

Are ELT Undergraduate Thesis-Writers Novice EFL Teacher-Researchers? A Case Study with In-Service Teachers¹

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the case of three Mexican teachers who wrote and defended a Bachelor of Arts (BA) thesis in ELT with an oral defense at a large public university where they had completed their course work more than 15 years before. The objective is to describe how these participants perceive the thesis writing process to determine whether they conceive it as a research activity and whether they perceive themselves as novice researchers. Findings indicate that participants' feelings of belonging to a foreign language department research community vary considerably from one participant to the other. These feelings result from how each participant experienced the thesis writing process and the related research activities. The level of engagement with the foreign language department research community was also a factor influencing a sense of belonging.

Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación analiza el caso de tres profesionales mexicanas pertenecientes al campo de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Dichos profesionales redactaron y llevaron a cabo la defensa de una tesis de licenciatura en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en una universidad pública en la cual realizaron sus estudios, después de más de 15 años de haber concluido sus créditos. El objetivo de esta investigación es describir cómo las tres participantes perciben el proceso de escritura de la tesis, con lo cual se busca determinar si dicho proceso es concebido como investigación y si las participantes se perciben a sí mismas como investigadoras noveles. Los resultados indican que su sentido de pertenencia a la comunidad investigadora de la facultad de lenguas de la que ahora son miembros varía considerablemente de una participante a otra. Se concluye con el argumento de que estos sentimientos están ligados a sus experiencias con el proceso de escritura de sus trabajos y con la actividad investigativa derivada de ello, así como al nivel de involucramiento que sostenían con la comunidad de investigadores de esta facultad de lenguas.

Introduction

English language teaching professionals in Mexico have a variety of teacher training backgrounds. However, university foreign language departments (FLDs), many of which are public Mexican universities, are among the most common providers of language teaching training in México (Ramírez Romero, 2013). Most of these FLDs offer four-to-five-year undergraduate ELT programs. Many Mexican ELT professionals, therefore, enroll in pre-service ELT programs, usually right after they finish their high school studies, at 17-19 years of age.

Meanwhile, due to Mexican national policies (Méndez López, 2016), faculty members at these FLDs are not only expected to do research (Hernández Méndez & Reyes Cruz, 2014) and publish research (Marsden & Kasproicz, 2017), they are also expected to teach pre-service teacher training students how to conduct research. Although there are alternatives for students in ELT programs to obtain their BA degree (e.g., portfolio, research seminars, MA degree), most Mexican universities require that their BA in ELT program students write and defend a thesis or final research paper as a degree requirement (Busseniers, Giles, Núñez Mercado & Rodríguez Luna, 2010; Sayer, 2007). Successfully writing and defending a thesis or final research paper allows these students to not only obtain an ELT degree, but to also become members of their FLD research community as novice researchers (Castineira, 2012).

In other countries, EFL teachers have also been encouraged to engage in research, essentially to inquire about and inform their classroom practice (Borg, 2009). Teacher research projects carried out by ELT practitioners and guided by ELT organizations around the world have been of interest to describe research cultures and to provide evidence of active engagement of teachers with instructional practice (Borg, 2013; Dikilitaş, Wyatt, Hanks, & Bullock, 2016). This paper analyzes the case of three Mexican EFL teachers who conducted research, wrote a thesis and defended this formal piece of academic writing in an oral exam before an academic committee, more than 15 years after having finished their coursework. Participants were interviewed and asked to describe the period of time they dedicated to thesis writing. In their account, they were guided to recall what drove them to successfully write and defend a BA in ELT thesis 15 years after they had finished their ELT program

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coursework. It was hoped that participants would provide information related to their engagement with research in the EFL field, perhaps as consumers of research or as producers of research (Borg, 2013). In addition, their story could situate thesis writing as a social practice embedded within a specific community, namely a FLD research community in a large public university in Central Mexico. Therefore, the research questions for this study are as outlined below:

- RQ1. How does a FLD research community become visible through the participants' accounts?
- RQ2. Do participants view themselves as novice researchers? If so, do they view themselves as part of the institutional FLD research community?
- RQ3. Is there any other community in which participants view themselves as members?

Literature review

Research in the ELT field

According to Borg (2013) and Dikilitas, et al. (2016), research in ELT could be carried out to inquire about one's teaching practice, to investigate instructional practice based on institute requirements to obtain an ELT degree for professional competitiveness, or to achieve two or all of these objectives. Further subdivisions of these categories, however, can result in other objectives as well. Some researchers may focus on how experienced ELT researchers and researchers in similar fields can get involved in training students or less experienced researchers (Ariza Pinzón & Aquilar González, 2016; Wyatt & Pasamar Márquez, 2016), whereas other researchers may be much more concerned with exploring how researchers report and share their findings with interested researchers through colloquia and publications (Trujeque Moreno, Encinas Prudencio, & Thomas-Ruzic, 2015; Nygaard, 2017). Some other researchers may be focused on the conditions under which the reading and writing of thesis writing took place and how those conditions contributed to successful thesis completion, especially at the graduate level (Difabio de Anglat, 2011). There has also been interest among researchers inquiring about the writing processes and the conditions under which graduate students finish a doctoral or master's thesis, while others explore how these students become members of a research community where they can fully participate with their research contributions (Ramírez García, Pérez Colunga, Soto Bernabé, Mendoza Tovar, Coiffier López, Gleason Guevara & Flores Zuñiga, 2017). However, there is very little research that investigates the case of undergraduate BA students in ELT and their view of themselves as writers, how this impacts the thesis writing process, and their involvement in the FLD research community.

While there is a marked interest in how undergraduate students cope with writing assignments in an effort to design teaching strategies to improve students learning and writing performance (Itua, Coffey, Merryweather, Norton & Foxcroft, 2014; Stockall & Villar Cole, 2016), there are few papers that focus on how they cope with a final research paper (i.e., thesis) at the end of their studies. Also, available research about undergraduate students who have been successful thesis writers considers participants whose ages range from 22 to 29 (Calvo López, 2009; Olmos López, 2010). There is no, or little direct, research where thesis students are 40 or older completing a BA thesis in ELT. This paper aims to fill this gap in the research by discussing the case of three undergraduate pre-service EFL teacher training students in their 40s, who completed their thesis writing in two years about 15 years after they finished all their program coursework while they were also serving in in-service English teacher training practicums.

