparently translates into low and marginal engaging in learning English.

Time is a factor that apparently involves being or becoming efficient; that is, to deal with important subjects and finding ways of spending the least amount of time or effort dealing with issues related to English.

Discursive practices and their influences are apparently part of personal dialogues to make sense of realities to construct positions. However, confrontations with previous constructions and dominant discourses create uncertainty where values, such as being responsible and engaging in learning become problematic and sometimes involve challenging dominant discourses such as the mandatory nature of the subject which are perceived to exert control.

Emotions which I first identified as "Fear", are apparently deeply entangled in the construction of a language learner self. These could be said to be at an interface of the two non-linguistic levels and the linguistic level where personal dialogues seem to be involved in the process of dealing with them. Emotions are not static factors but constructions that are constantly changing and it appears that personal dialogues support the individual to construct an able self despite marginalized positions or difficult situations.

Marginalization is a complex position that sometimes is apparently self imposed or perceived as imposed by teachers or more knowledgeable peers. A self imposed

marginalized position appears to involve an interest in learning and a critical view of personal attitudes and feelings. On the other hand, a position of marginalization perceived as imposed by teachers or other students, apparently involves holding these actors responsible for lack of learning.

Students make sense of their realities through comparisons which give a sense of dynamism to emotions where imagination may trigger them. In this sense, the role of intrapersonal interaction seems vital to understand interpersonal dialogue. At the interpersonal level, significant others apparently play a key role while other levels of social interaction may be sources of comparison to construct a confident self. It could be said that once students make sense of their reality, they decide what to do and how to go about doing. Thus, they exercise their human agency despite and within discursive influences.

Based on the above evidence, anxiety may be conceptualized as socially constructed where classroom happenings and social interactions outside the classroom may contribute to it and where exercising human agency becomes a key factor to deal with it.

Evidence suggests that positions adopted are closely linked to power issues between students and also their teachers. These seem to be related to how students want to be perceived or if they want to be invisible to other individuals around them, a position that may be seen as self marginalization. These issues also influence decision making processes.

Students' constructions of what is involved in learning a second language showed an emphasis on a linear and compartmentalized approach to language learning where teachers and students apparently feel safe and thus do not contest. The influence of a structural view of language seems to permeate students' work in the classroom and outside of it. The language classroom may be responsible for perceptions about English as a long, difficult, shallow and linear process that sometimes is not perceived continuous and at times may be a move backwards.

Understanding is apparently sought through strategies that do not necessarily involve the teacher. Reasons for marginalizing the teacher could be the power and controlling

position that teachers seem to adopt as they act as authorities and experts. When there are students who try to understand class content, some teachers appear to miss this attitude and construct students as lazy and uninterested. Teachers' positions of control and as experts allow little engagement of students who while being nervous, could be interested in learning. Students, as a response of the latter, adopt positions that controlling teachers find acceptable to continue transmitting their knowledge. For some students, such position apparently means standing in a safe space. All these positions seem not to promote language development.

Social interaction within the language classroom is not perceived as means to negotiate understanding and therefore may not be perceived as an important factor to develop language proficiency. Pair or group work seems to be problematic for some and not always fostered in the classroom where there appears to be asymmetrical power positions where there is an apparent lack of shared responsibility to construct a dialogue between teachers and students and among students as well.

The discussion also served the purpose of showing my lack of awareness and understanding of classroom events as well as the importance of negotiation through language and in language as a key to language development.

Classroom discourses which are usually expected to intersect are apparently understood by teachers and students in ways that do not necessarily interconnect. Lack of intersection of these discourses may be due to the influence of factors discussed earlier. As example, discourses about a need to provide metalinguistic information and the use of communicative activities do not seem to converge; this may be due to few opportunities to negotiate meaning and understanding. Similarly, class objectives are apparently problematic and seem to be interpreted differently by different people; thus, preparing for exams becomes a challenge.

The difference between memorization and studying relates to knowing and understanding. While memorization involves knowing with no understanding, studying apparently means knowing and understanding. Even though there seem to be some contradictions, for some students it is not necessary to fully understand to

continue learning the language. But, this position appears to be linked to the presence of negotiation grounds to make sense of the complexity of language use.

Teachers and students do not seem to understand each other's positions as their discourses seem to show and a gap between them is constructed. This gap is apparently present among students with different levels of proficiency when they are not encouraged to support each other. As a result, interest in learning English may be affected. Thus, learning and surviving could be seen as competing positions. While some students expect teachers to bridge the gap between them and position teachers in control, other students consider that the distance between them should remain because they belong to different groups. For some students, teachers' strategies to bridge the gap are not necessarily appropriate. Taking a personal interest in individual students, teachers are perceived to bridge the existing gap.

Gaps between teachers and students could be linked to lack of spaces to negotiate positions and understanding of each other's discourses. Challenging teachers' positions of control are apparently part of the resistance created by factors that impede understanding.

In this chapter I looked at extracts from a large body of data. Choosing these extracts could be contested as it implicated the researcher's biased perspective. However, the use of several sources of data provide a range of angles to look at the phenomenon under study and strengthens the discussion. The fragments analysed provided an insight of the recurrent themes of that body of data and served as the basis for the process of understanding the phenomena I studied. In the next chapter, Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings in this chapter and how they relate to some discourses.

Chapter 5

Dialogue: engaging and becoming conscious

In Chapter 4 I identified several levels of influence which seem to feed each other as the following summary shows:

Influences outside the language classroom	*Students' views about the learning process*	*Students' and teachers' constructions of each other*	
A L2 is a low priority subject while those directly linked to the area of study are more important. Contradictory practices in the institution: low value of learning a L2 vs. mandatory fostering learning a L2.	Learning a L2 is perceived as a linear, long, shallow, compartmentalized and difficult process.	Achieving understanding does not necessarily involve the teacher.	Students are lazy and lack interest.
	The process is not necessarily continuous and at times it may move backwards.	Teachers as controllers and authorities.	Teachers miss possible interest on the part of the students.
Being an efficient tertiary student causes tensions where the product (validating a requirement) becomes more important than the process (learning English).		Interaction is not a means to negotiate understanding.	Students do not respond as expected.
	Structural aspects become prominent in and outside the classroom.	Interaction involves asymmetrical power positions.	Teachers as committed and interested individuals.
		Lack of shared responsibilities.	
	Negotiation grounds towards understanding are not fostered.	Memorization involves knowing without understanding.	Teachers as authority, controllers and experts.
		Studying means knowing and understanding.	Promotion of structural linguistic knowledge.
		More knowledgeable peers are not encouraged to support less knowledgeable ones.	

From the above summary, it seems that:

Teachers and students do not understand each other's positions. Thus, their discourses do not intersect.

Gaps may be seen as lack of negotiating grounds.

Gaps impede understanding.

Gaps do not provide spaces to support each other.

Gaps promote competing positions of learning and surviving.

Students' constructions involve discourses outside the classroom and within the classroom.

Emotions impact students' positions. Both are dynamic processes that apparently changed in light of lived experiences.

Based on these findings, in this chapter I will first revisit the literature review to see how it links with the findings from Chapter 4. Then I will look at discursive influences that influence students' level of engagement. Next I shall discuss the dialogues between teachers and students drawing on ideas from Bakhtin and Vygotsky, a discussion that will enhance the understanding of the issues raised. I will try to get a better picture of the process of dialogue construction where disagreement and intentions to agree or converge may be conceived as appropriation of each other's positions and thus as understanding of each other's discourses. This theoretical stance involves looking at discourse as a dialogical construction where individuals "develop ways of viewing the world, their belief systems, positionings

and values, and interacting and aligning with others" (Maguire, 2006:169) as responses to each other's discourses.

I will also discuss the presence of safe spaces. This is a theme that emerged while carrying out the data analysis; it became evident that some students changed positions and this seems to imply a need to find safe spaces to make sense of reality and the experience and process of being a language learner. Another theme that I will discuss in this chapter is a process of becoming conscious which apparently involves moving from a non-engaged position to one that means becoming part of discourse communities who share an interest in learning English.

Before such discussion, however, I would like to revisit the research questions to keep in mind central issues they raise:

> *What is the nature of undergraduate students' experiences as language learners when English is a mandatory subject?*
>
> *What factors enable or deter students in engaging in learning English?*
>
> *What is the nature of the difficulties they face?*
>
> *How do students perceive their teachers, their classes, the language?*
>
> *Is there agreement in teachers' and students' perceptions?*

I suggest that the different sections that comprise this chapter will allow me to find some answers to these questions. Now, I will move on to look at the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

5.1. Revisiting the literature review

The objective of this section is to look at the literature discussed in Chapter 2 in light of the research findings; findings pose interesting arguments that disagree with some conceptualizations, in particular the meaning of being a good language learner, learner beliefs and motivation. On the other hand, given the research approach I used, a social view of language learning opened doors that were not even visible within the most influential position of ELT studies.

The meaning of "a good language learner" in light of the research findings

The construction of a good language learner in Naiman's et al (1978) model was based on a teachers' need to find ways to prevent students from failing, considering the characteristics of successful students. While in Naiman's study individual learners are responsible for their learning taking into consideration their motivation and attitude as factors to be successful, the research findings of this study suggest that this may be a more complex phenomenon.

Influences from the social grounds where people interact affect their performance in the language classroom. There is strong evidence that hints that there are influences arising outside the classroom as well as others within it. The learning environment, in this case Spanish speakers learning English in a Mexican tertiary institution, is conceived in Naiman's study a functional instrumental arena to learn linguistic codes as though students were socially isolated.

Students' decisions appear to be personal in Naiman's model; data apparently question such a view. Students' decisions are shaped by discursive influences and power positions of agents of symbolic control (Bernstein, 1990)(I explain this term below) like teachers, and the individual's exercise of human agency, aspects that I will discuss later in this chapter.

The assumption that teachers understand students' processes and progress is also challenged by the findings of my research. As I will discuss below, there are gaps at different levels where teachers and students' objectives do not meet and which I have called monologues probably because conceptualizations do not stem from students, but from teachers' perceptions of what being a language student is. The conceptualization of the language classroom in Naiman et al (1995) as a space to learn linguistic codes (refer to 2.1.1) suggests a narrow view of language, which is yet another struggle that students apparently live.

The meaning of learner beliefs in light of the research findings

The conceptualization of learner beliefs in Horwitz's (1987, 1988) studies raises similar concerns as those of the good language learner. Beliefs are considered

complex influential factors in an individual's learning process and many attempts have been made to build an inventory (Horwitz, 1987, 1988, 1999; Mori, 1999; Cotterall, 1995 for example) of concepts that individuals hold about aptitude, the nature of learning, the difficulty involved in learning a language, motivation and expectation. As such, individuals are characterized in isolation and not as part of social groups which may influence their actions.

Research findings in this study challenge these constructions and suggest that beliefs are dynamic constructions created as the result of positions afforded by individuals who are part of social groups where personal histories play an important role in the struggle of making sense of realities.

The meaning of motivation in light of the research findings

My contention is that given the lack of dialogue in the language classroom and the subordinate position of students within the classroom and the institution where disciplinary discourses[10] seem to have a hegemonic influence, motivation to learn a language takes more than an internal drive or an external interest to develop professionally which seems to support Ushioda's conclusion that "language motivation today has an inescapably political dimension of which we need to take greater account in our research and pedagogical practice" (2006a:148) and I would add that political dimension should involve macro and micro levels; that is, influences outside and within the classroom. Given that among key motivational theories such as Gardner's (1985) socioeducational model and Dornyei's (1994) model, motivation is conceived as an individual quality that is influenced by internal personal factors as well as external ones, findings from this study seem to challenge these conceptualizations where reality is conceived as an intertwined construction at many levels.

Following Gardner (1985), the motivation of students who participated in this study could be termed instrumental; for this reason, they would not fall into the category of good learners because their motivation would be considered weak to support an engaged attitude (2.1.1). Naiman's et al model (1995) where motivation and attitude

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[10] I refer to disciplinary discourses as those discourses within a discipline that shape the valuing of some practices and ideologies and not others.

are considered good predictors of success, however, appears to say that a positive attitude is "necessary, but not a sufficient condition for success" (1995:219) and opens the door to wondering what is missing! Drawing on Horwitz (1987, 1988), students' beliefs about learning English would place them as unsuccessful language learners because their interest would not support an engaged position either. All these constructions do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the contradictory positions and constructions found in the data and which point towards discursive influences.

The level of discursive influences or as Ushioda (2006a) calls them, political dimensions, found in this study (Chapter 4, 5.1.1 and 5.2) do not seem to be contemplated and explained in Gardner's (1985) and Dornyei's (1994) models. Notions like Weiner's attribution theory, learned helplessness and self-efficacy which are directly related to attitudes and beliefs (2.1.3) place the individual as the only one responsible for the outcomes in a language learning situation if adequate learning opportunities are present; such representation of the individual stands as part of a monologic discourse as seen by Sampson who considers that monologues "rob the other of any genuine standing in the world, thereby permitting the dominant groups to operate… and ensure the maintenance of their privilege." (1993:4). The meaning of being responsible is another contested issue that I discuss below and in light of the evidence analysed in Chapter 4, appears as a social construction rather than an individual's inner quality.

Another factor that has commonly been linked to motivation that may be detrimental for a language learning process is anxiety (Spolsky, 1989), which in Krashen's (1981, 1982) influential ideas translates into the notion of affective filter. The discussion in Chapter 4 brings into light discursive factors that are apparently linked to anxiety. These and their contradictions apparently cause anxiety and influence positions adopted in the classrooms. In traditional studies, anxiety can derive from within the individual or from the social interaction in the classroom. The same has become evident in this discussion; however, the factors mentioned above are not obviously linked with the language classroom. For Shotter (1993b) who draws on Vygotsky and thus challenges traditional views considers that anxiety "is always connected with attention…in ways which are unchanging…" (1993b:61). This is a problematic

conceptualization if the self is placed as part of social groups where social interaction mediates "by temporary, artificially created, semiotic links, by signs that are first used like 'tools' to control the behaviour of others, but which later, can be used to control one's own behaviour…"(1993b:61). Based on these ideas, students' feelings become social constructions challenging traditional concepts because it positions feelings as part of negotiation grounds of making sense of reality. In a similar way, questions have arisen as to the appropriateness of present conceptualizations like integrative motivation (Ushioda, 2006a) where other issues seem to be present and which contest views of unified selves and identity.

Considering Norton's (1995) conceptualization of motivation as investment allows the characterization of the self as fragmented and under constant construction. Norton and Toohey (2001) contend that investing in language learning relates to social power positions and hegemonic discourses as learners position their selves. Investment (Norton, 2000) denotes the interest that a second language learner has to engage in language learning which goes beyond language classrooms, "socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (2000:10). The classroom is conceived as a social arena where external and internal social positions and discourses constantly interact (2.2.3) and which may bring linguistic symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) based on the idea that learning English would afford individuals future positions that otherwise would not be available; however, the process is subjected to tensions created by a myriad of discursive influences (Pavlenko, 2002; Norton, 2001) and not merely on the structure of language. In this sense, learning English as linguistic symbolic capital in Bourdieu's terms may not be seen as an unproblematic enterprise carried out as the result of an individual's exercise of agency but as a complex phenomenon where present and past discursive influences as well as future expectations may be felt.

Moving away from the dominant perspective as Norton, Ushioda, Toohey and Pavlenko appear to have done, has involved an appraisal of the conception of how knowledge is acquired. Wertsch and Toma (1995) explain:

> The claim that learning and development are inherently social is very much in the
> limelight these days. Instead of restricting our focus to the isolated individual when

studying cognition and other forms of mental processes, we have come to realize that key aspects of mental functioning can be understood only by considering the social context in which they are embedded…yet a great deal of educational and psychological theory still is ill equipped…One of the reasons for the weak theoretical underpinnings in this area is that focusing on the social constitution of mental functioning requires us to cross disciplinary boundaries...bodies of knowledge that have been artificially separated by disciplinary boundaries… (p.159)

Crossing boundaries involved moving away from the individual as agent of change with the capacity to become motivated. Individuals are social selves where discourses at all levels affect or influence their interest as they construct their positions in the world. Within a similar train of thoughts, Bakhtinian dialogicallity of discourse positions those influential motivational models as hegemonic views; in hegemonic discourses, students become subordinates of those ideas. Those discourses trigger dialogically constructed responses, but which the evidence of this study suggests are monologic. The latter may be the result of expectations that powerful ELT discourses presuppose (see 5.2.2).

The views discussed in this section are directly related to the coming section in this chapter where I look into influences that would not be considered in a more orthodox study as part of the language classroom.

5.2 Resistance, discourses and commodification of education.

In this section I will discuss findings related to discursive influences which show that conflicting discourses are linked to power and control exerted by authorities and teachers. Students' reactions towards these discourses show tensions and resistance and this proves problematic as they try to make sense of discourse communities at the university. The discussion in this section links to themes discussed in chapter 4.2 such as students' perceptions of themselves as language learners, the importance that learning a second language appears to have, the impact of English being a mandatory subject as well as the emotions that such a situation seems to trigger. The discussion is organized in three subsections: Institutional discourses, commodification of education and resistance.

5.2.1 Institutional discourses

A strong finding of the research was the marginalization of English as a resulting effect of institutional discourses on students' attitudes towards learning English. In 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 the importance given to its learning appeared influenced by understandings and expectations about professionalism and specialization. That is, Hyland's (2008) notion of disciplinary discourses exerting their power over areas that are perceived less important seems to confirm the challenging attitude towards a mandatory subject.

The way university communities experience policies established from the top apparently become institutional practice; in other words, actual practice of a policy translates into collective behaviour, a cultural manifestation of positions of power and control accepted in this setting (Hofstede, 1983; House et al, 2002). Becoming members of discourse communities (Swales, 1990) is part of the process of making sense of new social arenas. Making sense of these communities involves engaging in activities that are considered relevant and thus meaningful (Cornelius, 2004); in other words, understanding the practices that discourse communities value involves, as data appear to show, marginalizing English. That is, members of discourse communities share "knowledge about discursive practices of their community" (Woodward-Kron, 1999:1). Such knowledge, according to Woodward-Kron, is developed through social participation/experience within those communities; in this particular case, it involves tensions between the perceived and fostered value of different subjects that are considered to meet future professional goals. The existing tensions seem to bear an important influence on the level of engagement in learning English. Engagement then, is not unified and may be influenced, as Woodward-Kron (1999) contends, by the linguistic capital in an individual's home environment. An additional dimension evident in the data is the marginalization of English (4.2.1) present in pre-tertiary levels which could be seen as a culture-specific means of producing and reproducing conditions (Wells, 2000). That is, when students in this project took English in secondary school and high school, they considered that English was not taken seriously (Alondra '05, Raul '05, Evaristo '05, Rolando '05) by their language teachers, other teachers, the school authorities and themselves; other subjects were more important and thus English was marginalized. This

dimension adds to the already conflicting position of language teachers and their students who are required to achieve certain level of proficiency to reach their final goal of finishing their tertiary education.

5.2.2 Commodification of education, control and power

Another important finding in the research that adds to the above discussion was the commodification of education which is linked to the mandatory nature of the subject as well as the importance of learning English (4.2.1, 4.2.2). To explain this, I will first look at how exams exert control and power to serve institutional goals.