Research on thesis writing

In a review of writing trends, Cuatlapantzi Pichón and Lima Xalteno (2017) describe the social-cognitive focus of these trends of writing practices that have been shaped by institutional and micro-social contexts; one such context is thesis writing. Thesis writing has generally been conceptualized as a joint learning journey during which a thesis supervisor and a thesis writer work closely together. The thesis writer engages in the craft of writing for a frequently unknown or seemingly hidden-for-him/her audience and where the thesis supervisor is the primary resource to conceptualizing this process for a long time to come (Ramírez García, et al., 2017). Similarly, Difabio de Anglat (2011) states that supervisors do not guide thesis writers in a void, as all tasks they perform during thesis supervision have to promote the thesis writer's access to the culture of research into a very specific community of practice: a discipline-specific research community. Access conditions to interact with equals and those in higher ranking positions in such a research community have to be created and enhanced in order for thesis writers to understand what is expected from them and their writing as determined by the culture of the academy (Calvo López, 2009; Difabio de Anglat, 2011).

As a whole, thesis writing has also been said to be a complex and beneficial-for-the-writer process. Ramírez García et al. (2017), for example, assert that writing a master's thesis is an opportunity to grow personally and professionally, as well as to learn to be a scholar and a researcher in university and academic settings. Learning to build on previous knowledge in order to fulfill one's own research is the primary outcome of graduate thesis writing; however, undergraduate thesis writing is often understood to be the beginning of the journey. Calvo López (2009) explains how knowledge and transformation processes become evident at different stages for undergraduate thesis writers. Where the relation of conceptual literature to their research arguments is not the difficulty, but rather expressing and owning the manner of doing in their writing are considered as the obstacles. Similarly, Cuatlapantzi Pichón, Lima Xalteno, Sánchez Hernández and Encinas Prudencio (2017) assert that learning how to write implies cognitive and social learning that enable undergraduate pre-service teacher trainer students to think and act as members of their professions by using the concepts and discursive tools that are used in their disciplines. To become members of a FLD research community, therefore, undergraduate pre-service teacher trainer students need to learn how to write a thesis, which involves reading research, doing research and reporting about research under the supervision of a scholar who is familiar with all three competencies aforementioned.

Research on writing and reporting about research

Undergraduate, pre-service teacher trainer students in FLDs may not be in contact with research, reading research, and doing research until they start writing a thesis or final research paper at the end of their BA studies. Tapia Carlin (2010) and Reyes Cruz, Rueda de León-Barbosa and Murrieta Loyo (2017) analyze undergraduate students' beliefs about research to determine whether they hold any misconceptions about the thesis writing process and to determine whether these misconceptions are in any way related to maturity and seniority when enrolled in such programs. Findings in Reyes-Cruz et al. (2017) match Wyatt and Pasamar Marquez's (2016) study in that they all found that participants may not have been old or mature enough to process what research entails and how research is reported in academic writing. Also, Wyatt and Pasamar Marquez (2016) did not anticipate in their study how intimidating it was for their first-year participants to approach individuals in order to collect data for their studies. Nevertheless, these and other studies (Ariza Pinzón & Aguilar González, 2016; Hunter, Laursen, & Seymour, 2007) suggest a consensus about the need to involve university students and pre-service language teacher trainer students in research degree programs as early as possible in order to create and enhance a culture of consuming and conducting research. This acquired understanding and knowledge of the academic research culture can in turn ease interpreting research texts and working with these texts in the building up one's written texts to produce research and thesis (González De la Torre, Jiménez Mora & Ignacio Rosas, 2016).

Similarly, teacher educators in FLDs may be more familiar with reading research and doing research than with writing and reporting about research. As is the case with many academics, these language professionals may also be struggling to find the time to read and do research, or to write research reports and to make this public in the shape of research products such as journal articles or book chapters (Méndez López, 2016; Nygaard, 2017). In their study with faculty members and institutional administrators from a university in southern Mexico, for example, Hernández Méndez and Reyes Cruz (2014) discuss how the goals of the community can encourage the increase and sustainability of research among its members. They point out to the fact that a national policy requires tangible research outputs as evidence to receive funding and the right to reward programs and incentives. In her study, Méndez López (2016) critically analyzed whether diversifying teachers' roles does bring positive impacts to themselves as teacher-researchers and their university students. Although faculty participants' motivation to conduct research can also reside in recognition and respect in academia (Alhor Martínez, 2018; Reyes Cruz, Murrieta Loyo, & Perales Escudero, 2018), a point is made by Méndez López (2016) about faculty not feeling entirely attracted by research as it seems to be perceived as a results-oriented part of their workload. Moreover, participants in her study report feeling immersed in a competitive and individualistic culture that does not promote mentoring amongst colleagues. Overall, factors such as primarily teaching-oriented workloads, the need for experienced researchers to help in the process, insufficient research training and insufficient research articles writing experience also add to the challenging transition to become researchers in the foreign language field (Alhor Martínez, 2018; Méndez López, 2016; Reyes Cruz, et al., 2018).

On the other hand, Hajdarpasic, Brew, and Popenici (2015) offer a view to complement the benefits of teacher educators engaged in research focusing on how undergraduate students feel they benefit from being taught by researchers at an Australian research-intensive university. In their study, Hajdarpasic et al. (2015) weigh the positive and negative impacts of research faculty on undergraduates. A positive

aspect reported by undergraduates, for example, is that they have the chance to be directly involved in research and can learn from the experience first-hand. A negative aspect of being taught by the research faculty is that students may feel that these research faculty are busy and unavailable to see them on a one-to-one basis. Benefits found by Hajdarpasic et al. (2015), however, surmounted the negative aspects since evidence for transferable skills and better rapport with faculty who seemed much more enthusiastic about their subject matter were significant motivating factors for undergraduates. Moreover, an increase in motivation to undertake postgraduate study was reported by students participating in the study. Although it clearly results in a challenging combination (Méndez López, 2016; Nygaard, 2017), language teaching professionals do benefit from research experience in their role as university scholars, especially when inner curiosity and a sincere desire to build on previous knowledge for the betterment of their lives, environments, and circumstances drive their efforts. This true enthusiasm for reading, doing, and reporting the research appears to be positively perceived by undergraduate pre-service teaching students, who might see their research-teaching staff as role models they want to be like and learn from (Hajdarpasic et al., 2015; Reyes Cruz et al., 2017)

Research on conceptions and beliefs about research

Language teachers might already belong to or wish to become members of specific communities, one of which may be an academic research community. Some research has focused on how language teachers and other professionals view research and the research communities they wish to belong to. Banegas (2017), Borg and Liu (2013) and Tabatabaei and Nazem (2013) use Borg's (2009) questionnaire to determine how EFL teachers, describe, perceive and understand good research, to describe how they perceive their institutional culture in relation to research, and to determine how they engage in research. Their results confirm many of the findings in Borg's (2009) original study in that respondents tend to associate research with rigorous scientific inquiry. As reported from those studies, participants also believe that large samples have to be studied in statistical terms in order to prove hypothesis so that findings from studies can be generalized, made public and made practical for intended audiences. In a related study, Roux, Mora, and Trejo (2013) also analyze the conceptions of Mexican EFL teachers about research. Their two participants, 56 and 32, are of interest to the present paper in that they graduated from BAs in ELT from Mexican public universities. Roux et al. (2013) analyzed written accounts produced by their participants in response to thinking about the last time they conducted research. In these four studies by Borg (2009), Banegas (2017), Roux et al. (2013) and Tabatabaei and Nazem (2013), the researchers conclude that EFL teachers and teacher trainers' engagement with research highly depends on how involved and accepted in the research communities they already belong to they feel they are.

Using follow-up interviews, Banegas (2017) and Borg and Liu (2013) discuss how participants' background plays a role not only in research views but also how they affect attitudes towards research. Banegas' (2017) participants who were based at Argentinian secondary schools, for example, viewed research as an activity where researchers were distant university intellectuals who came to their schools to obtain information, were not interested in working with classroom teachers and had no idea of teaching practice. His study suggests it is necessary to understand teacher researcher identity by describing who the researchers are, what researchers study (themselves or others), where the research takes place, and what the purposes of conducting research there are. Nevertheless, these participants' concept of research seems to be more influenced by the practices deriving from their experiences from their master's degree in Applied Linguistics and TESOL from a British university than by their previous BA studies. As acknowledged in other studies, being a member of research-based communities encourages school teachers (Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer, & Kyndt, 2017), university teachers and other academics (Ng & Pemberton, 2013) to make room for research despite the limited time that teaching might leave for it. The case of participants in Roux et al. (2013), therefore, is a valuable follow-up study to learn how participants' experience and job positions as coordinators could allow them to promote research among teachers who work under their supervision.

Research supervision for in-service teacher trainers may not only be offered by school coordinators, but also by teacher educators on university campuses. Vergara Luján, Hernández Gaviria and Cárdenas Ramos (2009), for example, illustrate the case of in-service school teachers who are taught how to research by Colombian university faculty. In a similar study, DeLuca, Bolden, & Chan (2017) describe how satisfied Canadian elementary school teachers were to have participated in a collaborative inquiry policy whose aim was to establish a systemic learning culture and to eventually improve student academic achievement. Further, Dikilitaş et al. (2016) report on several successful cases of in-service teachers enthusiastically engaging in teacher research as a result of joint efforts between IATEFL organization and their universities and schools. In yet another study (Burns & Westmacott, 2018),

Chilean university staff and school teachers were offered a pilot version of a teacher action research program supervised by a distance facilitator and a local mentor liaison. This last study emphasizes that involved teachers were able to submit a journal article or a conference proposal, which are highly valued program outcomes in their research communities.

Vergara Luján et al. (2009: 172) firmly believe that classroom research “lends teachers the opportunity to confront knowledge generated in other areas, to develop the necessary confidence and security to transform their practice in a way that responds to the needs and possibilities of their particular contexts and to develop the feeling of being professionals, which fosters a sense of belonging to the teaching profession.” Similarly, Dikilitas et al. (2016) highlight the benefits of teacher research for participant teachers’ professional development in some areas: personalized learning, systematized inquiry, a much deeper understanding of their practicum and teaching contexts, a development of autonomy and a feeling of more cohesively belonging to their workplace. Going by different names, classroom research, practitioner research, action research and teacher research (Borg, 2013), research seems to rightfully extend beyond university premises. For the case of the present study, university research is a starting point since participants are to be considered university students in the first place. These university students, however, are in-service teachers already immersed in a discourse community of their own (Nistor, Daxecker, Stanciu & Diekamp, 2015; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002), which is the workplace that inspires their research topic. The general objective of this paper is to determine a possible sense of belonging to the university research community they came back to—a FLD research community in Central Mexico. In turn, this could lead us to assert that participants have started to develop a teacher research identity (Taylor, 2017).

Methodology

This paper intends to understand how participants perceive a specific social phenomenon by eliciting in-depth descriptions of their lived experiences as BA thesis writers, which is a potentially crucial moment in their personal lives and professional careers. Thesis writers who are 40 to 50 years old are of special interest to achieve this paper’s objectives because they are believed to be able to reflect on events that affect their lives more deeply. In addition, the chosen participants are seen as strongly committed and resilient individuals who may be able to describe processes in more detail than their 20 to 25 year-old counterparts. In order to access participants’ understanding and emotions towards the possibility of becoming fully accepted researchers and belonging to a FLD research community, a case study, qualitative design to approach data collection and analysis were used (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

The three participants in this study were female undergraduate ELT students in their forties who wrote their BA thesis in ELT 15-20 years after they finished their BA coursework. They are all married and have worked as EFL teachers in the high school or junior high schools in the Mexican public-school system. They all were accepted at their workplaces as “pasantes,” according to Sayer (2007), “someone who has finished the coursework, but not the final thesis requirement” (p. 72). They all live in urban areas and have two children. Although no information about the reasons why they had to write and defend the thesis to be able to graduate was elicited from them, it is assumed that as Olmos López (2010) describes, they “failed or retook a course during BA studies” (p. 160). Appendix E shows how the compulsory thesis writing and defense policy for all BA students at this large public university works. Two of the participants belonged to the 1992-2008 BA in ELT program, while a third participant expressed being from the very first BA program, 1984-1991. The first participants worked with the researcher in this study on a “tesista-director” (undergraduate thesis writer-thesis supervisor) relationship, and the latter was introduced to the researcher by staff members in the FLD when she was doing her after-oral defense paperwork. Pseudonyms for the first two participants are Ruth and Loren, and the third participant is called Ellie.