Data suggest (4.2.2) that a complex assessment scheme to demonstrate some level of proficiency does not necessarily foster learning. That is, Shohamy's (2006) contention that exams are social ways of manipulating behaviours and not only pedagogical tools, have "a strong impact on education and can determine social order" (2006: 93). Exams represent the controlling role that the institution has invested on the Language School which defines exam policies and decisions related to course content and teaching approaches. Shohamy elaborates as follows,

> It is the realization by those in authority that test takers will change their behaviors in order to succeed on tests that leads them to introduce tests to cause a change in the behaviour of those affected by the tests in accordance with their own priorities (Shohamy, 2001 cited in Shohamy, 2006:94)

This indicates a perpetuation of knowledge as commodity. Based on this, the conceptualization of knowledge seems to agree with Lyotard (1984):

> …knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold … consumed … the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its "use-value"…an informational commodity … (p. 4-5)

These views challenge a conception of learning as an intellectual process of reasoning carried out by individuals. It places value on an object that will become a useful commodity (Roberts, 1998). According to Roberts (1998:6) such a stance positions students as "rational, autonomous, utility-maximising" individuals following market rules. Under this perspective, education does not serve society, but it may be conceived a personal "private investment" (Roberts, 1998:7). It also means that the grading system becomes a trading ground where standardization of grades replaces learning; this seems to confirm findings presented in 4.2.2.

As became evident in this research (4.2.1), engaging in a process of learning English, as was identified by Schumann (1980) in a study of a language learner's diary, competes with subjects which in the future may translate into a well paid job. English does not receive the same treatment as other subjects (4.2.2, 4.2.1). Students' positions involve contradictions between fulfilling a requirement and becoming competitive within a discipline.

Time within these discourses becomes a kind of tangible object that relates to efficient time management (Macan, 1994) which leads to a reduction of tension, increasing performance and satisfaction; this explains students' concerns of wasting their time and lack of efficiency and satisfaction brought by time spent on subjects considered less important. As Bourdieu (1973) said:

> …entrance into the money economy…coupled with the discovery of time as something that can be wasted, that is, the distinction between empty, or lost, time, or well-filled time. (1973:83)

This argument supports constructions discussed in 4.2.1. Efficiency and time invested wisely become reasons for not studying English and demonstrates influences from disciplinary discourses mentioned in 5.1.1. Perhaps this means that students do not see English as part of their future work space. Trying not to fall into a deterministic view of social status given material conditions,

> Outlooks on the future [may] depend closely on the objective potentialities which are defined for each individual by his social status and material conditions of existence. (Bourdieu, 1960: 53 cited in Jenkins, 1992:28)

When time is linked to efficiency, investing it in something that is not valuable within a discourse community becomes an issue. The controlling agents, that is, members of discourse communities such as lecturers who change class times regardless of students' complaints against this practice (4.2), exercise symbolic control over students who would otherwise invest their time studying English. Bernstein (1990) defines symbolic control as:

> …the means whereby consciousness is given a specialized form and distributed through forms of communication which relay a given distribution of power and dominant cultural categories. Symbolic control translates power relations into discourse and discourse into power relations…I refer to a set of agencies and agents that specialize in discursive codes which they dominate. (1990:134-135)

According to this, not only disciplinary discourses appear to impact students' decisions, but power positions and relations. Accreditation and not necessarily engaging in learning English becomes a key issue where hierarchal positions of teachers or lecturers belonging to different disciplines challenge control and power exercised by language teachers and institutional policies. Appealing to Vygotskyan thinking, the findings confirm that:

> Learning is not dependent on teaching…with their emphasis on transmitting cultural knowledge and skills… [as a result] institutions often impede rather than facilitate learning…(Wells, 2000:56-57).

In other words, learning seems not to be the result of actions that only take place within a language classroom. It appears to involve more complex processes where influences such as hierarchies, through symbolic control, disciplinary discourses and contradictions, position language teachers in a less powerful situation when compared with other members of disciplinary discourse communities. As a result, it seems that these discursive influences challenge the important of learning English. Under these circumstances students find ways to finish their degrees without making an effort to learn English.

5.2.3 Resistance towards learning English

So far I have interpreted how influential discourses influence students' attitudes towards a subject that while being marginalized by some, is still mandatory as was evidenced in 4.2.2. For some authors, English as a commodity may also imply a pragmatic dimension that could give students future "control over a wide range of functionally crucial domains" (Kachru, 1996:146) which translates into:

> … a global vehicle that refuels at every stop, creates economic and other opportunities, and returns to its home bases, each time upping the financial ante for English users. English has become a global commodity that seems to have no sell-by date attached to it. (Pakir, 1999:104)

English may mean future opportunities, as Pakir contends, but this seems blurred in students' stories (4.2.2); the immediate advantages of developing their discipline seems more urgent as discussed above.

My contention is that some students do not perceive the pragmatic power of English with the necessary strength to seriously challenge disciplinary discourses and

contradictory discourses and thus they resist learning English. Some students avoid registering in the language classes (Evaristo 25'05, Rolando '05, in 4.2.1); instead, many search for strategies that fit institutional demands to comply with the rules. As research findings suggest, it is not a matter of totally disregarding the subject but subjecting engagement to a process of negotiation at the level of finding ways to survive without engaging in learning (4.2.1, 4.3).

Evidence suggests that resistance has more than the dimensions discussed above. Discourses of English as a commodity apparently compete with the value of students' first language (Rolando1'05, Rolando em'06); this could be related to "…a dimension of power, the economic power of English as an export commodity" (Kachru, 1996:147) which seems to undermine the importance of the first language as not being enough to become a specialized professional within a discipline.

Professionalism is a complex construct where knowledge and values are central (Hyland, 1996) influenced by disciplinary discourses and in this discussion it has at least two threads, one related to the students' major (Alondra 4'05 in 4.2.1) and a second one related to English teaching/learning (Evaristo 25'06, Etienne 10'05). To be considered professional in a field, individuals should undergo a process of qualification imposed by educational models (Hyland, 1996) accepted and recognized within disciplines. A professional field involves ethical dimensions of practice backed up by certification and proved professional knowledge and competence. Acquiring knowledge through work experience or practice is not considered enough; it is necessary to be competent and gain certification to become part of a profession. This may explain the disdain towards English in some discourses as some students' experiences with their language teachers at pre-tertiary and tertiary levels show:

> In secondary school the teacher was good…because she had earned awards[11]…she explained well… (Alondra 14'05)

And that:

> In high school I had a really bad teacher…he gave [taught classes] us for two semesters…homework…sometimes he checked them…other times he didn't care if

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[11] The word award may not be the right translation for this context. I would say that the student referred to the teacher as having some kind of certification.

> we had it…in the end, a short final exam…everyone passed…he didn't care…all of us had low grades…and they passed us…(Alondra 5'05)

Evaristo said that:
> [in secondary and high school] they didn't speak much in English, they didn't even pay much attention to what they were teaching you… (Evaristo'05)

In these extracts competence and professionalism of these language teachers is questioned. This may be another source of resistance strengthening disciplinary discourses discussed above.

All this seems to link with feelings of wasting time; a structural metaphor that involves the structuring of one kind of experience or activity in terms of another kind of experience or activity (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). That is, an individual does not waste time when it is used efficiently in terms of the importance of the activity being developed. But, as English appears to be a marginalized subject, time spent studying it, attending classes, working on it, is not perceived as time well spent (Etienne 10'05 in 4.2.1). It provides meaning and understanding where the value of learning a second language and becoming part of a discipline as a competent professional are involved, and time becomes an "accountable commonplace" (Shotter, 1993c:107) where the importance of other subjects becomes salient. However, not all positions adopted by the students in this study are the same or remain the same.

The level of engagement changed as students progressed in their studies (Raul 7'05, Rolando 10'06 in 4.4.4). Findings point out that experiences play a vital role in the process as learners move from a non-engaged position to one where engaging in learning may go beyond English as a useful commodity to suit present needs (Alondra 2em in 4.5.1). Thus, the role of experiences seems to raise students' awareness (see 5.5) which apparently involves re-constructing and creating one's discourse where resistance towards English is re-conceptualized. It could be a matter of planning for the future where the future is conceptualized as part of our schematic representation of life; time plays an important role in our future plans and discursive influences are constantly acting upon our actions either enabling learning or acting against it. Shotter explains:

> Our background ethos…determines for us, not only (i) our own ways of being ordinary, but also, in particular, what we think of as (ii) the imaginary, the nonexistent, the impossible, the extraordinary, as well as (iii) a whole range of things

we do not even notice that we do not even notice…things which our ways of perceiving, acting, talking, and evaluating fail to make visibly-rational to us…(1993a:38)

In other words, students' actions are the result of previous constructions as well as present ones in the social arenas where they interact. While constant re-constructions seem invisible, they take place in very particular ways for each individual as their voices show. Considering that individuals may plan their future based on their present views appears to be similar to Dornyei's (2005) model "L2 Motivation Self System" discussed in Chapter 2 linking identity, the self and personal experiences. This represents what students' would or would not like to become in the future. In other words, if individuals picture themselves as future English users, their motivation to learn the language in the present is enhanced by the representation of their future selves, present circumstances or environment as well as personal characteristics. Conceiving motivation in this way means that there is a dynamic interplay between present and future expectations, factors which constructs a dynamic system of motivation which would involve not only motivation, but language aptitude, learning styles and learning strategies (Dornyei, 2005).

If discourses are intrusive in the construction of reality then Gardner's influential socio-educational model which has informed the understanding of motivation for a long time (refer to Chapter 2,) seems to be challenged. The conceptualization of the social world of an individual in Gardner's model draws on theories where discursive influences are seen differently. It is the individual's agency and volition exercised based on personal differences, future goals and the social context that may trigger or impede learning. This means that all the influences coming from surrounding social arenas are influential but as seems evident in Gardner's definition of motivation to learn a second language the individual is the one responsible:

…the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity. (1985:10)

Thus, in traditional motivational models it is up to the individual to learn and what happens in the social world appears to have limited influence.

5.2.4 Challenging convictions

Another issue raised in the findings was the presence of attitudes that challenge convictions such as responsibility (4.2.2). Responsibility has commonly been placed as an individual accomplishment or the lack of (McNamee and Gergen, 1999) and data strongly support this construction (4.5.1, 4.5.2). However, this conceptualization displaces the interactional nature of everyday life and positions individuals as solely responsible for their actions as teachers seem to expect students to act upon the opportunities they provide; a view that would support Gardner's (1985) motivational model.

Social constructionism defends an alternative position (McNamme and Gergen, 1999). Responsibility is a shared construction dependent on the way people relate to each other and how relationships are understood as they create, value and sustain common meanings (McNamee and Gergen, 1999). This stance recognises power issues involved as well as discursive influences which may cause conflict with the collection of voices involved. From this perspective, because students' responsibility is perceived as coming from them (4.5.1, 4.5.2), being responsible could be taken as part of a monologic discourse; responsibility is bound to students' understanding of the discourse communities where they interact and thus they become subordinates (Sampson, 1993).

For Shotter who is informed by Vygotskian thought, being responsible relates to "knowing how to correct oneself if one goes wrong" (1993b:115); what is right or wrong is culturally defined and this is learned through mediational means; that is, through social interaction as students become part of discourse communities and the influences of discourses from members of those communities support the construction of realities.

When requirements are considered social constructions, acting as responsible individuals, in this particular case fulfilling the required level of English, implies fulfilling expectations. However, even though this could be seen as a straightforward action for those students who want to finish their studies, data show that expectations are not uniform. They appear to be diverse for different discourse communities. There are power positions at stake constantly challenged by those in disempowered

positions. Requirements involve responding in socially acceptable ways and these are context and culture specific depending on how individuals relate to one another (Shotter, 1993a). At the university, students are expected to study, learn, attend classes, be respectful towards their teachers, and do homework and many other aspects that are negotiated with each teacher or lecturer (4.5.1, 4.5.2). Codes of conduct are hidden or not obvious to outsiders but understood and agreed by actors within discourse communities.

Drawing on Gergen (1989a) who establishes responsibility as a social construction challenging monologic positions, acting as a responsible person and complying with obligations may entitle the individual a position as discourse user that serves personal purposes. It may be the result of expected and understood behaviours where power positions are challenged not only by present conditions and discourses, but by previous experiences in different social arenas where beliefs and values may play an important role as part of the tensions in the negotiating ground.

For some, responsibilities imply a constant pushing of boundaries (Evaristo 4'06, 4.2.1). Thus, responsibilities are defined by dominant discourses which exert symbolic control through agents (teachers and institutional practices) as defined by Bernstein (1990). But, I would argue that being responsible is also part of the construction of consciousness (Vygotsky, 1986) (see 5.5). Under these assumptions, students negotiate an engaged self in a process of learning English sometimes pushing boundaries which they probably would not push in other situations (4.2.2), but which may be a resource when there are powerful conflicting discourses involved. I conclude with a quote from Lillis who claims that:

> The goals of higher education can be described as monologic where the institutional and pedagogic practices are oriented to the reproduction of official discourses of knowledge… [which] signals a conception of the higher education community as broadly homogeneous…(2003:193)

The meaning of this is that power and control are the means to maintain certain social order without considering students' plurality.

Figure 5.1 shows a schematic representation of the discursive influences discussed in section 5.2 and the monologic subordinate relationship between these discourses and the language learners in this study where responsibilities are imposed on students and not co-constructed. The figure shows three forces that act upon students' experiences and which, in my opinion are one sided: the institution's, the language teachers' and discourses from different disciplines. Above these discursive forces, is the personal story of each individual which I conceive of a dialogical nature, the past is in constant dialogue with the present. The relationship between the three discursive forces around students portray them in dialogue, as they feed each other; however, not at the level of understanding each other, but at the level of influence towards each other. The most prominent discourses would be those of the institution as they exercise power and control over the other two. Data show that disciplinary discourses are more influential than English teachers' discourses; but given the mandatory nature of the subject, the latter cannot be disregarded by students.

Figure 5.1 Schematic representation of the discourses discussed in section 5.2
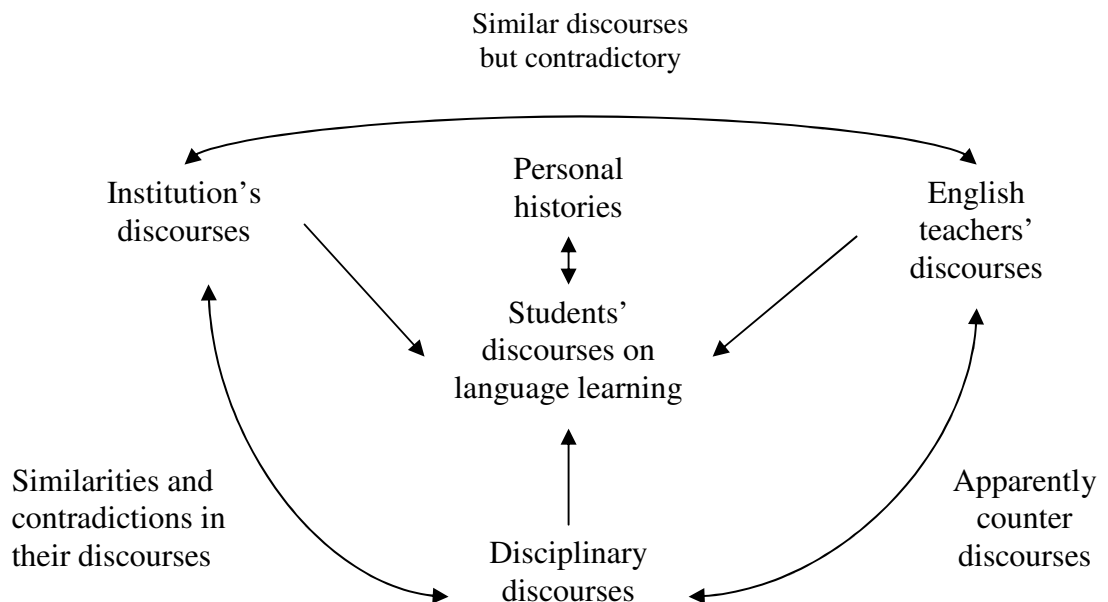
The discussion thus far affords some answers as to the nature of the factors that apparently deter the students who participated in this study engaging in learning

English; that is, learning a language as commodity, disciplinary discourses competing with learning a second language; also, the controlling nature of the exam scheme and the power positions of agents of control position students as subordinates. Being these all discursive influences, the discussion suggests that the nature of some of the difficulties these students encounter are discursive and thus socially constructed.

As I constantly revisited the data, I became more and more aware of the lack of understanding between teachers and students, and it seemed to be that rather than a dialogue, teachers and students were engaged in their own monologues. In trying to make sense of the data, the ideas of Bakhtin on 'monologism' and 'dialogism' which had not previously appeared to be of relevance to my study, became a central reference point. While Bakhtin has been related to aspects of language learning (Linell, 2005; Lillis, 2003, for example) there are not many studies (Nystrand et al, 2003 is one such study) which relate Bakhtin to teacher and student interaction.

Dialogue and monologue

In Bakhtinian terms, the base line of a dialogue is language used in social interaction as well as other semiotic cultural symbols:

> Considering language dialogically… means that our primary interest is not in language as a formal system but rather in language as it is used by people… engaged together in the many activities of their collectively organized life… we never use language, but always languages in the plural… and hence is heteroglot." (Sampson, 1993:114-115)

Being heteroglot, a dialogical conception of language is the result of multiple and diverse voices that position the self when interacting with others. Through Bakhtinian thought, it is possible to understand the multiplicity of voices present in discourse. Dialogues imply many truths and many voices; dialogues are a collection of discourses where many identities and realities are constructed through social interaction that bear influences of previous encounters, and thus cannot be detached from the histories and realities of every individual:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands

of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981: 276)

In this study, students construct their positions based on multiple discourses that influence their agency (4.2, 4.3, 4.4. 4.5). However, agency should be seen as the result of many influences:

> Utterances within each professional world "must be regarded primarily as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere…. Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known and somehow takes them into account." (Bakhtin, 1986:91)

Monologues on the other hand, involve conceptualizations of one truth and homogeneous realities. Sampson who appeals to Bakhtin contends that dominant social groups conceptualize the self as independent agent where "individualistic understanding of the person..." (1993:31) makes individuals responsible for their acts and their agentic capacity defines aspects such as being responsible, independent, autonomous or motivated. It displaces the individual self to give prominence to authoritative discourses; it subordinates the self (Lillis, 2003:198). That is, authoritative discourses dictate what is right or wrong, how individuals should lead their lives and move from being dependent to being independent, from being immature to reaching a point of maturity to make sensible choices and decisions:

> The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own: it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally: we encounter it with its authority already fused to it –it demands our unconditional allegiance. (Bakhtin, 1981:343).

As these authoritative discourses act as mandates they are monologic; they are forces that compete with dialogues. Bakhtin's conceptualizations of dialogues and monologues, given the different positions of power and control of different discourses, may be seen as forces constantly challenging each other because one seeks unified views while the other celebrates diversity which is constantly changing based on the constant interplay of words and meanings. The latter would be what Bakhtin called centripetal and centrifugal forces which are actually competing monologism and dialogism. While on one had, dialogism involves sharing meanings

(Holquist, 2002), monologism could well be seen as the opposite where awareness of others is not present, or as Holquist suggests, a type of autism (2002:52) which "aims for a single, collective self" which taking it to an extreme "no mediation is necessary since everyone's thought is in step with everyone else's. There is no difference between individual and society." (2002:53)

Based on my understanding of dialogism and monologism, negotiation becomes an important part of the process of gaining ownership of someone else's words. By negotiating grounds, I mean sharing responsibilities when trying to understand each other and thus making sense of each other words. This notion of negotiation differs from the conceptualization that many authors use when referring to negotiation in the language classroom which many times refers to form, pragmatic use of the language, and so on (Swan, 1985). These views of monologues and dialogues are of relevance to the discussion in the following sections of this Chapter as I discuss issues related to learning in terms of positions afforded by the group of students in this study in their language classrooms.

5.3 Learning as process vs. learning as product

The aim of this section is to portray how students and teachers construct separate realities within the language classroom as became evident in the data analysis when looking at students' and teachers' perceptions (4.3 and 4.4). Drawing on the definitions of monologues and dialogues presented above (5.2.4), my contention is that given the nature of ELT discourses, classroom dynamics are monologic and teachers and students hold their own monologues. To explain my view I will refer to findings described in Chapter 4, particularly sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 where several gaps between teachers and students became evident. But before that, I will present some views about learning which I consider relevant for the discussion on learning as process vs. learning as product. After that, I will explain my understanding of a narrow view of language as this is a key point to the discussion below.