Instruments

Data for this study was collected conducting one-time in-depth interviews with each participant. An interview protocol in Spanish was prepared, along with retrospection visual aids (Gass & Mackey, 2000), which were (1) a timeline regarding the thesis process, (2) a diagram showing two circles, one for indicating the people who were around the thesis writer at the beginning of the process, and a second circle to depict who were around the thesis writer at the end, (3) a printed copy of the participant’s thesis and (4) pictures of students using a computer or a library. See Appendix A for English version of these materials, or Appendix B for original Spanish version. The objective of the interview was to help the participant recall the period she invested in writing her thesis. The timeline, for example, was intended to frame that period and to give perspective as to the amount of time that

passed between individual events and when events occurred. The two-circles diagram was intended to reveal whether people who were around the thesis writer were the same as those people in the final stages of their thesis writing process, and the last two aids were intended to help participants articulate how they proceeded to channel their thesis writing efforts.

Data collection procedures

Participants were contacted via email and by telephone 4-10 months after their oral defense took place. They all consented to be interviewed about their thesis writing experience and audio recorded for research purposes. Then, they agreed on a date for the face to face interview. Contacting, meeting and interviewing participants were all conducted in Spanish. Ruth, a school teacher who had afternoons free at the time, agreed to be interviewed on a weekday afternoon within the premises of the FLD. Loren had two jobs at the time, one in a morning school and another one in an afternoon after school. For this reason, she was interviewed during school holidays, in a shopping mall of her choice for convenience. Ellie lived in another state at the time, and she could not drive or travel alone due to an illness. For this reason, she was interviewed on a Saturday morning, when she was in town to visit family, in a shopping mall of her choice for convenience. Participants were interviewed in a one-to-one format, and they were asked for their consent to be audio-recorded; only the researcher was with them during the interview. Retrospection visual aids were used during interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed.

Data analysis procedures

Data consisting of Spanish transcripts from in-depth interviews were analyzed manually using theme analysis (Creswell, 2014). The three transcriptions were read at three different times: a month after data was collected in order to allow for researcher objectivity, then another month later for data analysis, and another time while sharing preliminary findings with colleagues via forum and colloquia. The objective of the first holistic reading was to see each participant as an individual with a story to tell. Preliminary commonalities among the three participants were drawn, such as the reasons for writing their thesis, their academic and research skills, and opportunities for professional development. The participants appeared to have several more areas of commonalities in analyzing data collected through visual aids during in-depth interviews. Those commonalities, which included elements such as age, number of children, and residence details were transferred to a summarizing table (see Appendix C). The objective was to set these participants' characteristics aside in order to focus on themes and patterns that could help answer the research questions.

Results and discussion

The analysis here focused on (a) the writing of undergraduate thesis as a social practice, (b) what thesis writing and doing research requires the writer to do, and (c) a wish or need to continue researching a new member of the research community. Each theme and salient relationships among them were then cross-referenced to refine initial coding into less overlapping themes. Quotes from participants that are relevant for the analysis below were translated by the researcher and are presented here. Original quotes in Spanish can be seen in Appendix D, each of them identified with numbers between square brackets []. The first section of this analysis tries to answer RQ1. *How does a FLD research community become visible through the participants' accounts?* The following section attempts to answer RQ2. *Do participants view themselves as novice researchers? If so, do they view themselves as part of the institutional FLD research community?,* and RQ3. *Is there any other community where participants view themselves as members?*

The writing of EFL undergraduate thesis as a social practice

The participants' accounts reveal the existence of a community in which social practices need to be acknowledged and respected. Some of these practices were referred to several times throughout their interviews and were highlighted as part of the social conventions they had to adhere to in order to write their thesis. The most notable practice was that the thesis writer has a thesis supervisor, not two or three, but one supervisor. This thesis writer-supervisor relationship was dictated by the supervisor in that he/she (1) determined how frequently, when and where they met, (2) indicated what needed to be changed in the writing, and (3) decided when thesis writing finished. Examples of all these points were found in all participants accounts. Ellie and Ruth explained that it was hard for students not based in the city the FLD supervisors worked in to attend or reschedule meetings. As well, supervisors who stopped working temporarily or permanently at the FLD would leave thesis writers to their own resources. An additional problem seems to be related to the fact that participants were not allowed to choose a supervisor. All three participants indicated that a supervisor was appointed for them. The

writing of an undergraduate thesis as a social practice appeared to be in full control of the FLD, or at least it seemed to be the case for students who were far from the FLD premises and disengaged from its academic culture. This tight control may not necessarily be negative, as it could be a way to prevent students from being unattended since administrative staff in the FLD is formally involved in the thesis writer-supervisor relationship. Further details about whether thesis writers would find this control helpful, however, are not available in the present data.