Some views about learning

The discussion on process and product learning appears relevant at this point to frame teachers' and students' apparent behaviour in the language classroom. This

became evident through data constantly revisited; it had not previously appeared to be of relevance to my study. The views teachers and students have about learning seem to cause tensions in students' language learning processes when discussed from a Bakhtinian stance. Data from this study show evidence of students confronting a system that favours memorization and quantity of knowledge. Gergen (1995) describes traditional views of knowledge in exogenic and endogenic terms; while both positions consider a dualistic mind/body reality independent of each other; they are opposed in the sense that for exogenic views the mind is a mirror of nature (Rorty, 1979). From this perspective to acquire knowledge the individual must observe and develop the "ability to adapt to or succeed within a complex environment…the world is a primary given, and the mind operates best when reflecting it accurately." (Gergen, 1995:18). For endogenic views, on the other hand, "the mental world is self-evident… [it] places emphasis on the human being's intrinsic capacities for reason, logic, or conceptual processing" (Gergen, 1995:18). As a result of these conceptions of knowledge, education has different representations; while for exogenic perspectives students are seen as "tabula rasa upon which the educational process should inscribe the essential features of the world" (Gergen, 1995:19); for endogenic perspectives the educational emphasis is on rationality. It is not a matter of quantity but on how students rationalize the information presented.

An alternative position is to conceive knowledge as social construction and whereby learning becomes the result of social interaction at different levels as was discussed in the second part of Chapter 2. This position is fostered by Gergen (1995), Shotter (1993b), Lantolf (1993), Lantolf and Aljaafreh (2006), Lantolf and Thorne (2006), Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), Wells (2000) and many more. In the light of knowledge as a social construction, social interaction becomes central and language and other cultural symbols are key factors in the learning process. Many of these ideas are based on Vygotsky's (1986) views which foster socially mediated interaction to develop an individual's understanding and knowledge.

These views support a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective where education may be conceived as a dialogical development of knowledge; individuals appropriate social

languages and genres that are already in existence fostering plurality and change where differences are the rule rather than the exception.

A narrow view of language

A narrow view of language relates to the nature of language. While some linguists consider it useful to conceptualize language as skill systems such as speaking, listening, writing, reading, grammar and vocabulary, others foster a view of language as a socially meaningful system where interaction provides the opportunities to develop all its levels through its use given their interdependence (Mitchell and Myles, 1998). Within each tradition, there are variants, but the main difference is that the former holds a dualist view of knowledge while the latter questions such duality placing a key role on language in use (Gergen, 1995). The first view refers to what I have called a narrow view of language where different levels of the system of language are separated and according to some competence and performance as defined by Chomsky (1965) (competence refers to the abstract representation of language knowledge inside our heads which enables the individual to create and understand original sentences. Performance, on the other hand, mirrors the imperfect language competence of a learner) account for students' progress in the learning process. For others, the distinction between competence and performance does not exist (Firth, 1957 cited in Stubbs, 1996). The direct implication of these views is in the language classroom where formal instruction usually takes place.

Linguists like Krashen (1981, 1982), Sharwood Smith (1994), Long, (1985), Swain (1985) and many more foster a dualist view of language and many refer to the language process in terms of a metaphor that equates the mind to a computer using terms such as input, output, language transfer, systematisation, automaticity to mention some that have been very influential. This approach detaches the student from the social world where actual communication takes place and the way they have experienced their first language. The assumptions behind a narrow approach to language have important implications in the classroom. One of them is the transmission of knowledge from one person to another, a deterministic view of the world where culture and education can be learned and transmitted. This assumption opens the need of someone as the knower:

> …the teacher is a source of knowledge in terms of both the target language and the choice of methodology. In other words, the teacher is a figure of authority who decides on what should be learnt and how this should be learnt. (Tudor, 1996)

The roles that the teacher adopts leave students as recipients of knowledge who should have the mental ability to process it and execute it as necessary and, as the content is the key to learning, context and social interaction are set somewhere else, but not as key figures in the learning process. Wilson (2001) considers that the linguistic issues this view fosters are legitimate and important, but contends that if language is considered as "a living, breathing, sociocultural phenomenon… it is necessary to understand the nature of language itself and how it operates in the world… To do that, [students] need to study their own use of language and the way it's used by others". (2001:31-32). Dualist views of language as explained above seem to have been taken on board by advocates of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) despite the fact that those teaching approaches include pragmatics and sociolinguistic aspects of the language and not only language as skills; the position of the language teacher is that of the knower and the authority in the classroom. As Savignon states, CLT has improved but there is still a need for "full and widespread understanding of communication as negotiation [which] has been hindered" (1991:261). In other words, the discourses fostered within the language classroom seem to celebrate one side, that of the teacher. The data analyzed for this study strongly support that the CLT approach used in this institution does not go deep enough to promote negotiation of meaning to appropriate knowledge which together with the discursive influences discussed in 5.2 seem to overshadow an engaged position to learn English. These are aspects that I will discuss in the following section.

5.3.1 An issue of mutual misunderstanding: class objectives

Holding positions of control and authority not only in terms of discipline but as the ones who know (4.3, 4.4), teachers construct classroom realities around students' learning which are by nature monologic. Teachers decide upon their teaching approach based on their knowledge about ELT methodology which given the position of authority hold certain expectations; other aspects that may influence teachers are their personal beliefs about teaching and learning as well as social and

cultural background of the place where they teach. On the other hand, students' objectives do not only revolve around learning, but around other interests which influence their behaviour in class and seem to be partly resistant towards the mandatory nature of the subject and the different discourses discussed in 5.1, a discussion that stems from findings in 4.2 and 4.3; in this sense, it could be said that students' resistance acts as a monologue and competes with teachers' discourses.

5.3.1.1 Monologic objectives

Given their understanding of class objectives, teachers and students hold expectations about each other which discursively define classroom behaviours. For teachers, students should act upon the learning opportunities they provide (4.4, 4.5). They expect committed and engaged students who demonstrate through their exams that they have reached their objectives. Evidence shows that when these expectations are not met, students are constructed as lazy and lacking interest. On the other hand, students construct teachers as authority and controlling actors who are not necessarily interested in their individual well being (4.3). Teachers control content; they pace it and sequence it. They know what is best for students and students are recipients of their knowledge (4.3.1.2, 4.4.1, 4.5). This is a process that involves modelling, demonstration and reinforcement of learning where teaching implies a sequence of introducing prerequisites before more advanced material (Palincsar, 1998). This model may work for factual subjects, but for a language learning situation, evidence suggests misunderstandings between teachers and students. These seem to stem from teachers' positions of authority provided by ELT discourses and their expertise knowledge in the field which according to Johnson:

> L2 teacher education has long been structured around the assumption that teachers could learn about the content they were expected to teach (language) and teaching practices (how best to teach it) …and develop pedagogical expertise… (2006:238)

The differences discussed above seem to provide grounds where lack of understanding of each other's positions creates gaps because their discourses do not converge. Drawing on Sampson (1993) teachers' discourses are monologic and subordinate students. These constructions become the authoritative discourses fostered by teachers and which deny plurality among students. They are problematic because they set standards and unify individuals and their behaviour. This translates

into dissatisfaction and frustration on both sides. Establishing that none of the actors involved seem to foster understanding of each other, the teacher's position of control and authority is apparently resisted by students who, as a result, construct monologues (4.3, 4.4).

5.3.1.2 Students struggle: making sense of teachers' objectives

Data strongly suggest that teachers position themselves as those who know (4.4); as a result, students become receivers of such knowledge (4.3). While students perceive that there is more to language than compartmentalized knowledge (4.3.1), findings show that lack of negotiation grounds which would enable them to use the language at other levels, are not easily sought nor fostered by them (4.3.1) (I will discuss this below) or their teachers (4.5.1). Students become recipients of knowledge like in Freire's (1993) banking concept of education where the teacher deposits knowledge and students add it to their account. Freire argues that in this view, knowledge is predictable. That is, after achieving objective one, it is possible to move to objective two; an aspect that is fostered by a narrow view of language which maintains a monologue in the Bakhtinian sense because it is expected that all students will respond in the same way (Rolando, RER 3'05).

But, given the diversity in a classroom, the interpretations of objectives differ and this may explain students' struggle to connect exam content and material covered in the classroom (4.3), perceptions of having the same content year after year (4.2) and not advancing (Alondra 1em'06) or lack of learning (4.2.3) apparently cause marginalization and anxiety. The issue, however, seems to involve a perceived deeper meaning of language. Based on this, it could be argued that no matter how clear objectives in the language classroom are, the dialogical nature and richness of language use problematizes learning experiences of a second language, especially when there are few opportunities to negotiate meaning (4.3, 4.4.1). By lack of negotiation I mean not taking into account the personal history of the students who through their lives have made sense of the world through the words of others as they appropriate them (Bakhtin, 1981). This seems to link with students' attitudes and the use of Spanish in the language classroom which apparently triggered particularly engaged attention (4.4.2) and where teachers may 'assume a parental role to provide

more natural context for second language learning' (Canale and Swain, 1980:10-11). In this way, transfer of abilities acquired through experiences in the first language may become part of the second language abilities. From a Vygotskyan perspective as has been observed in a collection of research studies and reports (Swain, 2000; Donato and Lantolf, 1990; Brooks and Donato, 1994; Antón and DiCamilla, 1998, etc.), the use of the first language apparently mediates in the learning process of a second language. However, this view challenges practices at the Language School where the use of L1 is constantly rejected.

Experiences in the mother tongue differ from experiences in the language classroom (4.3.1.4) because the former in essence deal with language as means of communication with other people to make sense of reality and construct one's positions in the world; the self *is* through language and in language. On the other hand, language in the language classroom creates conflicts between the nature of first language experiences and the nature of understanding and knowing of a second language, a contention that appears to agree with Seedhouse's claim that the nature of a language classroom interaction is different to interaction in other situations because it does not meet the following characteristics:

> … the setting must not be an institutional one; turn-taking and participation rights in conversation must be unrestricted; responsibility for managing and monitoring the progress of the discourse must be shared by all participants; conversations are open-ended, and participants jointly negotiate the topic. (1996:18)

Similarly, experiences in Spanish involve constant negotiation and mutual understanding (even if it is partial and many times monologic) when constructing reality as each individual appropriates ideas and discourses, the classroom does not necessarily foster this (4.3.1, 4.3.1.1-4.3.1.4, 4.4-4.4.2).

5.3.1.3 Compartmentalization of knowledge

Students and teachers have to meet objectives set for their courses, a fact that cannot be changed but which involves compartmentalization and objectification of knowledge where order of learning the language becomes necessary (4.3.1, Raul 14'06, 4.4.1, 4.5.3). Teachers' responsibilities are those of the expert who provides learning opportunities (4.5), and students are responsible for learning through those opportunities. Responsibilities then are monologic (5.1.4) in the sense that teachers

are in control of those learning opportunities and students become subordinates; a position that may cause resistance to control and which has an emotional effect on students if gaps on previously taught objectives are found (4.2.3).

A reason for feeling at loss when there are gaps seems to involve the linear approach of compartmentalization. Order and linearity of learning (4.3.1) seem contradictory when considering that dialogical understanding is a co-constructed activity (Bakhtin, 1981) where linguistic outcomes are not sequentially organized ahead of time. The assumption that second language learning may be organized in stages may stem from Brown's (1973) contention of first and second language acquisition as a staged systematic process. This view has influenced ELT where several contentions like the Natural Order Hypothesis which foresees a fixed and predictable order of language acquisition independent of the level of difficulty (Krashen, 1982) make it possible to break a language system into small chunks of learning objectives to aid the learning of its whole. However, the social aspects of the language seem absent or too partial and limited from this view, and become problematic (4.4.1) because the deep essence of language is absent.

5.3.1.4 Monologic discourses

Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) claim that discourses emerge as a result of social experiences, one could say that an individual constructs dialogues between the self and others; responses from each other are answers to each other's interpretations and understanding of each other involves negotiation and appropriation of each other's words. Under this perspective, the language classroom as social ground is a co-construction of reality between students and teachers. But this construction becomes problematic when the meaning of language is simplified because opportunities to negotiate are absent in this deep sense (4.3.1, Rolando, RER 3'05, 4.4.3, 4.4.1). Similar to Sampson's references to man's constructions of woman as unequal partners, the teacher in the language classroom is the dominant figure and students become subordinates. Thus, the dominant teacher does not seem to foster spaces to negotiate and construct a dialogue; students 'struggle to discover who they actually may be' (Sampson, 1993: 142) in the language classroom. Thus, teachers' discourses

are monologues exercised through the implementation of certain practices which imply also certain expectations.

The perception of superficiality or shallowness described in 4.3.1, like when teachers use display questions, a strategy used to foster second language development within the field of ELT (Long, 1982) seem to further demonstrate a narrow view of language and its monologic nature. When teachers allow students to answer their questions, they often have in mind the answers they consider adequate, a commonly used sequence of initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) (Mehan, 1979) means 'to orient the students to the content to be taught' (Johnson, 1995:17), a characteristic of recitation teaching (van Lier, 1996). Despite perceived pedagogic usefulness or value of this type of questions and their appearance in mothers and teachers' conversations with young children (Swan, 1985); from a dialogical stance they are problematic because understanding is taken for granted and control over the pace and direction of instruction shapes instructions and learning (Christoph and Nystrand, 2001). Evidence suggests that students question an approach which does not involve true communication and understanding of each other (4.4.3, 4.5). The other option would be to use referential questions which in fact would connect teachers and students at a level where the teacher is not the knower anymore, but seeking information from and about students and vice versa. In fact, the use of referential questions would mean that both would have to negotiate understanding and the use of the language would probably be more complex and meaningful (Brock, 1986).
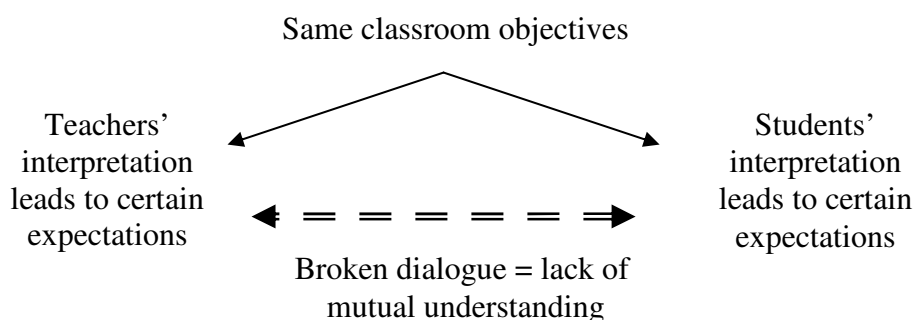
It is surprising that while students question the simplicity or superficiality of the language class, some adopt positions of invisibility or self-marginalization (4.2.3). These contradictions may be the influence of emotional constructions discussed in 4.2.3 and 4.4.

In those instances, students apparently accept being depositories of knowledge. That is, they choose not to participate. For the teacher, this translates into unfulfilled expectations of what a good learner should be (2.1.1). When students choose marginalized positions, they are constructing their own monologues suggesting that, as it is a chosen attitude, they exercise human agency (Raul 20'05, 4.4.2). It was a

decision made by the self to avoid a threatening situation as probable result of the monologic discourses in the classroom. According to Wells (2000), when students do not have opportunities to explore and engage with the theoretical aspects of learning as it becomes practical and thus significant to the individual, understanding may remain shallow (4.3.1). This could be an underlying reason in the difference between memorizing, learning and understanding (4.3.1.4), as well as the perception of always learning the same, not advancing (4.2.3, 4.3.1) and not taking the subject seriously (4.2.1) or marginalizing English (4.2.2).

In section 5.3 I have tried to bring in strings that emanate from findings in Chapter 4. Classroom objectives are interpreted differently by the teachers and the students who participated in this study as it is shown in Figure 5.2. Classroom objectives appear to be the same for teachers and students but which are interpreted differently by them. As a result, their perceptions of each other are problematic and cause tensions and monologic positions which apparently prevent understanding and an engaged position.

Figure 5.2 Interpretation of Classroom Objectives

Same classroom objectives

Teachers'
interpretation
leads to certain
expectations

Students'
interpretation
leads to certain
expectations

Broken dialogue = lack of
mutual understanding

The way classroom objectives are interpreted have implications in the teachers' and the students' behaviour. Teachers, on one hand, construct the objectives around the possible ways for students to learn English based on their understanding and interpretation of ELT discourses which call for compartmentalized input that may provide enough linguistic knowledge to become fluent in the language. At this level, some teachers apparently adopt authority and controlling positions given that they are the knowers. Based on these, they seem to expect students to act upon the opportunities they provide; they expect students to engage in learning the material

they present as responsible good learners. As discussed in Chapter 2, good students are those who fulfil expectations while individuals who do not fall within those groups are labelled lazy and lacking interest.

Students' perceptions of teachers' expectations do not converge. While teachers expect students to engage in learning the language, students consider that opportunities provided involve superficial use of the language with little and sometimes no space to negotiate understanding and gain ownership of meaning. The latter seems to be an influence of experiences with their mother tongue. It could be argued that for these reasons students may choose to become invisible in the classroom, a strategy to deal with the uncertainty of not understanding teachers' discourses. It is this lack of mutual understanding that I have called monological discourses.

5.3.2 A dynamic gap.

Several issues arise from the findings presented in section 4.4 to bridge the gap between teachers and students. One is some level of trust of the teacher (Raul 26'05, 4.4.1); a second one is an understanding of a need to engage in a learning process (4.4.4); a third one would be critical events using the language (4.4.4). On the other hand, there are also instances that open the gap even further. Lack of trust is one of them when students did not understand something and asked for clarification and teachers closed possibilities for negotiation/dialogue, or if there are signs of impatience. An example of the latter is when students tried to ask for clarification in English and the teacher would respond in Spanish (Lulu'05) with responses from the teacher like 'I already explained this, don't you study?' (Lulu'05). For the student, the teacher lacks patience and is not willing to establish real contact with the needs of her students and thus the student marginalizes her self avoiding situations prone to cause misunderstanding or tensions between them (4.2.3, Raul 17'05).

Apparently, students do not push boundaries to establish a negotiation process with the teacher and do not challenge the teacher's power position (4.4.3). Findings demonstrate the controlling nature of the teacher as dominant actor who defines gains from the power position she occupies as an agent of symbolic control

(Bernstein, 1990). This problematic situation keeps students at the margin where feelings of awkwardness and inability apparently become personal negotiation grounds, like using inner dialogues, rather than grounds to negotiate understanding of communication with others, in this case the teacher. As Volosinov (1973:93) contends,

> The organizing centre of any utterance, of any experience, is not within but outside, in the social milieu surrounding the individual being… Utterance as such is wholly a product of social interaction, both of the immediate sort as determined by the circumstances of the discourse, and of the more general kind, as determined by the whole aggregate of conditions under which any given community of speakers operates.

Volosinov places this issue on the discursive grounds where interaction takes place and where local conditions become vital within those grounds to achieve communication. As the teacher does not bridge the gap, the student decides to keep it that way and only negotiates with her self saying 'I am good at selling things' (Lulu'05). Saying this could be seen as enhancing the awareness that despite the difficulties faced in the classroom, the individual deals with other situations and does not feel helpless when turned down by the teacher. She has her own inner dialogue. As Volosinov explains,

> A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. (1986:25)

In other words, the teacher's response which seems to widen the existing gap was followed by a personal dialogue that would not have happened had the teacher responded in another way. This personal dialogue could be conceived in terms of the interpersonal/intrapersonal levels where we "become ourselves through others…and this applies not only to the personality as a whole, but also to the history of every individual function" (Vygtsky, 1966:43 cited in Shotter, 1993b). Thus, personal beliefs as part of the social interactive ground are under constant construction and re-construction (4.4.4, 4.5). This position challenges the concept of beliefs discussed in Chapter 2 that are said to impact people's motivation where internal cognitive processes play an important role in the beliefs held by people about their abilities (Hofer and Pintrich, 1997).

Taking Foucault's (1982) view that power relations are complexly intertwined, "taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point…

using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application…" (1982:780) a teacher in control opens a prospect for students to resists and assert their selves as able persons in other settings where they are in control and can negotiate to understand and avoid misunderstandings with others; this involves reference to other discourse communities where abilities are not challenged (Lulu'05); in this way, they draw on multiple voices (Bakhtin, 1981) as well as the teacher's voice to make sense of the experience of being a language learner who lacks expected ability to learn the language. For teachers and students to achieve understanding, both parties should get involved in a conversation where negotiation would take place through starting, maintaining and leaving the interaction (Fritz, 1991); this becomes a mutually constructed process (Freire, 1993; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1981; Pavlenko, 2002). Considering the type of classroom where participants interact, linguistic competence and language are detached from the social world; lack of linguistic knowledge and lack of opportunities to negotiate apparently prevent them from saying things that they would like to share with others.

I would argue that the responsibility to encourage students into developing their linguistic ability should be shared by teachers and students and as it is, teachers apparently, hold the responsibility because they are the ones who know (4.5). It seems obvious that in these cases, the sense of a shared responsibility is absent or not considered. Classroom experiences apparently trigger a collection of awkward feelings which some find unbearable and become reasons to drop out even before they reach threatening levels (Raul '05 and Raul 4'05, in 4.2.3 and 4.3.1). The positions that students find themselves in within the classroom and the lack of understanding between teachers and students could be partially responsible for these constructions.

There is evidence that points towards students being particularly sensitive about teachers' attitudes or remarks (Raul 8'05, in 4.3.1.3) where feelings of awkwardness and humiliation appear and which keep students silently creating a gap between them probably because classroom experiences are mainly monologic.

The idea of monologic experiences seems to contradict Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism. I would like to pose the idea that there are different possible dialogical responses. On one hand, responses which involve negotiation and understanding; on the other, simultaneous responses where negotiation and understanding are not sought, but which respond to each other. In this way, teachers who do not foster understanding their students in their classroom could be said to foster monologic classes where students usually realize that the teacher will not look for means to understand them (4.3); as a result, they keep to their own discourses, not seeking to be understood nor understand the teacher (Raul 20'05). I suppose that this is what Nystrand et al. (2003) call recitation and consider it as highly controlling. Monologism, for Bakhtin 'pretends to possess a ready made truth' (1984:110)

> In an environment of … monologism, the genuine interaction of consciousness is impossible, and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well. In essence idealism knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousness: someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil, which, it follows, can only be a pedagogical dialogue. (1984:81)

In other words, monologism is a deaf dialogue where no negotiation grounds are easily opened and where the controlling figure apparently widens a gap between individuals.

The issue discussed above has been discussed by Woods (1997) in terms of decision-making processes where students decide when to participate, do their homework, and other actions in and out of the language classroom. Even though this author does not explain it in terms of monologues and dialogues, I would argue that teachers' positions are monologic because according to the author, many times teachers are not aware of students' decisions. While students' actions could be seen as monologic, they are in fact a dialogical response to a monolog and as mentioned in this chapter, an example of the exercise of human agency. Similarly, teachers' responses to students' monologs are dialogical. Kramsch on the other hand, explains something similar in terms of:

> "There will always be a struggle between the teacher whose charge it is to make students understand… and the learners who will continue to use transmitted knowledge for their own purposes who will insist on making their own meaning and finding their own relevances. This struggle is the educational process *per se*" (1993:239).

Another interesting issue that monological classes may pose is the possibility of self regulation as was mentioned above. Drawing on Vygotsky, McCafferty (1994) notes that for Lantolf (1993)

> …the importance of the concept of self as linguistically constituted, this taking into account the need of the individual to find a "voice" in the new language as part of the process of becoming self-regulated (McCafferty, 1994:424)

This means that the absence of a negotiating space in the monological classroom may not support students finding their voice as the process of private speech is seldom fostered and as above, it may be necessary to find other discursive communities to assert the self (Lulu '05).

In this section I tried to make evident through students' voices that teachers hold positions of authority and control which may create a gap between them. This may be bridged or enhanced by either of them through pushing established boundaries which seem to be the result of the dialogical nature, not necessarily verbal, of the classroom. Negotiation grounds that if seen as mediators seem to empower students may support the construction of a more confident self.

The meaning of a more confident self could be translated into better reception of teacher led activities for students and as they respond to these, a more positive teachers' perception about students. Resisting teacher control in a variety of ways seems to be a response to the gap between teachers and students where marginalization or peripheral participation in their communities of practice involves lack of mutual understanding, hence their monologues apparently seldom intersect or if they do, those opportunities are not necessarily exploited.

5.3.3 Negotiating grounds: the meaning of group and pair work

Another finding in sections 4.4 and 4.3 linked to narrow views of language that became salient is pair and group work (4.3.1). Considering that for some the value of this type of interaction does not correspond to the teachers' objective and some perceive it as an opportunity to memorize routines and not as opportunities to negotiate meaning and understanding (4.3.1), this interaction is not valued as a means to go beyond the structural level of language. Data show evidence of teachers fostering the use of this type of interaction (see 4.3.1) which supports the importance

of small group activities that several authors encourage to enable linguistic development (Johnson et al, 1993; Sharan and Sharan, 1992; Slavin, 1983). But, this is not necessarily perceived by students as an opportunity to expand linguistic repertoires (4.3.1.3) and gain what has been labelled as automaticity, a word that hints at a mechanistic view of language that Schneider and Shiffrin conceptualize as 'automatic processes' that

> …do not require attention, though they may attract it if training is appropriate, and they do not use up short-term capacity. They are learned following the earlier use of controlled processing that links the same nodes in sequence… controlled processing is a temporary activation of nodes in a sequence that is not yet learned… controlled processing is used to facilitate long-term learning of all kinds, including automatic processing. (1977:51-52)

Schneider and Shiffrin's conceptualization apparently means that students are individuals whose thoughts and processes are carried out quickly and efficiently; such processes take place in people's heads. While these processes appear to be part of the learning path, for students of a second language, this view implies that to develop language proficiency and be able to communicate with others, it is necessary to achieve automaticity. However, the pedagogical implication of this view is in line with the discussion in 5.2.1 of linear growth and compartmentalized controlled knowledge which appears to be powerful and overshadow the social construction of language and which may mean that a more balanced cognitive and social teaching approach should be fostered (Candlin, 2001). This type of work may be threatening, (4.2.3) some go to extremes to avoid it (4.3.1.2, Raul'05 and '06) and adopt an invisible position and thus, for the teacher they appear as unmotivated. But, I would argue that within a personal niche, a safe space is constructed (see 4.2.3, 4.3.1.3), a position where negotiating meaning and understanding is not available but which demonstrates the exercise of human agency as a result of a dialogical construction of reality. My understanding of agency in this instance brings Bakhtin (1981) in who contends that appropriation of someone else's words is the result of social interaction in the sense that beliefs, personal experiences and histories are always present in someone else's utterances as well as within the individual who is gaining ownership. Then, this dialogue between the self and others determines our exercise of human agency. Thus, it is loaded with personal histories as well as influences of surrounding environments, in this particular case, the institution's discourse communities and

practices which are contradictory as was discussed earlier (5.1.1). Considering students as agents is problematic because agency involves the self as the one acting upon a reality and may not involve power and control issues discussed so far. But, evidence has brought to the forefront the presence of resistance at different levels and this may be linked to a level exercising human agency which foresees possibilities of changing positions like the ones I identified in this study (5.4). It has been argued that students avoid situations where they would be positioned by peers as not knowing (Norton, 2000; Shamim, 1996), however, in some cases as above, it is the student who promotes such a position (Raul 20'05, in 4.4.2).

While evidence pointed out lack of negotiating grounds, there were other instances where spaces to negotiate were opened by teachers (Raul 26 '05). These apparently fostered deeper understanding of the language and not only automaticity. An example of these was discussed in 4.4.3 where a more advanced student collaborated with her peers mediated in the understanding of both parties. The same seems to be the case when teachers express some interest in an individual's development or needs (4.4.1); gaps between them are bridged and students dare to ask questions and negotiate understanding. My contention is that when teachers open spaces where students are empowered, gaps may be bridged and collaborative work is enabled which serves as scaffolding. Students and teachers construct a dialogue where negotiation and understanding apparently takes place. The process apparently involves teachers giving up power and control.

Findings insistently point towards the lack of space to negotiate understanding which drawing on Vygotsky and Bakhtin is essential for knowledge development as "speech is an expression of the process of becoming aware" (Vygotsky, 1986:30), "the second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining effect on all the present and visible words…for each present, uttered word responds and reacts…to the unspoken words of another person" (Bakhtin, 1984:197). In other words, not having spaces to negotiate may involve few opportunities to develop awareness, internalize or appropriate others' words and as a result little involvement or engagement.

Not having opportunities to negotiate understanding, either with the teacher or with other students, as discussed earlier (4.2.3, 4.3.1, 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.3, 4.3.1.4, 4.4, 4.4.3), underlines the recognition that multiple research studies seem to give to the importance of language beyond its structural level in the learning process (Wells, 2000). Negotiation envisages the process of mediation as conceptualized by Vygotsky where a more able individual supports the development of learning. Also, it envisages a dialogical construction of classroom activities where teachers' and students' discourses converge. The contention that through pair/group work students will be able to reach some level of automaticity implies a cycle of work towards accuracy based on structural knowledge of the language (grammar) and work towards fluency (based on the use of language in terms of functions, for example). It could be said that the Vygotskyan view of negotiation is also involved in this type of interaction. However, data suggest that teachers and students do not appropriate the language they use in those activities to negotiate; they are used to practice linguistic repertoires that are not meaningful enough to be appropriated by participants.

Following this train of thought, I would like to add that if students do not perceive pair/group work as spaces that promote appropriation of other voices, then interaction may be equated to the teachers' IRE routines where there is linguistic *input* and *output* (following the mechanistic metaphor). However, given that topics or questions and *possible answers* (when setting examples) are decided by the teacher, it is only the teacher's voice that directs the interaction. Seen from this perspective, pair and group work becomes part of the teacher's monologue where spaces to "accommodate and promote the refraction of voices representing differing values, beliefs, and perspectives" (Christoph and Nystrand, 2001:252) are absent. Thus, it is not surprising that students are uncomfortable when they are not sure of the *correct answer* (4.4). Correct answers suit teachers' expectations and voice, but not students' understanding and appropriation of those words. In this way, language becomes a superficial set of grammatical structures and not a means to communicate and interaction through pair and group work an option to mechanically reproduce it.

According to Lantolf (2006) who draws on Vygotskyan thinking, negotiation is socially mediated. It evolves through social interaction where not "just a system of a

person's individual functions, specifically, systems of social connections and relations, of collective forms of behavior and social cooperation" (Vygotsky, 1999:41) are at work as individuals construct new knowledge and understanding. Thus, understanding involves a constant dialogue between people to appropriate each other's words where many influences are complexly linked and at work simultaneously. In Lantolf's words "Speaking (and writing) activity can function as a mediational artifact ….Linguistic signs may also be outwardly directed… as well as inwardly…" (2006:60). These theses support the importance ELT gives to pair and group work. However, as evidence shows and as discussed above, the level of negotiation in the classroom is not sufficient to appropriate the language. Participants of pair/group work do not seem to use language in a process of mutual understanding, but as means to reach linguistic automaticity, grammatical structures or functions set by class objectives towards which teachers define classroom activities (4.3.1).

Drawing on Bakhtin (1986), there are multiple voices within these discourses; ELT discourses which are voiced through language teachers' discourses, institutional discourses and their contradictions which are voiced through students' and teachers' discourses and the discursive baggage that each individual brings to the classroom (4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). However, given subordinate positions at different levels, these discourses become monologues which at some points interact dialogically but which do not necessarily appropriate each others' words. Under these assumptions, teachers as subordinates of ELT discourses hold certain expectations of the type of attitudes and beliefs students should have in order to be good learners as was discussed in Chapter 2. Within these discourses, students should respond in specific ways to the opportunities given by teachers. Not doing so positions them as lazy and unmotivated (4.4, 4.5).

There are two main arguments in the discussion of this section. One points out the level of mediation that pair/group work involves in the development of linguistic knowledge based on Vygostky's ideas. The other suggests that hegemonic discourses subordinate teachers and these subordinate students creating monologic relationships. Some problems with these two views are the level of interaction between students and teachers and the preconceived ideas about the outcomes of activities set for

language classes which are part of their multivoicedness (Wertsch, 1991:13), the dialogical nature of voices which "presupposes more than one voice" present in everybody's discourses, a view that follows Bakhtinian thought. A side argument would be the linguistic superficiality promoted by some pair/group work activities.

5.3.4 Inner dialogues: another level of negotiation

Findings in sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 from Chapter 4, strongly show a wide array of dynamic positions students adopt and which appear to be influenced by discourses at different levels. Evidence also demonstrates that students talk to themselves (4.2.4). Drawing on Vygotsky (1986), personal dialogues act as mediators in the process of making sense of discursive contradictions and understanding new knowledge. Even though these dialogues are present in everybody's experiences, they seem especially important for individuals who find the process of learning English complicated and appear to use them to assert their selves, as data suggest (4.2.3, 4.2.4).

From a traditional perspective, reactions towards threatening situations would be linked to personality characteristics, trait anxiety which categorizes people as worriers (Hilleson, 2000). Even though anxiety is seen as a dynamic construct, the way it is conceptualized presents it as something difficult to overcome, an issue that seems to be contested by the evidence, and the inner dialogue mediates enhancing one's confidence. Thus, lacking confidence does not seem to mean "end of the story, I cannot learn English". Students face difficulties, but the dynamic nature of their confidence leaves spaces that allow them to overcome those difficulties as they recognize strengths and weaknesses (Alondra em2 in 4.2.3). Personal dialogues are reassuring means that encourage students to continue and not give up on something that seems important (4.2.4). They are conversations between two selves, *you* and *I* as personal negotiation and understanding takes place.

According to Vygotsky (1986) there are two levels of negotiation, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Language and other symbolic tools (Lantolf, 2006:59) function as mediators at both levels. Language mediation, for scholars who follow Vygotskyan ideas like Lantolf,

> …control thinking because of what Vygotsky called the reversibility of the linguistic sign…[they] may also be outwardly directed toward other individuals and may influence, or regulate in some way, those who are the object of our speaking… [and] may also be inwardly directed to the goal of self-regulation (Vygotsky 1997b:62)… [they] have the power to 'radically reconstruct[s] the whole mental operation' of others and of ourselves and in this way 'broaden[s] immeasurably the system of activity of mental functions' (ibid.). (2006:60)

That is, language mediates between the mind and the social world through interpersonal dialogues, while it also mediates within the self through intrapersonal dialogues to internalize new thoughts and emotions encountered through interpersonal interaction (Lantolf, 2006:153) and thus transforming previous constructions into meaningful new understandings. Winegar defines internalizations as:

> …a negotiated process of development that is co-constructed both intra- and interpersonally. As such, it is a process of reorganization of the person-environment relationship that itself emerges with person-environment relationships. (1997:31)

Looking at the data as a chronological development of positions, at the beginning of the project several students constructed positions that rejected learning English. As the study progressed and I interacted more with students and they voiced their experiences, it is possible to see how their positions and views changed. I would say that this is evidence of how they simultaneously negotiated new positions within their selves through interpersonal interaction. This stance, however, is problematic when considering appropriation. However, I would like to pose the possibility of considering internalization as appropriation of multivoicedness, a dialogic concept in Bakhtinian terms (Bakhtin, 1981). Thus, appropriation or internalization affords the self changing positions as a result of social interaction and intrapersonal dialogue. The process that appears to give meaning to new positions that serve to assert the self and raise confidence becomes dependent and interconnected with the self and the social arenas where individuals interact and all the discursive influences present. The latter seems to support findings where contradictions are present within internal dialogues making evident the complexity of processes of making sense of experiences.

5.4 From the margins to peripheral participation in a community of practice

So far I discussed how monologism apparently impacts the students' learning process in different ways where different discourses interact in sometimes contradictory ways. I also mentioned how power and control are involved in those monologic experiences where tensions are created and resistance is also present. In section 5.3.4 I presented my views on the role of inner dialogues as part of the process of changing positions and asserting the self. In this section, my contention is that the process of engaging in learning requires becoming conscious or aware of processes involved in learning development and where interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues play a key role from a dialogical stance. This discussion directly links to section 4.4.4 in Chapter 4 where I presented evidence of students' changing attitudes towards learning English.

Findings suggest that students adopt marginalized positions either as self chosen or are marginalized by others (4.2.3). These positions prevent them from becoming part of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Given that those positions proved to be dynamic (4.4.4), my claim is that there is a process of becoming an active participant of a community of practice ('conceptualized as groups who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly…'(Wenger, 2007)).

The process of becoming aware involves mediation between collective practices and the learning process when participants are mutually engaged. Sharing resources developed during joint efforts involves acting within a dialogical system of negotiation as perceived by Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky (1986). Shotter interprets Bakhtin's ideas as follows:

> …our awareness is located in that point of contact between a word's use and the responsive effect it achieves (or is meant to achieve)… the ordering of our utterances must be negotiated with the others around us in ways which they find intelligible <u>and legitimate</u>. If we do not negotiate our ordering of our utterances with them, if we do not address them in a way which is responsive to their concerns, there is no point for them in what we say and we cannot hope to have them respond to it in any way. (authors emphasis) (1992:10).

And Vygotsky's views are seen as more than

> …a simple transference or the creation of an inner plane of consciousness… but the constitution of a distinctly…mode of being. In learning how to be a responsible

> member of certain social group, one must learn how to…perceive, think, act, and to experience one's surroundings…"(Shotter, 1993b:75)

My understanding is that in dialogical terms students raise their awareness through social mediation as they open opportunities to negotiate (4.4.4). Thus, lack of negotiating spaces in the language classroom as the study suggests may mean not only lack of appropriation of the language being learned, but lack of awareness to understand or reflect about the objectives of the activities carried out in class. Consciousness is conceptualized by Shotter and Billig (1998) as:

> …consciousness is dialogically constructed… operating, not within the heads of individuals, but in our use of certain words at certain times in certain ways…attention, or consciousness, is drawn dialogically to certain issues, in the very words we use, it is drawn away from others. (1998:5)

Based on this understanding, the construction of awareness involves necessarily interpersonal contact which according to Vygotsky (1986) is part of the process of turning public knowledge into private understanding, as it becomes part of the intrapersonal negotiation ground. This is my understanding of a dialogical process between the public arena and the private one which then is translated into actions that support learning and well being, or as a participant said "If I keep trying to learn English, I think I'll succeed" (Raul 18'05) and this meant attending CAADI workshops and interacting with other students in class (Raul 14'06) where previous constructions about personal abilities are reconstructed. Changes in positions previously adopted are influenced by lived experiences. This translated into engaging in learning English and also positioning the self as empowered individuals where attending CAADI workshops and asking for support became a means to maintain the self engaged in learning English.