Analysis of data does reveal some of what occurs during sessions with supervisors as participants indicate what supervisors would do and say to them. These interactions with supervisors seem to reveal that there were instances where thesis writers felt lost and unsure about how to proceed. A clear power-relationship in which thesis writers are placed in an unequal position in relation to their supervisors becomes evident here. As an example of that, two participants were not sure whether they were allowed to ask their supervisor what was required of them, while Ellie ventured to ask her supervisor about what he wanted her to do. This could also suggest that thesis writers believe that thesis writing is done with the help of experts who correct their English writing and that they are expected to find their writing experts so as not to bother their supervisors. As expressed by both Ellie and Loren, they were or were not lucky to have someone who helped them with their English. While Ellie was fortunate enough to have someone to help her with her writing continuously, Loren had to do all the writing on her own as no one would volunteer or have the skills to help her. Please see Appendix D for original Spanish quotes from participants, each of them identified by numbers between square brackets []:

Loren: *"...There were many people who gave me moral support, who encouraged me, but to write, I did it all by myself... There, in the teachers' room and at home, in the dining room, always alone, writing..."*³[1]

This is a curious finding, and it would be interesting to see whether other thesis writers would believe that thesis writing is to be done with an expert who helps them with their English, or not. Finally, the participants' accounts reveal the presence of other community members, especially as thesis writers and supervisor worked towards finishing the writing in order to reach the next stage of the process. Also, participants report that the supervisor was not only the person who asked for corrections to be made but also a source of support and encouragement:

Ruth: *I feel that with all those issues, I could have quit in the middle of it all, but luckily it didn't happen because my supervisor stayed with me until the end.* [2]

Loren: *Yes, yes, May 8th. Yes, I perfectly [remember], I will never forget it, I will never forget that day. It was my oral examination, my theses defense, before my committee; they were Professor J and Professor L and my supervisor; ...* [3]

Ellie: *First of all, my supervisor, here. And back at home, I had David [native-speaker colleague]; in fact, I just stopped by his home last week and gave him a copy [of thesis], because I mention him at the beginning.* [4]

Ruth appears to believe that the supervisor would not be present for the oral dissertation at the end which, as confirmed by Loren's comment, was not the case. The committee for the oral dissertation is composed of two professors and the thesis writer's supervisor. This committee, from Loren's comments throughout the interview, appears to be entitled to reject the finished thesis at the end of the oral dissertation and to act as gatekeepers (Castineira, 2012) of the research community she could become a member of if not rejected. Finally, Ellie's comment reveals the presence of people she was grateful to, and whom she had in mind when she was asked to write dedications at the beginning of her finished paper.

Thesis writing: reporting about doing research?

Participants' accounts in this section describe (a) thesis structure, (b) academic writing conventions, (c) specific research-related tasks and (d) how they worked and organized their time. Here, I attempt to determine whether participants perceive these elements of research activity as traits that could define who they are as EFL teaching students, teaching practitioners, teacher-researchers and university FLD researchers. Participants' accounts are therefore scrutinized in order to unveil a wish or need to continue researching as new members of this FLD research community. The way they perceive their theses and thesis writing activity is therefore analyzed for any signs of enjoyment and feelings of belonging to this research community.

³ See Appendix D for original Spanish quotes from participants, each of them identified by numbers between square brackets [].

First, all three participants were able to describe thesis structure according to the conventions of the research community at this FLD. They all identified five chapters, but they were not perfectly certain about what each chapter should be about. Participants showed different degrees of certainty about what they did in their role of novice researchers in each chapter or section of their papers. This sort of full reliance on memory much more than on practical experience could lead us to believe that they had not engaged in similar research activity after their thesis writing and oral examination took place. Although reasons for why this occurred are not available for the present study, it could be thought that their workplace did not solicit or encourage them to produce any research-related product such as a report, a briefing or a presentation (Borg, 2013; Dikilitaş et al., 2016). There is, however, some evidence in the participants' accounts to believe that they enjoyed themselves while they did research. For example, when using the academic writing conventions that this FLD research community asked for, they felt seriously challenged; but they managed to cope with it with the help of their children:

Ruth: *It was like, the fear [of using the computer]... my supervisor used the computer, and I said, oh no, not that, and little by little trying to overcome it.*

The help, with the computer, I said, come, help me, how do you do this? And they [her children] tried to help me."[5]

Ellie: *'Mum, how's your thesis going? The quotes, how are you doing?' He [older son] was taking academic writing [at the junior high school]... He said, 'I know they go like this, mum, but if not, we can look it up,' and because he understands the web perfectly, he surfed and all and said, 'Look, it's like this.'* [6]

Loren: *I asked them, I said, 'Son, come help me here'; the computer, it was hard, not to type, but what the computer does; he said 'Ok, but pay attention. It was frustrating.'*[7]

Although most of the participants' concerns seemed to be related to the use of technology, there were several other skills that participants had not anticipated would be necessary to carry out research. From their accounts, the research community at this FLD expected participants to carry out research as fully equipped EFL teaching training students. Unfortunately, all three participants reported not feeling prepared fully for this novice research experience due to the time that had passed between finishing their coursework and embarking in thesis writing. Yet, there are instances where participants seem to enjoy some of the conducting research experience. For example, when they describe specific research-related tasks, how they worked and organized their time, they seem to re-picture themselves in the places where they worked with a fairly positive attitude:

Ellie: *Yes, first, I had it all in cards, I had the first books in cards, then the last ones I have them in my laptop, and there I read them; I underlined the most important things, all that is there in my laptop ...*

I also had a little notebook, to write my summaries, when I considered the information to be difficult or complicated; I took out my notebook and made notes, to type them later in my thesis, in my own words, and in a simpler way...

I read constantly, there was always something when I looked for things to read; I was looking for something and another thing came up and I said 'oops, well, I'll save it for another occasion' and kept looking, and what I found I read it right there, then I came back to what I saved before which was sometimes very good information. [8]

Ruth: *Well, I liked the FLD library because it was a quiet place, where one could think, read, like in quiet places where I could sit down to write and think or read.*

I had like, at home, the computer, there was internet, it was basically what I needed; when I read my summaries, I liked sheets better, than the computer, I still can't get used to study like that, then I prefer to write things on sheets, recycled paper where I could write my notes and then, I saved them for later because they helped me, to remember, a note, to remember things... I kept all my sheets. [9]

Loren: *Well, I sat down, took out my laptop, my bibliography, I sat down to try to write and write and write which was... Write and write and I put everything else aside a little, I turned off the radio, turned off the TV, asked my kids to be somewhere else so they would let me work, during the holidays, especially. That June-July period was when I was fully dedicated to that, write, write, write and write, when I was not working.*