 In contrast to positions described above, others persisted on resisting engagement (informal conversation with Evaristo, January 2008). After a year, at the end of 2007, he was forced to stop his studies and will only be able to continue and finish if he passes his English courses. This particular participant constantly resisted engaging in his classes and was still blaming his teachers for failing the courses. This position seems to add to the meaning of making an effort. While some take a stance of engaged participants, this participant became a bystander waiting to see the results of his lack of engaging. As Shotter explains:

> Our 'inner' lives are, thus, structured by us living 'into and 'through,' so to speak, the opportunities or enablements offered us both by the 'others' both around us, and by the 'audiences' we have internalized within ourselves from operating within different bounded spheres of communication. (1992:3)

The meaning of making an effort appears linked to levels of awareness constructed through experiences within discourse communities. While this participant keeps a disengaged position not only in English but in other subjects (Evaristo '05), other students become participants of different discourse communities where engaging involves becoming aware that passing a subject is not possible without engaging in its learning (4.4.4). Vygotsky's views on the nature of consciousness shows the importance of previous experiences as mediatory devices in its development:

> …awareness and deliberate control appear only during a very advanced stage of the development of a mental function, after it has been used and practiced unconsciously and spontaneously. In order to subject a function to intellectual and volitional control, we must first possess it. (1986:168)

Vygotsky places consciousness as part of the social contact with others. Similarly, Bakhtin (1984) considers that consciousness develops through interpersonal negotiation, thus under constant construction:

> …the idea is interindividual and intersubjective…a living event which is played out in the point where two or more consciousnesses meet dialogically (1984:72)

For Bakhtin (1984), it is a back and forth dialogue between present and past experiences creating new consciousness, however, not within the individual but in an interstice between the individual and the social. My understanding of these quotes leads me to believe that students go through a process where their awareness of what taking language classes is about changes as they experience it, but not only in the language classroom but in the social arenas where other discourses either support it or reject it. Depending on their personal experiences and constructions as they make sense of the world, they may go from lack of engagement and a pass-the-subject only to a need or perhaps desire to learn and engage as they fail to reach their objective; the opposite is another possibility where the experience may prove counter productive in terms of engagement (Rolando 13'06, Lulu '05).

Based on these views, the social realms where students have to negotiate their positions are key factors in the construction of awareness. I would argue that given the discursive tensions and contradictions, previous experiences as language learners,

awareness about learning English for many seems to be, at first, linked to finding ways of passing the subject than actually engaging in learning. This could be due to many factors like the symbolic control within the local hierarchy that other-subject-teachers apparently hold as well as the effort to reach a level of competence that will translate in becoming part of the power force once they become qualified, among others.

5.5 Students' safe spaces to voice concerns

In this section I shall discuss an issue that was totally unexpected and surprising. This issue poses ethical problems where the researcher faces a moral and ethical dilemma. The idea of safe spaces occurred to me once I established a trusting relationship with participants, and noticed that they were not only telling me about their experiences as language learners; they were also sharing personal issues related to their lives outside school (Fieldnotes November'05). In a sense, they put me in the position of a counsellor. I found this position difficult to handle; not being a trained counsellor, I could foresee problems stemming from it and this made me feel overwhelmed. However, I thought that it was significant that students shared their personal problems. One of the aspects that I worried about was not so much my ability to listen to them, but the adequacy of my responses; this makes evident my lack of awareness of the importance of a dialogical space. Given the diversity and private matters that they shared, I will not provide evidence of actual voices. However, I would like to discuss our conversations from Bakhtinian and Vygotskyan points of view where researcher and participants apparently managed to establish dialogical spaces to negotiate understanding that led to solutions in some cases and feelings of satisfaction in others (Kate'05, Etienne'05, Evaristo'06, Lulu'05, Alondra'06, Raul '05, Rolando'06). Even though I did not provide actual solutions, it seems that through questions and long pauses, we managed to bridge the gap that speaking to a researcher involves.

I believe that students were not really seeking answers from me, but spaces to voice their issues in a safe space. By safe I mean not being judged, knowing that what is said is confidential and remains confidential and perhaps the attached support that having someone that listens brings. In this sense, safe spaces become arenas where

the dialogical nature of interactions mediates in the solutions individuals find for their problems.

According to Boostrom (1998) using a metaphor of safe space enables one to attend to phenomena that might otherwise remain unnoticed. In his study, Boostrom identifies several characteristics of safe spaces in classroom life:

> (1) we are all isolated, (2) our isolation is both physical and psychic, (3) we can become less isolated by expressing our diverse individuality, and (4) students thrive in a classroom in which individuality is freely expressed. (1998: 398)

Safe spaces may be seen as allowing individuals to find comfort, a '…shared place to play with life as one actually experiences it; a place where others recognize, acknowledge, respect one's experiences, the self requires these and is constituted in them' (Kerr, 1996:47 in Boostrom, 1998). Safe spaces apparently build an environment where individuals feel trusted and may trust others 'as the self grows' (Boostrom, 1998:401) with a feeling of being acknowledged. However, these spaces may also involve a process of vulnerability as one confronts issues that are problematic but part of the process of understanding our selves. Thus, this process reminds me of Vygotsky's relevance of social interaction to develop consciousness and understanding of reality and reach a point of self regulation. In Bakhtinian terms, a safe space may mean a space where one can appropriate other people's words. I think that the relevance of these safe spaces in the students' experiences lies in the need to think about the role of a teacher beyond the classroom as well as within the classroom. This seems to be the point made by Allwright and Bailey (1991) when they talk about receptivity and openness and which van Lier considers 'a richer view of motivation' (1996:105) or Norton's (1995) concept of investment, placing as part of the equation social aspects that other conceptualizations do not consider and which enhance our understanding.

This chapter has served as a discussion ground for the findings identified in Chapter 4. It has outlined discursive influences that may have some bearing on students' experiences as language learners. It has also shown how monologic positions may affect engaging. The prominence of safe spaces as sites to negotiate understanding and become aware of what it takes to engage was also discussed.

The discussion involved issues that were unexpected. At the beginning of the discussion, I was aware of a number of contradictions present as well as existing gaps between students and their teachers. However, this discussion brought to the forefront first the importance of looking in depth at a phenomenon to uncover some of its complexity. Once this complexity became more patent, the discussion has served to understand the complex issues involved and a number of assumptions and discourses behind them which in turn provide the grounds to enhance my admiration of the awesome ability that students develop to make sense of their realities. Now, I will continue with the last chapter of this thesis where I first draw on the discussion in Chapter 5 to answer the research questions and also look at possible implications at different levels to conclude this study.

Chapter 6

In Search of a Dialogical Experience: Implications and further discussion

This final chapter of my thesis draws on the discussion of all previous chapters as it tries to put into perspective the implications that the findings presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5 may bring to the context where the study took place and also to the larger picture, the understanding of the language learner. I shall first offer answers to the research questions as these opened doors to understand the phenomenon of a small group of students and their English teachers. Then I shall consider implications of this research at different levels, particularly at the institution where the study took place but also implications for the understanding of the language learner as an interactive social participant of a collection of social groups. Finally, I will conclude by discussing possible future research areas.

6.1 Revisiting the research questions.

I began this research project with the intention of finding ways to motivate undergraduate language learners whom I perceived lacking interest and being unsuccessful. My exploration implicated moving from a deterministic perspective to an interpretive stance in search for a deeper understanding of a small group of students' experiences learning English. A reconsideration of the initial research questions gave me the opportunity to dig deep into the phenomenon that I investigated.

I may not be able to provide a clear answer to the main research question *What is the nature of undergraduate students' experiences as language learners when English is a mandatory subject?* However, I believe that the findings and the discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively provide an insight of the complexity involved in the phenomenon. From the standing position of this study, I was able to identify discursive influences that affected an engaged position. I would argue that a main point involves failing dialogues at different levels. This assumption leads to answers to the other four research questions:

1. What factors enable or deter students in engaging in learning English?

To answer this question I will begin spelling out the factors that I consider enable students engaging in learning English. First, the nature of the relationship they establish with their language teacher appears to have an important bearing on their level of engagement.

A second factor seems to be the opportunities students have to raise their awareness about the process implicated in learning English, that is the level of engagement it involves, as well as becoming conscious of the consequences that not engaging may have on their experiences as tertiary students. In other words, consciousness may act as counter discourse of other important discourses that apparently militate against an engaged position.

A third factor that appeared to be beneficial in students' level of engagement was the construction of safe spaces which became social arenas to enhance their awareness.

Factors that apparently deter students from engaging seem to be the discursive contradictions within the institution. These seem to provoke competing positions between engaging in learning and engaging in a process of finding ways to obtain credits without engaging in learning.

A second factor appears to be the monologic positions teachers and students adopt which do not necessarily foster mutual understanding. Their monologues mutually disregard each other as far as the interest each one of them may have towards the other.

As third and fourth factors that appear to act as counter discourses when looking at engaging in learning English are the level of control and power exercised by teachers.

Aside from these, there is the issue of exercising agency. Students' agency appears to be a double edged blade. Agency appears to be used sometimes to support engaged positions and at times, it is used to marginalize the self within the classroom.

2. What is the nature of the difficulties they face?
The nature of the discussion in this study points towards discursive influences. I would argue that even though I have made a distinction between discursive contradictions at the level of the institution and monologues within the language

classroom, both levels involve lack of dialogical understanding where the objectives of the people involved seldom converge as was made evident in 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 and explained in 5.3. At the level of the institution, there are policies and practices (4.2 and 5.2) that could be said to work against engagement which drawing on Bakhtinian thought, are monological in nature. In practical terms, I would argue that those practices and policies do not establish a dialogue with the experiences that students go through and thus appear not to support their learning journeys in a way that could foster engagement in a wide range of academic matters. Rather, some disciplines appear to be more important than others and thus celebrated (4.2, 5.2).

At the level of the language classroom, and as I argued in Chapter 5, ELT discourses apparently fail to dialogue with students' interest, objectives, needs and complexity in general (5.3); this failed dialogue appears to foster simplified views of language. Somewhere in the conceptualization of interaction within the language classroom, ELT discourse appears to have failed to open spaces for negotiation of understanding. The lack of spaces for negotiation could be said to prevent students from gaining ownership of other individuals' words with whom they may interact (4.3); instead, negotiation of understanding is used as an opportunity, in many cases, to gain linguistic automaticity of the teachers' words without delving into deeper understandings of the language (5.3).

Even though I consider that my conclusions provide further understanding of this phenomenon, they should be cautiously considered because as with any qualitative study, the stance adopted and the researcher's subjectivity are key aspects to consider. In other words, these results may be different if someone else undertakes this study and adopts a different approach. Another aspect to take into consideration is the situatedness of a qualitative research project. This means that it is necessary to relate the results to the socio historical moment and the bounded nature of the study.

3. How do students perceive their teachers, their classes, the language?
Students' perception about their teachers is complex (4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). Teachers are perceived as controllers and knowledge transmitters (4.3). These two aspects position them as far reaching figures with objectives that are not shared by students (5.3). This causes gaps that both, students and teachers, do not seem to bridge. My

contention is that the reason for not bridging those gaps is fostered by their monologic positions. Teachers' monologic positions are apparently sustained by positions of power and control which are also fed by prominent ELT discourses that set standards and ways of being of, for example, "the good language learner".

Classes then, apparently become means to obtain necessary credits and not necessarily as opportunities to learn English (4.2, 5.2). Learning English is perceived as a commodity (5.2.2) and this seems to strongly influence the level of engagement.

4. Is there agreement in teachers' and students' perceptions?
The discussion suggests that teachers and students participating in this study perceive each other in significantly different ways (4.5.3). They appear to disagree at several levels as became evident in the way objectives are seen, for example. Teachers' perceptions about their students' attitude towards the language class and their interest towards the class, the language, its learning, seem to draw them apart, as well (5.3). That is, each party appears to have monologic positions that seldom intersect. Further disagreement seems to be the motives behind classroom interaction; while for teachers interaction is a key instrument to gain linguistic proficiency (4.3), for students, it seems to be a means for superficial learning (4.3, 4.4).

The issues involved point towards the importance of dialogue within the language classroom and to discursive influences outside the language classroom. These factors suggest reasons for not engaging which are intertwined with perceptions about language teachers, other subject teachers and the nature of language (5.2, 5.3). Findings point to disagreements between students' and teachers' perceptions which create gaps. Data suggest that some students who participated in the study raised their consciousness about their personal engagement (5.3.4) in learning English and what learning a language involved through the creation of safe spaces (5.5) where they were involved in a process of making sense of their reality.

I would argue that even if the research questions were not fully answered through the research carried out, first because that was not the aim of the study and secondly because reality is always under construction, the study provides important insights to the understanding of how this small group of students construct language learner

positions. Now, I will present some possible implications of the answers found at different levels.

6.2 Implications for the institution

In this section I shall look at implications of my research within the university at four levels: Institutional practices, Tutoring, Classrooms and Teacher education. The relevance of these levels lies in my personal commitment as a language teacher, educator and researcher seeking ways of supporting students who struggle through their process of tertiary education. Also, as teacher trainer, I consider that the findings of this study pose opportunities to look at the need to enhance future teachers' awareness of the importance of enhancing their understanding of their students.

The main argument of this thesis developed into the dialogical nature of communication between teachers and students. However, based on the dialogic nature of discourse (Bakhtin, 1984), this argument does not stem from the nature of the individuals involved, but from discourses at all levels. For example, for students, apart from previous experiences and personal histories, the discursive forces acting upon their actions as language learners in this specific institution (4.2, 5.2). For teachers, on the other hand, it seems that aside from discourses within the institution, ELT discourses influence them importantly in terms of attitudes and expectations towards/of students, materials, kinds of activities, methodology, etc (4.3, 4.5). It is in terms of this main argument that I discuss the implications of this study.

6.2.1 Institutional practices

Based on the contention that learning a second language would benefit students' future professional life, I can perceive several implications at this level. I suggest a reassessment of institutional practices if a more positive attitude towards English is to be fostered, aiming at learning English rather than complying with a requirement as seems to be the case at present (5.2). This would imply challenging influential disciplinary discourses within the institution's discourse communities as well as the conceptualization of knowledge as commodity. A reassessment of discursive practices could imply recognizing existing tensions in students' and teachers'

experiences where they are confronted with forces that pull, on the surface in the same direction, but which in practice seem to be opposite (5.2, 5.3). This is in agreement with Lave and Wenger's (1991) contention that "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (p.31). This could impact students' attitudes towards English.

A possible way of uncovering existing discursive tensions could be the implementation of discussion forums as part of the on-going teacher development scheme set by the university. The main objective of the discussions would be to discuss and understand how students and teachers perceive and experience curricular subjects. It would be necessary not only to discuss the compulsory nature of English, but the position of a second language within curricular subjects that are considered more important for a given discipline. If a dialogical discussion is achieved, the process could translate in lecturer developing higher psychological functions, as Vygotsky (1986) claims, through the interdependence of the individual and the social world.

While findings suggest that students' experiences are influenced by discourses around them (4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5), something that has already been discussed (for example Donato, 2004; Benson, 2004; Breen, 2001; Allwright, 1987; Nunan, 1995; Block, 1994: Seedhouse, 1996), I believe that these influences have not been taken into consideration within this institution and discussion forums could be a practical way to tackle this issue.

Apart from the discussion forum, I would suggest teaching development courses where the main objective would be to revise learning theories which may help lecturers understand their students learning processes. Development courses could ease out conflicting views and expectations that students and teachers struggle with and which seem to be at the heart of marginalized positions discussed in Chapter 5, specifically 5.2 and 5.3; I am referring to marginalization of the subject (4.2) as well as students' self chosen or imposed marginalization (4.2.3). Aligning different teachers/lecturers as well as practices to enrol would favour the learning of a second language and enable students to exercise their agency towards this goal.

Viewing education as a commodity appears to prevent students from engaging and conceiving learning as a process of internalization. Thus, it would be desirable to find suitable paths to raise these issues within discourse communities to highlight existing contradictions and act upon them. As above, discussion forums could be set up by the university's teacher development department. As a result of these, teachers may raise their awareness and help students to understand what they need to do to learn a second language. This process could also lead to a redefinition of teachers' and students' goals.

At present, the exam scheme that the institution has developed to ensure that all university students enrol in a second language (4.3.1.3), acts as counter-discourse controlling students' behaviour towards their subjects based on the symbolic control (Bernstein, 1990) exercised by agents and agencies who and which at the same time are influenced by other discourses (5.2) that apparently constrain students' future opportunities, as Apple, drawing on Bernstein, explains:

> The structuring of knowledge and symbol in our educational institutions is intimately related to the principles of social and cultural control in a society (2004:2)

The development of one's consciousness is constantly and intricately entangled with discourses within the different discourse communities and students' actions rather than fostering engagement in learning English they seek at first the earning of credits. Thus, an analysis of this practice would help understand the impact that the exam scheme has upon students' experiences and could provide grounds to find better policies that encourage students to perceive learning a second language as future symbolic capital.

In a practical sense and aware of the fact that many lecturers in this institution have not taken the opportunity to learn a second language and also knowing that there are international agreements for exchange programs, it would be helpful to encourage them to engage in learning a second language. This strategy would bring into the forefront the difficulties that learning a language involves but also the opportunities that this opens. I would hope that lecturers undertaking this enterprise become more conscious of the impact that learning a second language has on students' future professional life. There is evidence at the Chemistry and the Mathematics departments in the university that when lecturers speak other languages and not only

Spanish, they integrate readings in those other languages and even invite academics to their departments to give talks to their students which many times are given in other languages. This could become an important strategy to raise students' awareness of the importance that a second language could have in their future professional life and as a result the marginalization that English classes have at present could change.

6.2.2 Tutoring

The institution has set up a tutoring scheme for all university students. Even though this could be conceived as a safe space where students may talk about issues that are of concern in their lives (5.5), for many students this seems not to be the case. Thus, tutoring sessions, together with negotiating spaces (5.4) within language classes, could act as mediators to assist in a process of awareness raising; such sessions would support students to understand the meaning of being a tertiary student and the symbolic capital that a second language may imply. However, further research is needed to understand the discourses towards tutoring fostered by the institution and how tutors gain ownership of this practice. Also, the researcher's experiences should not be considered enough evidence to my claim that tutoring could become a safe space for students. This is one of the limitations of this study and further research is required to understand this practice.

Even though the objective of this thesis is not to provide practical ways of implementing what I consider the implications of the findings, I would like to suggest a possible path that could lead to the construction of a safe space. It would involve negotiation between tutor and the student to reach a point of mutual understanding of objectives. The first level of negotiation would involve the meaning of tutoring through discussion between tutor and student what each party understands and expects. Once this level has been mutually appropriated, then it would be possible to construct dialogues where both parties would share the responsibility of understanding each other's needs, likes dislikes, expectations, etc. This could be seen as the step of integration. The rationale behind this type of sessions would be to construct mutual understanding, a key aspect to foster shared responsibility (5.2.4),

rather than positioning the tutor as the individual who knows and can deliver solutions.

The next step would involve a co-construction of solutions through negotiation. Thus, tutoring sessions would become safe spaces (5.5) for students as they would have an opening where mediation, at intrapersonal and interpersonal levels (5.4), could take place for their understanding of what being a tertiary student means. The theoretical assumptions behind this type of tutoring session draw on Vygotsky's (1986) contention of negotiation as a mediator to raise not only an individual's awareness but also that of the tutor. It is also based on Sampson's (1993) conception of co-constructed responsibility that draws on Bakhtinian thinking:

> … it is in and through talk that we constitute the objects of our world, including ourselves and others…. This recognition gives us a profound sense of shared responsibility. It is our working together that makes us who and what we are. We share responsibilities together for these achievements. (1993:169).

The latter means that "if I am to act responsibly… [I must remember] we are interconnected. We are responsible… mutually involved" (1993:171-172). Thus, my suggestion would be to find ways of implementing tutoring sessions to support students in their learning journey.

6.2.3 Classrooms

Within classrooms and in support of the above arguments, it would be desirable to open spaces to negotiate understanding, gain ownership and construe responsibility as co-responsibility as discussed in Chapter 5 (5.3, 5.4).

At one level, negotiating spaces would serve as platforms for students and teachers to become conscious of the impact that English could have in students' future professional life. Discussions with language teachers, other subject teachers and peers, as suggested in 6.2.1 would mediate in the process of gaining awareness of each other's positions (5.2.4) and establish a dialogue where institutional practices (5.2) could be understood and if necessary, due changes made. This suggestion together with the fostering of lecturers participating in exchange programs could help each party understand the reasons they have for the positions they adopt hoping that

this dialogue could end up as a negotiating ground to share the responsibility that learning/teaching processes involve.