At first, I came to the library, to look for information, but the place to sit down and write was home, there I had the evenings to sit down in the dining room and write. [10]

The use of verb tense in the participants' accounts above could also be an indicator of how ingrained the reading-writing activity was in their self-perception of novice researchers. While Loren uses

finished past tense verbs and expressions, "the place was... I had the evenings to... that period... it was when I was fully dedicated to that," Ruth incorporates habitual behavior descriptions: "I still can't get used to studying like that, and then I prefer to write things on sheets." Ruth's perception of thesis writing could, therefore, be a changing academic-skills oriented experience that she might be willing to undergo. Ellie's use of recursive tenses as in "I took out my notebook and made notes, to type them later in my thesis," could reveal that she was able to see reading, writing, and research as a cyclic, back and forward activity. Furthermore, her use of present verb tenses as in "then the last ones I have them in my laptop and there I read [present tense] them" can be an indicator of her considering using her still-in-her-computer materials again. As it can be seen, although all three participants express some excitement when describing the research-related tasks they had to do, not all of them seem to be fully attracted to doing these tasks and to researching as a whole.

When describing moments of frustration, Loren and Ellie explain why their writing time did not last for very long. One difference between them has to do with the amount of control they had over the source of interruptions. While Ellie took advantage of how her duties at work were evenly distributed, Loren had to cope with unexpected interruptions she was not able to escape from. These interruptions came from the comings and goings of colleagues who would ask her how much she had already written. These comments provide evidence of participants interacting with members of communities other than the research community at this FLD: the students and coworkers at their workplace. As for Ruth, she would express frequent lack of concentration in this FLD's library, which may be related to her feeling alien to the setting (Nistor, Daxecker, Stanciu & Diekamp, 2015; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Nevertheless, further evidence for this assumption would have to be gathered.

Feeling a member of the institutional research community

In this section, each participant's case is analyzed separately, as participants' feelings of belonging (Nistor, Daxecker, Stanciu & Diekamp, 2015; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) are thought to be of fairly different degrees. Ellie, for example, seems to be the most enthusiastic about being a student again, especially one who would carry out novice research in the form of academic tasks such as reading about her topic of interest, writing with the help of an expert and feeling curious about her findings, issues in the field and how this process flows through her as a novice scholar.

Ellie: *It was almost towards the end of my writing that, I found the term, the message and I said, 'I should have started there'; ... I am left like; I felt like I needed to continue, researching about my topic, I feel it is important; ... I feel it's not all perfectly clear to me like, like I want to learn more about these terms because I feel they are more complicated; I feel that if I investigate a bit more, I would have a clearer idea.*

As I went on, as I got involved, I felt more and more interested... to investigate, to know more... in fact, now that I finished my thesis, I started another project at work and, my colleague Aura, she said, 'Oh God, it's been barely a month you finished and you are already doing something else' and I said, 'Believe it or not, writing my thesis resulted in this anxiety to want, to be doing something, to investigate more...' [11]

Ruth describes the experience as attractive, but she feels that she was underprepared. This feeling seems to prevent her from fully belonging to the research community she is now a member of. Her achievement, though, changes her status at her workplace, a community she entirely feels a member of, which appears to boost her self-confidence and her readiness to undertake another research experience in the future.

Ruth: *Well, what I feel now is that I was 'short,' I should have read much more because there is a lot of information, isn't there? I feel that I had to read much more, to commit to it much more.*

And like, I ended up with that feeling, working under pressure, and that you have to study, you have to do research, you have to find things, like I need it to some point, because I got used to that, that is the way one has to work, under pressure, and I think I need it.

There, at school for example, I am in a list now, that I now have... because I had a 'pasante' status, and right now I have my degree so, I have the... intention, to keep on studying, not just up to there and er... I now feel... good, I feel ok and at peace, I feel relieved, better now. [12]

Loren's case, however, is entirely different. She claims that it was a painful and overwhelming experience, and there are no comments which suggest she would like to go through it again. Loren even acknowledges using avoidance strategies to escape from her novice researcher duties momentarily. This avoidance is constantly referred to as a result of fear to produce academic writing, which she weighs against other skills she feels better at. It is encouraging, however, that she would

choose to do academic work in her language to restore her confidence in being a student capable of coping with academic demands:

Loren: *It was a diploma course I decided to take, a teaching certification. So I dedicate more time to the diploma course, I leave my thesis. It tormented me because it was very difficult because it was hard for me. The thought of sitting down and write [in English] scared me, I felt panic. So, I did my diploma course assignments that were in Spanish.*

I feel that I am better at speaking, at expressing myself orally than at writing, I feel that it was one of my problems during my studies, to write. Teaching, I think that I can teach my students, I can do that. I explain, they understand, but for me to write texts... when I started this [thesis writing] I realized it was very hard for me; it is not my thing, I am not good at it. [13]

Loren's unevenly felt language skills seem to have pushed her somehow in the end, as she seemed to look forward to her oral defense, where family and friends were allowed to physically enter into the research community that was to welcome her as a new member. The presence of gatekeepers (Castineira, 2012), it seems, triggered most of the support she was given. Her oral defense appears to have put an end to a painful journey, as she recalls from a visit to her doctor sometime later:

Loren: *That day, my oral defense day, I had many text messages on my mobile, many colleagues from work congratulated me, friends, very close friends sent me text messages 'break a leg! You can do it, Loren!' I received lots of moral support that day.*

My doctor asked, 'How is your blood pressure problem?' and I said, 'I don't have a headache anymore' and he asked me whether I had had my oral dissertation and I said yes. He said, 'You see? I told you it was stress'; I had been there to see him because I could not see with this eye, about three weeks before the oral defense.

I was not going to be able to do it, like, due to my age, to all the time I had been away from school, to my children, my work, all that; this day seemed so far and difficult to get to. [14]

Unfortunately, Loren's case is one where thesis writing is conceived as a finishing line. It is a point to get to in order to be allowed to keep her job. Ruth and Ellie, on the other hand, do welcome the possibility of seeing themselves as novice researchers even though they were also first forced to start thesis writing for the same primarily instrumentally-motivated reasons (Borg, 2013). Their sense of belonging into the FLD research community under study is, however, rather weak, for they refer to this research community as a distant group of academics who require them to do a series of tasks and go through a series of steps to authorize the quality and worthiness of the academic research paper they have to write.

Limitations

Since it was not possible to contact participants for a second time, study findings are limited to one-time-collected data. For this reason, the present study cannot venture to assert that participants have found a way to participate in some form of research design, implementation or dissemination beyond their final research paper writing and defense. In addition, the answers from two of the participants in this research might have been biased by the fact that they were interviewed by their former thesis supervisor, even though this interview took place almost a year after oral defense. In addition, interviewing conditions may not have been ideal for research purposes, even though they all seemed comfortable and willing to talk about their experience. Should the possibility to interview these participants again be given, care to do it within FLD facilities would be taken. This could allow for video recordings of participants, which could produce much richer and more precise data.

Conclusions

Participants had some difficulties, all of them related to the 15-20-year gap between finishing their coursework and writing a final research paper from scratch. First, the FLD where they studied had changed greatly. Two curriculum plans had been implemented after theirs, and a new plan was already being considered. Improvements aimed to fully equip undergraduates in these new curricula to write research proposals and final research papers. Expectations for participants in the present study were therefore high, both linguistically, and in terms of research. In addition, they were not in close contact with this rapidly developing FLD research community to get familiar with variants of research design, new foci in English language learning and teaching, ways to incorporate research on their regular practice, and ways to disseminate research for other interested ELT professionals during those years. These participants' accounts, however, reveal that this FLD may have to (1) explicitly describe how

things are done or expected to be done in this research community; (2) make these expectations public for current students and for students who return after some time.

Since participants in this study did not at any point of their accounts refer to rules or a protocol given to them at the beginning of their thesis writing process, potential supervisors at this FLD research community may be taking for granted that potential thesis writers are familiar with supervisor assignment protocols, as well as with other supervisor-thesis writer relationship elements such as:

- how communication between supervisor and thesis writer should occur
- whether supervisors are willing to correct the writer's English or just content
- how often face-to-face meetings should occur and how long they are
- how thesis writers should prepare for face-to-face meetings
- whether supervisors are flexible or demanding with thesis writers
- how long thesis writers can see the supervisor / what deadlines they have
- what to do in case a supervisor is no longer or never available
- whether any paperwork could formalize the thesis writer-supervisor dyad
- whether the supervisor plays any role at the thesis writer oral dissertation

In addition, thesis writers who have not been permanently in contact with this FLD research community could seriously benefit from a summary of academic, IT, academic writing and research skills that they are expected to have before a supervisor is appointed to them. Although these details may be explicitly described in research methodology textbooks that students at this ELT training program might be using during their coursework, it feels necessary that they are also described by the FLD research community in order to fulfill its very own specific objectives. In case there are already official documents that thesis writers and supervisors use to regulate their work such as writing rubrics, telling teaching students who come back after many years where those can be accessed (e.g., an official web page or a learning platform) would clear the months to come for many of them. In case there are no official documents that thesis writers can refer to, these would have to be created, approved by the FLD research community and made public for students and teachers' use. This document or documents could also highlight expected behaviors such as:

- Learning to view thesis writing as a form of research
- Understanding the cyclic nature of academic writing
- Developing academic reading strategies
- Perceiving research as an integral part of our teaching lives

Not only could teaching students who come back after some years benefit from such a public document, but current students and their supervisors would have a common document to refer to when working together in their joint enterprise – thesis writing. Finally, this FLD research community should be prepared to acknowledge and celebrate individual differences among current teaching students and teaching students who come back after some time to get their degree. As much as we would like to see every undergraduate go through thesis writing and defense, it may not suit everyone, and it could collapse some practitioners' already successful ELT careers (Sayer, 2007). This two-year enterprise did not come easy for the three participants in this study, and it was their determination and affective environment which appear to be the key factors that took them all the way to the end. As Ojeda and Encinas (2013) and Banegas' (2017) acknowledge, ELT professionals in secondary and high school contexts might experience ways to professional development entirely differently from academics.

These three participants managed to carry out research, and to report on it following basic research standards, both orally and in writing with very little or no prior research experience. The three managed to go through the social practices of writing for a research committee, who would, in turn, decide whether each of these participants was to be accepted as a new member of this FLD research community. Finally, not only have the three participants become rightful members of the ELT research field, but two of them have also expressed their personal desire to be somehow involved in research again. This desire is an essential ingredient to become *consumers* of research, which should go hand in hand with eventually *producing* research. As for practitioners who do not express a desire to be involved in research again, a FLD research community should be ready to welcome much more practical and just as honorable exits for undergraduates to obtain their degree. Some of these options could include putting together a portfolio about their teaching practicum, design course materials or develop curriculum for language learning contexts in need (Sayer, 2007). Learner differences in

student teachers and teacher trainers alike should allow for an effort to cater to as many of these learner differences as possible. In the end, what FLDs want are ELT teachers who fully engage with their workplace as a result of becoming more reflective, pro-active and less dependent on expert advice (Borg, 2013; Dikilitas et al., 2016).

Directions for further research

Collection of subsequent data to confirm first-time collected data feels crucial to inform an individual's specific reasons to continue his/her professional development and to take any further steps to participate in some form of ELT research. Alternatively, a larger number of participants would yield better insights as to whether there are any real patterns in undergraduates' circumstances that lead to common decision-making processes and similar coping strategies. In both cases, a longitudinal study design might better serve data collection purposes, analysis, and outcomes. Larger amounts of data could also be used to explore Ellie's use of recursive tenses further, as they could reveal that participants might perceive reading, writing, and research as a cyclic, back and forward activity. Although this FLD is primarily interested in providing undergraduate students with all necessary research skills and knowledge while they are doing their ELT program, it feels necessary to be alert about undergraduates who come back after several years to obtain their degree (MacKeracher, 2004; Merriam, Cafarella & Baumgartner, 2007). While some policies have been enforced in an effort not to employ degreeless undergraduates, the ELT context in Mexico might become lax again (SEP, 2018). This could result in the possibility of our current undergraduates finding job positions now and coming back to us for thesis writing later.