At the level of the language classroom, negotiating spaces would provide students and teachers with opportunities to raise their awareness as to the objectives (5.3.1) that individuals bring into the language classroom mediating in the understanding of each other's positions which may help bridge existing gaps and support the construction of a dialogical classroom where teachers and students are not alien to each other. In this way, they could share the responsibility (5.2.4) that teaching/learning processes involve when conceptualized as social activities where meaning does not belong to individual actors but which afford dialogical positions to all individuals involved. I suggest the insertion, at the beginning of a course, of a session to discuss reasons for being in class as well as expectations of the class. The discussion would open the possibility of negotiating understanding. This could then become part of a process of gaining awareness of the collection of objectives in a classroom which are not always compatible and which bring tensions into people's experiences.

A second kind of negotiating space would entail a reassessment of interaction within the language classroom. At present, it seems that classroom interaction is perceived as a strategy to gain automaticity. As was evidenced in chapters 4 and 5, this is problematic and does not foster necessarily engaging or gaining ownership of the language being learned (4.3, 5.3). If classroom interaction is conceived as opportunities to negotiate meaning and understanding as well as gaining ownership of new knowledge, and not as a process of input-intake-output (Gass, 1997), negotiation with other students and the teacher would promote linguistic awareness and shared responsibility (5.3, 5.4). These spaces would then allow students to view language not as a superficial collection of linguistic codes, but as means to make sense of the world and experiences as language learners and as opportunities to gain ownership of new knowledge. I would argue that the negotiation process should be regarded as the central aspect of a discussion and not the language in which such negotiation could take place. That is, it could be done either in English or in Spanish

considering that there would be aspects that students would be more able to take on board if they are discussed in Spanish than in English.

Based on the above arguments, the positions that teachers would adopt in the language classroom would imply giving up control (4.3, 4.4); they would not so much transmit knowledge (4.3), but would construct shared understandings with the students. If this were possible, then teachers would also enhance their awareness (5.4) as to the type of objectives they set for their courses and would challenge, in an informed way, positions of power and control they adopt at present. As a result of this, the type of activities set up for students could then stem not only from the teacher but from the students. This would enable teachers and students to become co-responsible of classroom happenings and outcomes.

I would argue that the type of negotiation needed must engage not only the learner, but the teacher. Often I mention that the student is not engaged (4.3, 4.2), but it seems necessary to also engage the teacher. Perhaps then, the teaching-learning dyad could be seen as a unified process where one cannot happen in the absence of the other and one is dependent on the other. My proposal seems to resonate with Breen and Littlejohn's conception of procedural negotiation where its "primary function… is managing teaching and learning as a group experience." (2000:8). As such, the dialogue between students and their teachers would also dialogise with the syllabus in search of converging activities and not monologic relationships (5.3).

A further suggestion could be done towards the exam scheme which at present apparently hinders learning (4.3.1.3). I propose an evaluation scheme that provides students with the opportunity to experience continuous self evaluation. That is, students would be involved in the decision of whether objectives taught had been reached or not in the form of self-evaluation. Fostering self-evaluation could also be seen as inner dialogue in Vygotskyan terms and thus an awareness raising activity (5.4). It would not be the teachers' only responsibility to decide who has and who has not achieved them. Continuous evaluation could open a range of opportunities for teachers and students to value their work based on the way they perceive their progress. Thus, evaluation would have a different meaning; it would involve looking at what has been achieved and become conscious of the development within a

learning process rather than measuring what has been achieved. It would imply, however, challenging the power position that teachers exercise at present. Nonetheless, it could also mean that teachers would liberate themselves from a one sided responsibility and would encourage a dialogue between teachers and students. Continuous evaluation seems to also provide opportunities to engage in the learning of objectives that may appear to be weak and capitalize on those which are recognized as strengths.

6.2.4 Teacher education

The findings of this study also have implications for teacher training programs within the institution. If the above suggestions are to become real, it would be necessary to integrate a module or modules within the undergraduate program as well as the diploma course in teacher training, of the meaning of dialogism and monologism in a language classroom and the impact that these may have upon the acquisition of a second language. The objective of such a scheme would be to enhance teachers' awareness of ELT discourses, how they adopt and adapt them in their practices and so not take them at face value. This seems a feasible objective given that there are some subjects that require student teachers to learn a foreign language and reflect on the experience. But, this would also involve another level of reflection, that of the teacher educators. It would be necessary to raise their awareness of this dialogical view of teaching/learning and the impact that monologues have upon students' experiences learning English. Personally, I would like to take the opportunity of challenging myself and also the group of students who will take the reflection class to experience a more dialogical classroom. This would imply at the very beginning of the semester a personal reflection of their experience in the first reflective course. Then, drawing on Wolfe-Quintero's experience (2000), I would suggest to share with the group that experience and negotiate the areas the group considers should be the focus of reflection this second time. In this way, student teachers would have the opportunity to engage in the content of the class and it would not be the lecturer's sole responsibility to define it. This could probably mean that they would engage deeper in the reflective process that the course tries to foster and if so, it would mean that student teachers would probably cherish their accomplishments rather than work

towards earning a grade for the course. Also, for the teacher educator, it would be an opportunity to construct a dialogue with the student teachers and better understand their experiences.

Another target at the level of teacher education could be to challenge views such as the responsibility of the language teacher which, at present, seems to be *to provide adequate opportunities* for students to learn. However, findings show that those opportunities do not stem from students but from teachers' conceptualizations of students which in the end apparently translate into gaps and lack of understanding (4.5, 5.3). I suggest looking at this issue as a process where both parties are involved and become co-responsible for the advancement in the learning process. This would mean that teachers and students would share the responsibility of making sense of each other's words, positions and understandings which at the same time imply a dialogical relationship with the syllabus.

The implications I present here are limited by my understanding of the phenomena involved and the complexity found in this study. Thus, I also suggest that further research is needed within the classroom to better understand the issues involved. My perception is that to understand how teachers construct their language classrooms further research is needed within teacher training programs. Also, more research is needed to better understand classroom interaction form a dialogical stance, not only looking at monologues, but also at how dialogues, from a Bakhtinian point of view, are constructed in a language classroom.

Likewise, the impact that mediation in Vygotskian terms could have within the language would be another aspect that at present is absent in the aforementioned programs and which needs further investigation given the limitations of this study.

6.3 Implications for the understanding of the language learner

In this section I will explore the implications for the understanding of the language learner not only in local terms but in general. I will focus on the lack of dialogism within the field of language education through the construction of teaching methods and concepts that have become institutional discourses; institutional discourses for Bakhtin (1981) had a strong tendency toward monologism.

The evidence from this study appears to support Bakhtin's (1981) contention as to the tendency of discourses to become monologic or to their initial monologic conception. ELT discourses appear to foster monologic practices as they establish ways of being for the student; as was discussed in 4.5, teachers seemed to expect students to behave in certain ways given that they were old enough to be mature and responsible students. Such expectations open gaps that create misunderstandings between teachers and students as the following excepts seem to point out:

> …young students are lazy and irresponsible, taking English only as a compulsory subject and without motivation at all…I'm there to provide learning opportunities (T2'05)…Students do not study…(T8). They are too lazy and demotivated… (T2).

> … I don't study … I rather leave English aside and pass other subjects … I simply want to pass. (Evaristo 25'06)

It seems to be the case that influences outside the language classroom where learning and obtaining credits compete, appear to affect students' interest in learning English (4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.3). Examples of monologic discourses were discussed in the first part of Chapter 2, where conceptualizations of the good language learner, learner beliefs and motivation stem from only one side of the teaching/learning world.

Conceiving classrooms as spaces where teachers and students should seek mutual understanding could result in actions construed as co-responsibilities. Under such assumption, motivation would probably be enhanced; actors might see themselves as agents (Ushioda, 2006). This could translate into a discussion between teacher and students at the beginning of a term where each one of them explains their reasons for being there. The objective of the discussion would be to enhance awareness as to why they are in the classroom and what each one expects of the other. Marginalization (4.2.3) as a self-chosen option would not necessarily be interpreted by teachers as lack of interest or motivation (4.5.1). Teachers' positions of power and control, issues that ELT methodologies have questioned and as a result fostered learner centeredness (Nunan, 1993) may not be as problematic as they are at present. Changing positions of power and control within the classroom are problematic at present because students come from a transmission based classroom; classroom discussion would provide teachers with the opportunity to explain to their students why they ask students to take more responsibility of their learning process. At the

same time, it would mean that students could reflect on their own positions in the hope of avoiding positions where teachers are blamed for their lack of learning, "… the teacher failed me…"(Evaristo 7'05).

The idea that teachers and students could become co-responsible for classroom happenings, that is how people interact, respond to activities, are interested or lack the interest to participate, could open opportunities to raise students' awareness (5.4) and achieve mutually negotiated objectives which seems to be the case in the following excerpts:

> … V used to say "to learn it you have to go to conversation, to pass it only, yes, you can come here and [work with] the books and your notes …(Rolando 6'06) …I don't skip classes anymore… I enjoy the class very much… I leave the class I'm happy, I mean, I enjoy his class… It's fun, I learn, I'm fascinated. (Rolando 9'06)

Rolando and his CAADI assessor negotiated each other's positions which allowed him to engage. This evidence would support my suggestion as to the use of discussions to help mutual understanding.

Students are individuals who need to negotiate understanding with people in their classrooms and particularly with the teacher who, as the person in power, should open opportunities to understand students' positions and be understood (5.3). Negotiation would mean that the struggle to make sense of reality is carried out while discussing to raise an individual's awareness at probably and hopefully two levels: macro discourses (5.2), outside the language classroom, and classroom discourses where students could reflect about their own objectives and how to reach them.

These ideas are problematic as they challenge some teachers' beliefs. One of them is maturity and the impact that this has in the classroom, as was briefly discussed in 5.2. Teachers' constructions of maturity appear to be a key factor to engage in language learning in the language classroom. These constructions suggest two processes, learning and teaching, which I suggest, should not be seen as two separate processes but as mutual constructions. For teachers, they are apparently separate responsibilities (4.5.1, 4.5.2) that of the student who should decide to engage and that of the teacher who should prepare classes and provide learning opportunities. as such,

they become monologues (5.3) enforced through banking pedagogical practices (Freire, 1993) where power and control are exercised by teachers and there are few opportunities to negotiate meaning at interpersonal and intrapersonal levels as became evident in the following data excerpt where students appear to position themselves as recipients of the teacher's knowledge:

> Rolando and Evaristo went to the CAADI today. They asked me for a list of questions that they could memorize for the oral exam. They wanted to prepare the answers for those questions… (Field notes, 11'05)

Teaching and learning should inform each other dialogically. As a result, language teachers and their students would become co-constructors of the learning process granting students positions of power and control; ELT discourses appear at present not to promote such possibility.

At present, many ELT discourses do not support appropriation of other people's words as a dialogic view of discourse contends (Bakhtin, 1981); that is, the main focus appears to be a superficial understanding of grammatical and lexical aspects, as well as attention to formulae to build up linguistic knowledge. Even though I believe these strategies are necessary steps to learn a new language, there is a need to promote personal engagement and mutual understanding. The following extract is an example of the monologic nature of some ELT discourses. In this introduction students' voices are left out and ELT teachers and material developers are portrayed as the experts who know what students need:

> Communicative language teaching (CLT) which started in the early 1970s has become the driving force that shapes the planning, implementation and evaluation of English language teaching (ELT) programmes in most parts of the world. Curriculum planners are preoccupied with *communicative* syllabus design. Materials producers have flooded the textbook market with books carrying the label *communicative*. Testing experts have come out with batteries of *communicative* performance tests. Teachers invariably describe themselves as *communicative* teachers. Thus, theorists and practitioners alike almost unanimously emphasize communication of one kind or another." (emphasis in the original)(Kumaravadivelu, 1991:12)

This seems to resonate with Bax's (2003) criticism of the conceptualization of Communicative Language Teaching and other approaches where "…CLT is seen to be about 'the way we should teach'. After all, it is Communicative Language *Teaching*, not Communicative Language *Learning*." (2003:280) where the local

context is absent could also be interpreted in monologic terms. I would like to propose that the recognition of local contexts, say students' voices, cultural practices such as the use of L1 in class, contextual factors such as the mandatory nature of the subject and the difficulties students face when there are competing views about the importance of learning a second language, would turn the monologic nature of CLT discourse into a dialogic discourse. This would call for a redefinition of terms inviting local practices and actors to the scene of language teaching and not only on "what the teacher should do" (Bax, 2003:281) suggesting that "CLT will work anywhere" (2003:281) and thus by learning about methodology you will be all right *no matter what the context*." (2003:282).

Materials used in class are designed by experts or by teachers under the assumption that they know what is best for students' learning process and thus monologic. I would like to bring into the discussion Tomlinson's thesis as to the need to devise "activities… that involve[d] the students in doing things that are connected to themselves." (2001) not in terms of humanizing the materials, but in terms of making materials dialogic where voices of those local actors are present. This would demand the creation of opportunities to develop understanding of students' nature of engagement as well as their objectives and the construction of spaces where teachers and students could negotiate meaning and be able to raise their awareness of how a language is learned. In this way, teachers and learners would share the responsibility of learning. To achieve this, it would be necessary to carry out further research to find out how students construe their participation in the language classroom. The results of such research would inform teachers' practices and raise our awareness of the need to seek students' opinions.

For more than twenty years, within the language teaching world, classroom interaction in the form of pair or small group work has been considered central for linguistic development at different levels (for example, to use a variety of speech acts, Long et al, 1976; to have more opportunities to speak than in a teacher fronted class, Pica and Doughty, 1985; to have opportunities to negotiate meaning, Varonis and Gass, 1985). However, Foster (1998) found that classroom interaction as spelled above does not necessarily involve negotiation or an understanding of what

negotiation means. The latter resonates with the evidence presented in this study (4.3, 4.4) as the following excerpt suggests:

> … I'd rather work alone… I used to give money to my classmates so that I didn't have to work with them. (Raul'05 and '06)

I would argue that it is necessary to go deeper into the meaning of negotiation and understanding; it seems necessary to go to a level where students can gain ownership of the language, because at present, as one of my students recently told me, "pair group is a nice parroting exercise where I can practice pronunciation" (researcher journal, 2008) which could be equated to Mori's (2002) finding of an "institutionalized nature of talk" as students prepared a "list of sequence-initiating actions" to use as prompts with Japanese speakers visiting her classroom. The latter appears to echo the oral exam practice students and the researcher aimed for at the CAADI. Therefore, my contention is that we, teachers and students, need to look at classroom interaction with a different understanding of negotiation, negotiation as means to gain ownership of someone else's words.

The above discussion may serve as an example of the kind of issues that a dialogical view of language learning/teaching would involve. Due to space constraints, I will not go into other methodological issues.

6.4 Self reflection

This research has made me look deeply into the positions that students and teachers hold, as well as some practices within the institution. It has been an opportunity to look at my teaching practice and construction of who the students are as well as my teacher self from a perspective that was foreign to me. Before doing this research, I was critical about students' attitudes towards their language classes, looking at these attitudes as something that was static and not constructed through experience. Now, I find difficult to stop wondering about ways to raise people's awareness as to the kind of tensions that are present in our daily life and which do not necessarily mean that we lack interest or motivation to act.

The position that as a language teacher I had constructed has been questioned through the research process. The story about my self that I presented in Chapter 1

portrays me through monologic traditions as a monologic teacher; that is, I located my teacher self following what I had learned without questioning. My educational background informed me about students' needs and best ways to teach a language, and I embarked in giving students what I considered best for them. In other words, I positioned my students as recipients of that knowledge, not expecting them to react in any way, but to accept because I knew! I was oblivious to possible discrepancies between us. In fact, there was not an *us*; there were *they* and *I,* a separation that suggests not a shared learning/teaching process, but two separate processes that could mean I teach, you receive, thus you learn; very much like Freire's (1993) banking concept of education where responsibilities are well defined by the roles that a teacher under this tradition should adopt, drawing from Lillis (2003), the teacher as owner of authoritative discourses in the classroom. Similarly, students should adopt their roles of recipients whose responsibilities would be to display and demonstrate that they have learned what the teacher taught. Thus, students discourses were not part of my picture of the classroom, I was not there to hear their voices because we represented independent voices.

Do I like being in control? Should I be in control? Why? What about my students? What do they want from me? What am I giving them? What can I learn from them? Why do I perceive them the way I do? What is the meaning of the material we use in class? Why do I decide for them? How do we (students and teacher) see interaction? There are so many questions that need answers which before this study were only givens. I saw them as issues that happened in a classroom because that is the way classrooms are. Maybe, to a large extent, this perception keeps teachers and students separate as well as the two processes involved, teaching and learning. It has become a reified position where a responsible teacher provides knowledge to responsible students who learn because that is why they are students.

Not having answers to these and many more questions is part of the limitations of this study. I already mentioned some aspects that I consider should be investigated. However, there is one particular topic that I am interested in. I would like to explore teachers' constructions of their language classrooms in search of ways to bring dialogism into the classroom.

Having come to a conclusion of this study and suggested some implications of the findings of this investigation, as a final thought, I would say that the journey of carrying out this research project has provided the means to look at the language teaching profession differently. It is a perspective that include not only the students learning a language and a teacher teaching them, but as people who co-construct one complex dialogue. I have also come to point where I question many aspects of my own professional practice. I do hope that the findings of this study serve the purpose of constructing better ways to support language students and their teachers where a more satisfying experience is the rule rather than the exception.

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Appendix 1
Photographs from the setting

The CAADI

The Patio

My Office

Teachers' Room

August, 2006.
Interview with Raul
Second phase of the data gathering process
The interview took place at a small café near the university. The place was chosen by the student on the basis of his convenience.
The last part of the interview is missing because the recorder ran out of battery.

R=researcher
Ru= student

R	Have you enroled [for the coming term]?
Ru	Yeah.
R	How did it go [last term]? And during the semester?
Ru	It was good. That semester I didn't feel the pressure. No.
R	Did you take English [classes]?
Ru	Yeah and I didn't feel under pressure. I felt a bit [of pressure], very confident at the beginning [of the semester], I didn't have a hard time at the beginning. I passed the first writing exam. I failed the second one, though. And then I said, wow then I'm behind but, I wasn't worried. It was like, "take it easy, don't worry, maybe it was because you didn't do your best", and yes.
R	Good, were you in R's class?
Ru	Yes. I couldn't take the class at the Language School because I didn't register on time, so I was left with only one option. I took the class in my Department.
R	But, it didn't matter, did it? It all went well?
Ru	Yes!
R	And, do you feel ok with R?
Ru	Well, yes. Now. Like maybe I'm used to the way he teaches now. But now, recently, like, it's kind of, I don't like his classes.
R	Why [don't you like his classes]?
Ru	Maybe the method he uses. It's good but, like for example, he sets a

	conversation activity for the first 20 minutes of class, in pairs. But, what I told myself, I'm conversing, but how do I know if what I'm doing is correct? Because in the end, he wouldn't check everybody and, well that's what I thought.
R	And… Would you have liked to… would you have liked to …?
Ru	Yes, I would've liked to be told. Yes, it's fine or [you should] correct this or that. Yes.
R	And now, did you dare converse with other classmates?
Ru	Yes!
R	Or did you always choose the same partner?
Ru	Yes, at the beginning I was afraid. I was always a bit afraid. But being afraid, I said, gosh, maybe I'll say something wrong and I don't know and he knows a lot. But like, not anymore. Well it's ok, it doesn't matter if he knows more. I have to learn. And that's how I calmed down.
R	What do you think made you change your attitude so radically?
Ru	Well, I think that attending the CAADI helped me to attend conversation workshops. That… well I was really afraid; in fact I barely spoke, but it helped me in building up my confidence. Like, I don't know, mmm but it helped me. It gave me confidence. I saw the other students, many [of them] didn't know either and maybe that raised my confidence and say "well, I'm not the only one" and that is what, that was my starting point to converse in class.
R	And, looking back into what happened the previous semester. Do you think that that experience influenced your attitude? The confidence of having had peers who were in a similar situation?
Ru	Yes, that had a big influence. To be honest, yes. The way that, well, in that semester I tried to help E because I realized that he was having problems and well, things I know I tried to explain them. And in that way, I was also helping myself to learn. Before that, I think that, maybe I studied, but I didn't learn what I studied. I mean, I did not assimilate, I didn't get it. Explaining to E was a way to evaluate myself. I knew that if I was, I mean, if I could explain that to him, I could know that I was right. That helped me a lot. Yeah, before, in fact, the only way I learned was, well, the teacher used to tell us what the exam topics would be for the writing exams and I tried to memorize a paragraph with a classmate. Sometimes we would get together, more or less, like, I don't know, I took notes, I tried to write what I wanted to say, this and that; and many times I even memorized it without knowing what I was saying. And that was, I don't know, part of the

	confidence that I gained from studying for the exams. I really knew what I was trying to say whilst before, I didn't. Who knows what I was saying! The teacher had said what the exam was going to be about and that was it; but without knowing why.
R	And, do you think that explaining E the things that you had understood, the things that you could handle, was your way of becoming part of a group?
Ru	Yes, yes!
R	Yes?
Ru	In fact, before I felt like, how do you say? I forgot the word. Like when you feel…
R	Belong?
Ru	Yes, belonging to something. Yes, I felt like that.
R	And how about now?
Ru	Right now? Well, I don't know.
R	But, in this semester's classroom, how did you feel? Like part of the group? Like, now I'm…
Ru	Yes, like I'm not the stranger. Yes, I felt like that. But many times, I felt, I went back to the same. I mean, like I try to distance a bit from people. But I tried not to do that. No.
R	And, what happened with the issues you had with teacher T?
Ru	Nothing. We handed our papers and almost everyone got a good grade. It was a paper that I wrote two days before the deadline. The problem was that I was researching and reading. But I wrote it two days before handing it in and I got a good grade; a really good grade.
R	So, you didn't have any more problems with him?
Ru	No, not really. But, at the end [of the semester] I was under a lot of pressure because it was the oral exam and we got that day at 10 o'clock and it was the last day of class. Well the last working day and I got there at 10; and we went in one by one. There were only seven of us and I left at 2.30; it was tiresome. The teacher spent 45 minutes with each one of us.
R	Wow, did you feel intimidated?
Ru	No, that teacher made feel confident.

R	That's good.
Ru	Yes, he made me feel confident many times that day.
R	Only that day? Or in general?
Ru	In general. Well maybe because, like I had already known him. I felt more confident.
R	And tell me, how about your job? How is it going?
Ru	Good, yeah. I'm a bit stressed right now because I'm taking a course on Fridays and Saturdays. And then I work on Sundays. But, it's good. I feel good, more…
R	And, why did you decide to take this course?
Ru	Ah, I honestly don't know. I now regret it. It's a lot of work. It's about learning to administrate projects and yes, it's very, I find it very complicated.
R	Well, probable at the moment, but if…
Ru	It's going to be useful in the future… that's why I'm taking it. Well not so much for that. The truth is that I was told that if I took it I would get a… well, financial support. I got a scholarship, three of us, from UPIE, state government [agency] and they asked us if we could do our professional social service and, well, I said, and yes afterwards what if I find difficult to find a place to do my social service. I'd better do it. That's why I accepted.
R	So, you saw it like a future opportunity.
Ru	Yes, only for that reason. Otherwise, I wouldn't have taken it. I was not interested. In fact, when they told me about it, I was not interested. Later, I was told that it would be during the holiday and I was also told about the social service and that was what caught my attention and in fact I didn't think it much.
R	Good for you! So, now you are a bit more than half way through.
Ru	Yes, yes!
R	You will start semester 7th. I'm happy for you!
Ru	I'm also happy. Right now I feel that all that happened before, like it is helping me now. I had good grades [last semester], and, like I'm not that lost. And, that's like, it makes me like, I mean, that thing of having lost two

	years, I think that if I had not done it, I would have, I wouldn't have continued studying… well, I haven't finished yet, but maybe I wouldn't have gotten this far. I think so.
R	So, do you mean that dropping out before failing was an adequate strategy for you?
Ru	Yes, I think so. I think that being successful today is like, well it tells me that I was right. Loosing two years was not a bad idea.
R	Do you think you gained something?
Ru	Yes, I see it as a gain.
R	In what sense is it a gain?
Ru	Yes, confidence. I think that it is everything together. I felt that I was failing in English and that made me feel under pressure. I was anxious and I didn't take my other subjects seriously. I was not having problems, but I was not paying attention and that was making me nervous and I think that if I had [continued], I would have said 'no, I don't want to study.'
R	Well done. That's positive thinking.
Ru	I hope things continue this way.
R	What do you think it takes for things to continue this way?
Ru	Everything depends on me. Yes, of not, I feel that I'm very lazy.
R	Really?
Ru	Yes, not a little, I'm very lazy. Yes, I'm very lazy. I feel that I do things because I don't want to feel under pressure in the future.
R	And, do you think that is being lazy?
Ru	Yeah, because I feel that I'm lazy. I feel like a mediocre because like, for example, right now, I had good results. But to be honest, honestly I think that I did not do my best. I mean, I felt good and well like, just do the minimum, not very good. But I think that I would've felt much better if I had done more. I feel that I can do more.
R	And, what does your effort depend on?
Ru	Well, I need to get rid of my laziness
R	What does that mean?

Ru	I don't really know. I'm still trying to figure out what it is.
R	Does it depend on things that you're interested in?
Ru	Yes, probable. Yes, like ideas. For example, now I can make do my best in english because I've got this idea in my head of studying a BA in English. And that is why I want to finish all the English courses. So I'm working hard on my English. Like it's something that takes me away, I don't know like having an objective.
R	And, where does the idea of studying a BA in English come from?
Ru	I'm beginning to enjoy it. I like English. I think I say, well, I don't know why, but it's an idea in my head.
R	That's interesting.
Ru	I've got this idea and like right now I think that before finishing this BA in X, I want to, I know it's on Saturdays only and before, well like when I start 8th or 9th semester, I'd like to start the other BA.
R	That's a surprise!
Ru	My mum says that I want to […] because I'm going to be Ander a loto f pressure, but I know it can be done. My sister studied two BAs, and it can be done.
R	What did your sister studied?
Ru	She wanted to be a teacher and so she went through the programs for grammar school teachers and also for secondary schools. I mean, two programs at once. Even though they are very similar, they are two programs.
R	And what else does your mum say?
Ru	Well, she says that i should do as I like. I'm like when someone says something and in the end does not do anything. Well, something like that. But in fact I'm working harder on my English.
R	That's interesting. Alter so many ups and downs that you've gone through. And now being interested in… where do you think this change comes from?
Ru	Well, I don't know. It's weird because when I study English I feel motivated. I find helpful to understand another language that never before,well when I see people walking on the street and more or less I understand them. Yes, that helps me. It feels good, it feels good and I say "it must be nice to study two or three languages". Understanding, that is what helps. I'd like to understand many languages. I'd like to, well, even one

	from Mexico, I mean, that must be nice, interesting.
R	But, where does this idea of studying languages come from? What are your expectations?
Ru	Mmm, it can help me. Together with my BA in X, I don't know. The truth is that I've got to think it carefully. But I think it would help me. In fact, I'd like to do that in the future, become a language teacher rather than a professional X. That's how I see it. But, this doesn't mean that I'm not interested in my field because I really like it. But, I think that I like teaching more.
R	Last year you told me that you wer truly interested in your BA and that you could see yourself working in that field.

Ru	Yes, but I don't know. It's not lack of interest. I mean, to say that it doesn't motivate me anymore. No, I'd like to, I don't know, I had this idea that maybe when I finish my BA, I'd like to study something else. Because what I really like is to learn. I've always said that a degree is not the most important thing. What is really important for me is to learn. I like my BA because we learn about many things that are happening now. I don't know, I understand things happening in the government, the elections and all that. I understand it and I feel good understanding. But I'd like to learn many more things. I wouldn't mind spending the rest of my life studying.
R	And, what would you like to do in the future?
Ru	I'd like to expand rather than only dedicate to one field.
R	How do you see yourself in the future?
Ru	In the future? More relaxed. I don't see myself, I see myself teaching. Yes, teaching. I'm a nerd, so, yes, that's how I see myself.
R	Now that you have a different interest in your English classes, do you perceive classroom activities differently? Has your attitude changed?
Ru	I try to participate and before I didn't [participate]. I used to say "it's better to observe only" and I think I was fooling myself. I don't do that now. This semester I participate and try to make sure I understand but even if I don't understand every word, I participate. Yes, I think I was different.
R	And, were there particular activities where you think you…?
Ru	Well, I noticed that the teacher gave us pieces of paper for an activity, like answering questions and other classroom activities, like a list of questions and I tried to answer even if I didn't know everything. I mean I tried hard.

	Before, I didn't do that. I used to wait for everyone to finish to copy the answers and now I tried to do it. It was the same with the homework. I tried to make it even when I didn't understand everything.
R	That sounds like a big difference, isn't it?
Ru	Honestly, yes. I felt very different.
R	In what way did you feel different?
Ru	Participative. But, that envolved everything. It wasn't only participating. It meant participating at all levels. Homework. I didn't miss any and all of them were correct. In fact, I miss less classes, maybe only four and that was because I really could go to class, otherwise, I wouldn't have missed class.
R	So, this time you didn't have to look for strategies to push yourself to attend classes, like before.
Ru	No, in fact, my previous class finished at 9 o'clock and the English class was at 1.30 and I mean, I didn't miss them. It was weird, like, what going on with me? Commonly, I used to look for classes that were back to back to force myself to go and not miss them as I used to say to myself "maybe I shouldn't go". But this time, I was kind of surprised, I didn't miss classes.
R	And then?
Ru	Nothing, I tried not to miss classes. I used to say, I'm not going to miss classes. Before, I usually missed between eight or nine classes in a semester. In the end, not going used to win over going. But not this time.
R	So, it was not like in other semestres when you said to yourself, "i'm staying home".
Ru	Not thistime. I said I'm going and it didn't win.
R	And, do you think that there is a connection between being successful the previous semester and your changes of attitude and like, belonging to a group?
Ru	I don't know. At the beginning I was scared. I don't really know.
R	How did you overcome it?
Ru	How did I overcome it? That's a good question. I don't know. Maybe, yes, all that had happend before was like, what drove me. I don't know, but perhaps. I don't really understand like… right now I can't explain how I did it. I mean, it was for that reason that I felt like very lazy because, I didn't want to make an effort. I felt that I ought to do my best and I was like afraid.

	Yes, and I don't know, I can't really explain what I did to be so successful, because I still feel that I didn't do my best. For example, I went to conversation workshops, but like not really wanting to be there. I went because I saw E and R going and that said to me "if they go, then I have to go". Something like that. I mean. I went, but not really convinced, I lacked enthusiams. I used to think "I better do other things". I went back to my old habit. I don't know how the moment arrived but I went.
R	So, you went to the workshops and so did they.
Ru	Yes, and the moment arrived when I didn't even think about it. I didn't think about that. I thought about it as something normal, like a routine. Yes, like a routine. Maybe.
R	And, that is how things started changing.
Ru	It became a habit, like when I go running. For example, when I stop running and then I start again, it's very difficult to get up early in the morning. I tell myself "it's better to stay in bed" until the moment when I don't think about it; in fact, I have a biological clock that wakes me up and I feel better once I do it even if I don't feel like running.
R	So, when you went to the CAADI, you went with them.
Ru	I tried to do it with them, otherwise I wouldn't have gone. For example, E, I used to go more with E and well, to motivate each other I said "hey, what do you think if we go to conversation?" and we had good and bad luck and at times there was nobody, but still we tried. And together it was easier than on my own. Yes.
R	So, would you say that going to conversation workshops, even if you wouldn't participate much helped you feel good in class when you had to converse? Those inintial 20 minutes [of class]?
Ru	Yes. I arrived and, like … well, R has always been like that, so then it didn't, I learned that as one arrived, one would take a piece of paper and it'd tell use the topic and we just made questions and answers. It was difficult, at times because I chose it; it's because I wanted to learn. I thought that it would be useful, that was practice, it would be helpful. In the end, being in the final exam crying because I hadn't done anything…then I tried to do something, make questions and answer them with a partner. Many times, well, there were classmates who didn't want to do it, like if they were lazy and I tried to ask questions, but they didn't want to do answer, they would say "I'm tired today". They answered in Spanish and I don't know…
R	What did you do when they answered in Spanish?
Ru	I traed to stop the coversation and remain in silence. Like showing them that

	I was upset and show them that I wanted to participate in class, be part of the class, I mean…
R	Did this happen in English?
Ru	Yes. And ask questions in English, I mean, we were given 10 short questions and then, one had to develop them and I asked; my partner wouldn't answer and then, like pressuring him and many times it worked, like I tried to motivate my partner. And it worked many times. I think it was helpful to be with classmates who, well, I think they know and they helped me. That helped me a lot.
R	How did you feel when there was someone that you thought knew more than you?
Ru	Mmm, I don't know. I felt good because when it was time to talk that would Ay, no se. Me sentía bien porque sabía como que a la hora de convershelp me. So that was useful, and I wasn't nervous, as if my mind were clear and the words were there. I remember words that I never, that I felt I wouldn't remember. I used to think that I wouldn't remember, maybe I won't remember in this moment, but then, I would remember.
R	So, at that moment you would freeze and close yourself anymore?
Ru	Well, there were still some moments, like for example the day that i had the oral exam. I got a 7.5 and at the beginning, I don't know, maybe it was my nervousness. But for example, the picture, like I said "what should I say?" I mean what to say. I only stared at the picture where there were two Chinese people and, but, what to do? What should I do? And yes, I tried to say things, but words didn't occur at that moment. In fact, as I was the first one, I felt like before, I closed my mind totally. I mean, I thought about moments in class when I asked those things to my classmates, and when I saw my partner's picture, I thought, why isn't that my picture? I'd have said everything correct. But in that moment it was like being nervous, like being graded. That was why I wished R [the teacher] had told me, "you're wrong" to get used to the feeling of being assessed. Maybe by the time the exam came, the feeling would be natural.
R	Were you in the same class as E and R?
Ru	No, I was in a different group. But I went to their classes many times. I went to their class because it was earlier than mine. I asked R if I could attend those classes.
R	While listening to the conversations that we have had, I can see a change of attitude towards English. I have asked you several times today where the change comes from. Do you think that the conversations with me have had some kind of influence?

Ru	A lot… these conversations have given me confidence to see the process as something not so difficult. I don't know how to explain. It's like when one learns to drive and something like confidence in something good, like don't worry everything will be fine and you take the car and leave. I compare it with the time when my dad taught me to drive. And my father was one of those that said don't do that, be careful, look, everything bad, things, when I was with him he treated me like, well, I just couldn't function and not, I'd better leave things. In fact, at that moment I just wouldn't start the car. I just couldn't. That was demotivating. So, when another person wouldn't shout at me and just said calm down, I worked better. I mean, I felt much better and like I knew that I was learning to drive. I don't know how to explain it. I think that there is no other way to explain it.
R	Do you think that I influenced you?
Ru	Yes, you taught me because there were things that I learned. Yes.
R	I didn't teach you. It was you who said I remember now.
Ru	Well, I don't know how to explain it. But you taught me and helped me a lot.
R	Do you think it was some sort of support? Because, if you remember, many of the things that we did was, like "ah, R said that is was this way" and like if you were connecting, like finding links, wasn't it?
Ru	Yes.
R	Do you think that there is a need for this kind of support in the English program?
Ru	Yes, I've seen that. There are many students like me. In fact, those in 4th and 5th semester, maybe. But I've noticed lately that well, I used to think that some of them knew a lot and that it was only me. There are many, I mean, like if they were afraid, or maybe they don't say it, or maybe, I don't know how to explain this. Perhaps they are different people and, they, I was afraid and I said no, I don't want that anymore. Maybe other people keep trying in a different way, but in the end they feel the same. I think it is necessary.
R	mmm.
Ru	Yes, it's really necessary. In the end, one thinks in class that an hour class everyday will be enough to learn. But that's not true. One doesn't learn and maybe it's fear, always fear, and one doesn't ask theteacher. One leaves it behind.

R	Do you believe that you are afraid of asking the teacher because he is the authority?
Ru	Maybe. For me, that was the case. I thought that he knew a lot and that made me afraid. I mean, I was afraid of asking because I thought he would say that I had not studied, I mean, I didn't study everything. I was afraid of asking things, like if I was in 3rd semester, asking things from 1st semester. I mean, I'd already seen that. He's going to say that I should know that and he is the authority and one had to, and no. I had to learn those things alone. I don't know, like search on my own and no. I didn't have the confidence to ask things that we saw in previous semesters, like in 1st level. So, I remained with my doubts.
R	So, do you mean that recently you asked the teacher?
Ru	No, most of the time I didn't. Sometimes I did, but because of the time, the teacher was there. When the class was over and the teacher stayed to clarify things with one of us. Other days, well, it wasn't like not wanting to ask him, I don't know.
R	Ok, so now you dared to ask questions while before you would?
Ru	Yes, I wouldn't dare to ask. In fact, I thought that none of my teachers knew me. Like if I was nonexistent to my teachers because I never got close to them. And now, I try to…
R	So, do you think that the change that you have experienced towards English, has also been part of other subjects?
Ru	Yes, i mean, yes. Well, I'm not the kind of person who is always participating. But I try. I mean, for example, when we had to read and I thought this helps to and I said yes! I would raise my hand and tried to ansser. No, it wasn't like that throughout the class, but I tried to do it and it was a way to feel more… like gain confidence. I mean, I think that was something I gained through participating, I mean, but in English. It's like a guide to other subjects.
R	That sounds interesting because I remember in our previous conversation you said that you didn't participate in class. That in other classes questions teachers ask are addressed to the whole group and not focused on you and then you feel ok and don't participate… saying that you could have answered that because you knew the answer. And now you are participating!
Ru	Exactly! I participate as much as i can, now. I still feel a bit nervous and it shows because I start sweating and well, I say things wrong, but I try. I try not to think I said something wrong, so I won't do it again. Not now, I just say, it wasn't correct, but in the end like the result is not that important.

R	That's good.
Ru	It's just a way to get rid of the fear to participate. Self assurance.
R	Self assurance? Do you think that you gain confidence through experience?
Ru	I don't know. I mean, before, all my life since I was in secondary school, the teacher, participating and I didn't I wouldn't mind participating but I was just a kid. I just didn't notice that I had the experience. I had participated before. But I did not see that.
R	Does that mean that it is not necessarily the experience that you have, but learning to perceive your strengths?
Ru	Yes, I think so.
R	And, what makes you perceive your strengths? Or rather, value them?
Ru	No, I don't know. That's difficult. In the end, it's like, I don't know, maybe the way I see life.
R	Really?
Ru	I think it stems from there. I' not sure. I mean, I've got the idea that I have to be like I've decided to be. I mean, life is like I, everything is part of life. To understand that, I don't know, life is to be lived to learn and know and fighting mistakes, all the effort, everyday, day by day. Something like that.
R	Then, you're not so harsh on yourself anymore?
Ru	No, and maybe it's also that. That's part of my relationship, yes. I felt that I have something new everyday and that involves for example, better participation, not really expecting like I've participated very well, excellent and for the teacher to say that I am proficient. No, it's simply to say that I did something new today and that's it.
R	Sounds good. Do you still think that you aim at perfection?
Ru	No, no, I don't know. I honestly don't know. I try not to aim at perfection. I don't want to be perfect.
R	Well, but it sounds like a contradiction when you say that you don't aim at perfection but then you call yourself lazy.
Ru	That's because I'm lazy.
R	No don't think so. Why? What does being lazy mean?

Ru	Well, if for example I believe that I should have done, I mean… like for example that I could've gone to the CAADI, two hours or more during the week and I didn't do it. I was, no, I'd better not, like I better watch TV or something else. And then, that is being lazy because I could have done it. And I didn't do it because I'm lazy.
R	Weren't you really tired?
Ru	I don't know.
R	Do you believe that we need to seach for a balanced way of life? I mean, to have spaces for fun, spaces to rest, spaces to work?
Ru	Definitely! That's the way it has to be. Nobody working all day can be a high achiever if there isn't a space to rest. But, how can I explain? For example, studying another subject, I used to wait until the last day to… I would say I went to class and learned. Really, being in class helps me a lot, I mean, if I don't miss clas and if I pay attention, I don't have to study and that's it. For example, the day before the exam I could do, I woke up at 5 in the morning and I studied for an exam at 7 am. I think that shows how lazy I am, because I left things to pile up instead of studying. I don't know, a whole week, 15 or 20 minutes and that day getting up at 6 o'clock to… but no, that's how I worked. So, I believe that it is being lazy. In the end, I left everything for the last minute. Therefore, I'm lazy.
R	But, someone who's lazy, I think wouldn't do that.
Ru	That's true. For example, I had to hand in a paper about social research. I did it. I was constantly thinking the topic I would write about. So I did it and it turned out good, but I did it on Sunday and had to hand it in on Monday. I wanted to do it on Friday but I couldn't' get the inspiration, so I said, I can't, no, it's better to do it tomorrow and I did it on Sunday at 7 o'clock in the evening. And I finished at 9 in the morning. So I came to school and that was it.
R	Did you work throughout the night?
Ru	The whole night. So in the end…
R	Well, maybe that's your style. I don't know, the result of always working under pressure.
Ru	I think that is part of the whole thing. Maybe because that gave me time to get some inspiration.
R	That's right, and that does not mean that you're lazy. I would say that maybe you lack the time?

Ru	Yes, but, so you don't think it's laziness?
R	No, i don't think it's laziness. I don't relieve that you're lazy. Someone who's lazy wouldn't do it.
Ru	No
R	Even when the final moment arrives, that perosn wouldn't do it. They don't find the time to do it and get inspired. But, would you like to change that?
Ru	Yes. In fact, that's what I want. I'm working on it.
R	Ok. And how do you plan on changing that?
Ru	Thrying, always trying. Not leaving things, for example, it's just simple, like when something comes up, like homework, even if it's to turn it in a week later, if I have time, well, I'll do it that same day and if not, I don't think there is another way I could change.
R	That sounds good. And is that your decisión?
Ru	Nobody is telling me anything. No, it's because I want to do it.
R	And speaking of obligations, now that you see English differently, do you still see English as a mandatory subject?
Ru	No, I don't think of it as an obligation. It's like being hungry. Knowledge hunger.
R	Knowledge hunger? And does that hunger is satisfied studying?
Ru	Yes, I'd like to finish not only the 6 semesters, but the eight levels, even if it is not a requirement in my school. And then continue with the BA.
R	Wouldn't you prefer graduate work in your field? Somewhere where English is required?
Ru	That could be an option, but, I mean, well, I don't know. Maybe in the future, but what is clear to me is that I wouldn't have studied English had it not been a requirement.

Appendix 3

Form of Consent

I _____ accept to participate in the research project.

I understand that all the information provided will be treated as confidential. The information will only be used for the present study. I am not under any obligation to participate in this project and I can withdraw from it at any point I decide.

I know that all the data will be kept anonymous.

Date _____

Signature _____

Researcher _____

Appendix 4

Samples of the research log

September 28, 2005.
I went yesterday to observe a class. I arrived early, 10 min., and the group was in class. The teacher talked and talked. I noticed that ss were anxious, they wanted to leave. A group of girls were chatting, others just looking at their notebooks, but without writing anything. There was another one who moved in his chair impatiently as if he were ready to jump and run. The ss close to the door shook his leg as if desperate because he kept looking at me and checking his watch. The teacher was standing in front of the classroom speaking with a high firm tone of voice.
The class finished 5 min late.
Four students ran out of the classroom before she left the room. A few minutes later, the teacher left the room holding a big wallet (compared with her height!). She passed by walking quite fast and said hi. For a moment, I thought she was going to stop and talk to me.
The ss who left the classroom before the teacher came back holding some snacks and a cup of coffee. The rest of the group stayed in the room.
About 5 minutes after that, the prefect came by and asked me if I was there for some special reason. I explained that I was waiting for the teacher to observe her class. He was a bit surprised and told me that the teacher would not come; then he broke the news to the ss. I couldn't see the ss faces, but I could hear them yelling; evidently, they were very happy.
I could hear chairs being moved, screeching. There was a lot of movement. As I passed by the door, I saw students standing, chitchatting, smiling, getting ready to leave.
I couldn't see Raul. He doesn't like to sit near the door.

I also observed R. He smiles with ss and jokes. He knows them by their names. He pats them on their shoulders and explains things in different ways. Even when he asks them if they understood, he seems to notice that some don't understand and explains again.
He stands quite close to the board, facing it with a pen on one hand, waiting for ss to give him an example. A few seconds in silence, he doesn't move, waits for an answer and then he writes. When there aren't answers he guides ss until they find a place in their book to help them. While observing R, I thought about L. Her classes seem mechanical. She doesn't seem to read students' faces. She explains without giving them the opportunity to ask or answer. I haven't seen those quiet seconds waiting for an answer. K explains several times, but I haven't noticed spaces to check ss understanding.

October 5, 2005.
Ss keep telling me that they avoid things when they don't understand. So, does that mean that silence in the classroom is fear of making mistakes? Like R said "I prefer writing in a less formal way. Maybe because I'm afraid of making mistakes."

October 13, 2005.

Yesterday C showed up at my office without an appointment and today L did the same. Both talk to me about very personal issues; I'm not sure how to respond, what to do. I don't think I'm qualified. On the other hand, I feel that they want to be heard. L told me about being upset because Ts miss classes and also when they don't prepare their classes. She doesn't quite understand how with that kind of attitude they ask for good grades. She thinks that Ts fall short of her expectations. I think she is really angry.

October 30, 2005.
I was in the CAADI today. R was there and two more ss joined us. R mentioned that he had a good grade in his writing exam. But, he also said that corrections still cause him a lot of anxiety. One of the girls asked me for help and then another ss came. When we were working, their teacher stood by the table and told her that she was lazy. I wonder, how does she feel with those comments? I think that she didn't answer back out of courtesy. After that, she was very serious.
The other ss mentioned other things, but I don't remember them… R laughed, he seemed nervous and showed us his exam. I noticed that he was sweating…

Appendix 5

Sample of Research notes

These notes were taken during classroom observations.

... pues ... y dice ya me fue mal. y ya es lo malo. Y escuelas. he escuchado textos

(K) xq me dice el mtro a ti te falta esto el escuchar, leí el libro pero a veces se me hace muy diferente el inglés q' manejan ahí a lo q' platicas con alguien. A repente, no sé si son las grabaciones xq soy bien visto y todo tenemos problemas con eso y me pongo a pensar, ¿qué onda?

(Y) Básican tu lo q' quieres es pasar, no aprender? Para ti lo importante es sacar los créditos, aprender es secundario?

(E)
*
En una opy si, escuando yo veo, soy muy desesperada, si no le estoy echándole ganas y no estudio para el futuro simple lo q' yo quiero es pasar, esa actitud influye mucho a veces. Entonces no puedo cambiar esa actitud a veces

(Y) No crees q' eso es lo q' está pasando? el mtro además te lo dijo si veo q' no estás listo pa 5° no vas a pasar? y q' está cumpliendo con eso?

(E) Conmigo sí, no con todos.

(Y) yo no puedo hablar x nadie

(E)
no, no, no. yo le digo xq yo he visto -me han contado. yo no sé xq o sea los de derecho a ellos si les da más la mano, a veces

(P)
xq les piden 4 sem d inglés o xq? xq ellos y una vez me dijo un cuate. A mí me pasó q a d. de derecho. a lo mejor xq le dije q' yo iba a 4° sem q' si pasaba 4° ya estaba bien. y veo no. a veces les tiende más la mano. Se lo juro algunos no todos, que tuvieron mala suerte, no sé. O lo yo lo veo d una forma. pero tos dbe ser igual con todos digo está bien q' les piden nada más 4 sem a ellos pero apli cales igual a todos. Apriétalos, no xq nos vamos a

(L)
tener 6 sem contigo y te quiero q' estemos bien preparados, órale, está bien. pero fíjate pasan dice R a mí que! se quedan los q' tienen q' salir de la carrera y a mí qué!

el final no, del oral, pag 7

a q' lo hicimos, así como lo hizo él, sí pasaba, no me dijo eso.
no xq' muchas personas estan mal too y pasaron pero era un milagro.

su percepción es q' el mtro no te quiso ayudar?
si, eso fue. yo le reclamé xq le digo bueno ya estoy reprobado, todavía
si la opp de bueno voy a entrar a 4° otra vez y decir tengo otra
oportunidad, lo ni de esa forma y dije ya no quiero decirle nada
al maestro, no quiero mejorarme, no quiero ni decirle
solo quiero q' ahora si sea d' interés ¿no? pero desde un principio.

tu crees q' es muy importante q' el mtro vea q' tu tienes interés?
no es importante q' m...?
te vaya bien too? Siento q' como dijo él. A veces un Todo
las personas nos va bien xq o sea nos intentamos a veces
pero mejor intentamos. a lo mejor me faltó más
xq realz yo sé q' si puedo dar más y no lo hice. que
no le di el interés suficiente. ya esta vez ... empecé
a participar. yo me fijo a veces q' él, de repente, no se si lo
ha observado, o sea, no sé' claro va a atender a las personas
q' participan pero cómo yo le platicaba esto de la. sales
participas en el CAADI, si quiere te doy la hoja por q' sea q' fuimos
al caadi, xq pa' él too era muy importante q' uno fuera al cadi. cuando
uno iba y viendo eso q' estaba en el cadi echándole ganas
yo sé como ayudarle ya más y q' son personas q' te están
echando ganas y no a todas las personas les va bien aun q'
estudien, xq' cuando estoy haciendo un examen parcial
yo suelo desesperarme un poco al escuchar xq' en el
escrito los paso la mayoría d' las veces. cuando es
de subrayar y todo eso los paso pero en el escuchar d' ley no
se me da' de repente a lo mejor hay 3 palabras q' si entiendo
pero ud sabe q' de repente too no escucho más q'2 palabras

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Appendix 6

Trail of the development of key themes from data

The purpose of this Appendix is to clarify how the themes discussed in Chapter 4 evolved from being words underlined in data transcripts to the initial themes that later evolved into the topics developed and linked as explained at the beginning of Chapter 4. What follows are samples of the progression of the data analysis process.

Picture 1 Initial stage. Circled and underlined words that were repeated

pasillo. Son 5 para las 4 hoy
hay alumnos sentados conmigo espe
ando q' comience su clase.
Andrea y algunos otros com-
pañeros están haciendo su
tarea. Me sorprende que no
hablan con ella. El resto del
grupito compara sus respuestas
pero no con ella.

* Body language seems to be connected to
enthusiasm (Ratheesh Spt 5) (Lisa Aug 31)

Apparently ss show more interest when T
talks about personal aspects of life if
ss like T. When they have not managed
to establish rapport w/T, there's lack
of enthusiasm and interest in personal
aspects of T's life (Rathee. Sp. 5)

Picture 2 Sample of the word "Fear" identified at the beginning of the data analysis process.
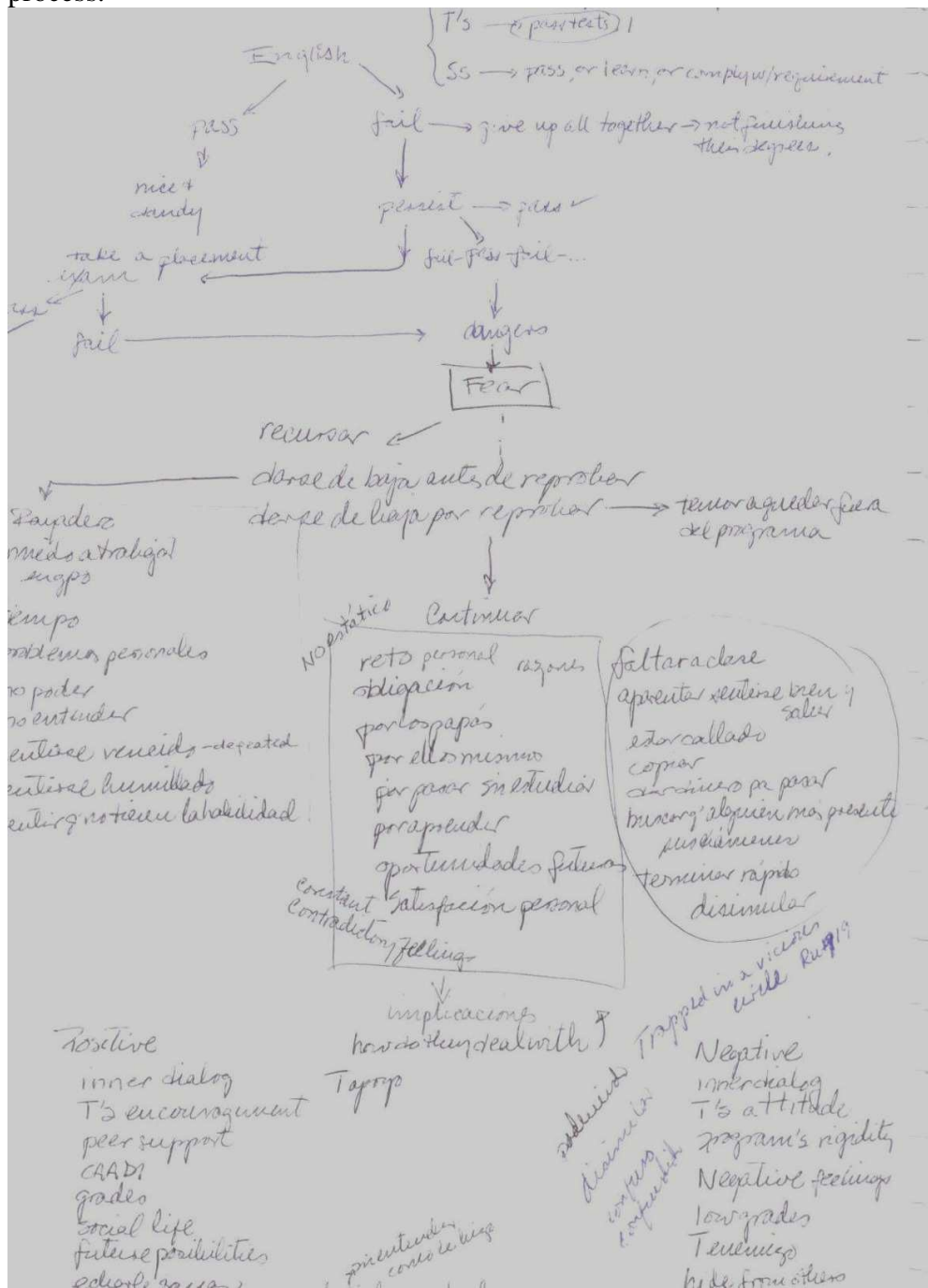
Picture 3 Samples of the contextualization of identified categories. I used different colours to construct those categories.
First column (yellow) contains data extracts related to students' strategies; second column (blue) relates to fear. The picture below shows several columns which related to the other categories (green, orange, pink).
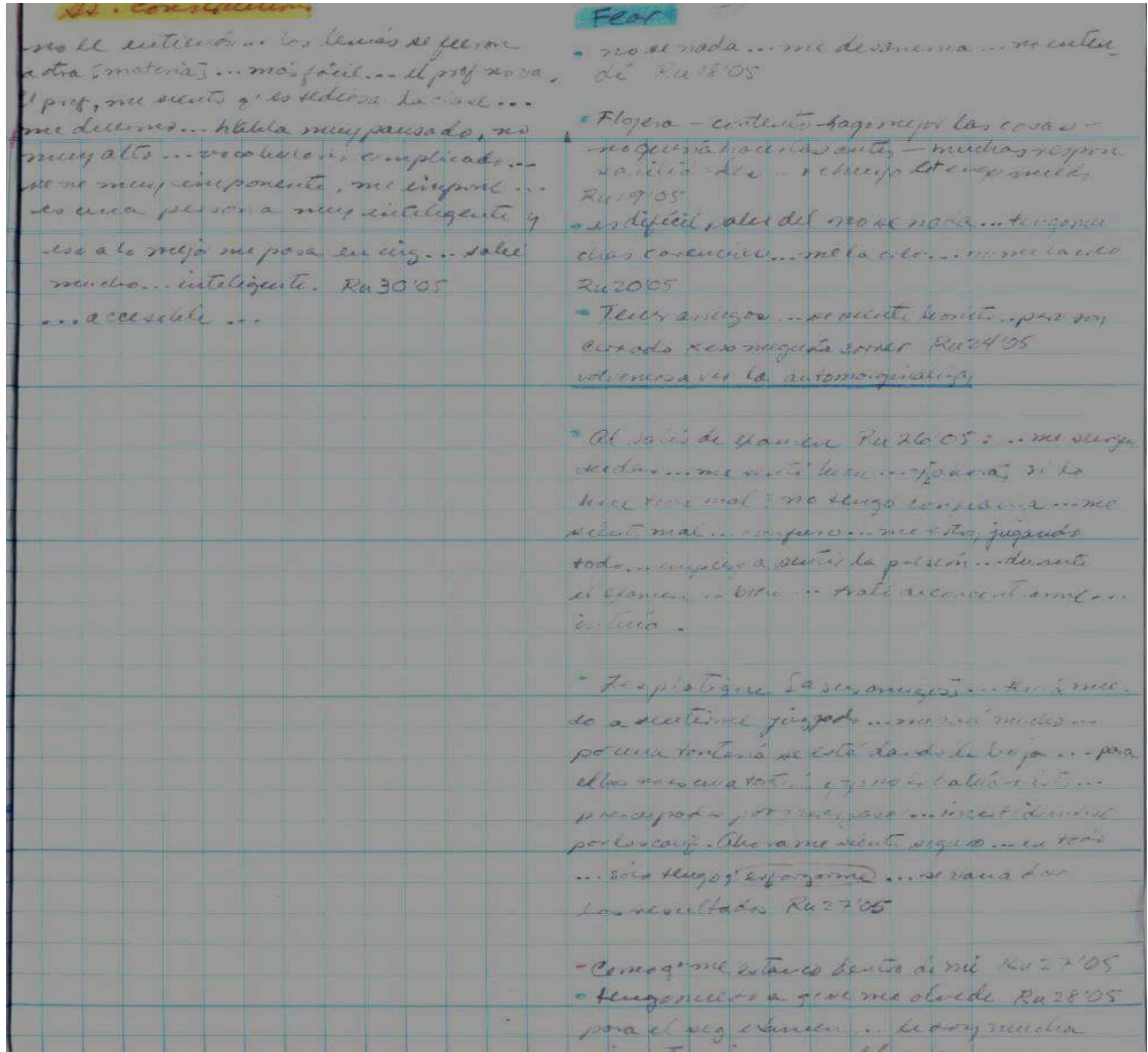
Picture 4 This picture shows how I organized data coming from different sources (interviews, field notes, researcher's journal) to build a theme.

Picture 5 Sample of the interconnection of initial categories (data from different sources). The interconnection is identified by the use of different colours (pink, yellow, blue, green and orange).

Picture 6. This picture shows how initial topics began changing into themes that constructed Chapter 4 during the process of interpretation.