Close collaboration with colleague researchers who are also interested in undergraduates in similar conditions across the country may seriously be considered for future work. Conducting forms of research where briefings or reports for school committees are expected could also encourage a more informed problem-solving mindset, self-criticism, and much more collaborative practitioners. These undergraduate-student participants could be invited to collaborate in research groups in universities in a follow-up phase, which would undoubtedly enrich research outcomes within our and other FLDs. Former participants' collaboration in our research groups could, in turn, help them become more active agents of change and improvement in their workplaces, or research sites (Patton & Parker, 2017), as well as to enjoy systematic inquiry and to feel constantly curious and challenged about language teaching.

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Appendix A

Protocol for interview

BA IN ELT THESIS: FINISHED DOCUMENT AND DEFENSE Cohort or student ID: _____
Mark exact date or month and year.

Started BA: _____ Finished BA: _____ Started writing thesis: _____ Finished writing thesis: _____

Personal Timeline

1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
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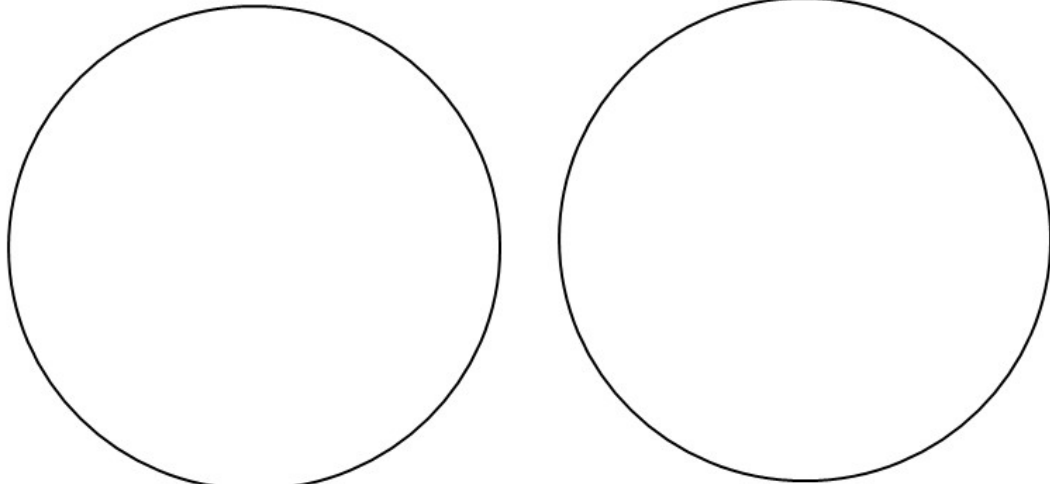
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BA IN ELT THESIS: FINISHED DOCUMENT AND DEFENSE Cohort or student ID: _____

Write ME/I in the center of each circle. Write the names of 5-7 people who were around you at the beginning and at the end of your thesis writing process.

Thesis writing: the beginning

Thesis writing: the end



Guiding questions

Thank you for coming. I am interested in you because you finished your BA thesis. Congratulations. The purpose of these interviews is to inquire about the factors / elements that helped and inhibited the writing of your thesis, as well as the specific actions you undertook to achieve thesis completion.

(Show timeline and calendars to each participant) Can you please fill in these dates? Cohort, year / date finished studies, start the thesis and finished thesis dates. If you would like to take this worksheet with you to make a note of more accurate dates, you can do so and come back / send it later. How do you feel now about having finished your thesis?

(Show calendars that display the time thesis writing took them) These are the years / months of your life which were dedicated to writing your thesis. Would you like to share what was going on with you / your life while you were writing your thesis? Are there any events / moments that you remember happened / were happening during that period of time? Could you please mark these moments / events in these calendars? Which of these events do you remember the most? Did they affect the writing of your thesis in any way, either positively or negatively?

Think about the people at that time; did anyone affect / influence your writing thesis performance? (Show the two circles diagram). Who was helpful or unhelpful? Who was motivating / demotivating?

Now, I am going to ask you about the actual writing of your thesis. If you do happen to remember anything related to the previous questions, feel free to bring up your comment. Here is a copy of your thesis (hand over thesis from the library). Again, congratulations. As you possibly remember, you left a copy of it in the library as part of your titulación requirements. Do you have any comments before I start with the questions? Any comments you would like to make? Thank you.

Ok. First, do you remember how your thesis is structured? How many or which chapters is it divided in? Do you remember what they are called? Did you write your chapters "in order"?

Now, how hard or easy was it to write each chapter? Which chapter took you the longest? Was there any factor (event / person) which prevented you from writing? Was there any situation that you had to overcome / which required your attention? How did you manage to retake writing? Was writing your thesis helpful for you in any way? Did it help you focus your attention, or did it help you forget about a problem you had at least momentarily?

Can I ask you about your health? Were you healthy / feeling healthy at the time you were writing? Did you notice any change in your well-being? Did you have any minor aches or recurring pains while writing your thesis?

Can you describe the place(s) where you performed the writing of your thesis? (Show pictures of students using a computer / the library). How comfortable was your seat? What could you see from where you were sitting? What tools, office equipment, and stationery items were available to you? How did you make up for unavailable things?

How did you manage your reading and writing (notebooks / photocopies / online searches / cards / printings)? How did you go about correcting your work? What did you do right after you got feedback about your writing? How did you proceed? Was your reading / writing, would you say, fluent / frequent / massive / thin / sporadic? How would you describe your reading / writing?

Is there anything else you would like to share with me? Do you have any questions for me? Would you like to tell me more about another appointment?

Thank you very much for your generous time.



Appendix B

Original Spanish version protocol

TÉRMINO Y DEFENSA DE TESIS DE LICENCIATURA: Datos de temporalidad Generación o matrícula: _____
Indique fecha exacta o mes y año o año:

Inicio estudios: _____ Término de estudios: _____ Inicio tesis: _____ Término de tesis: _____

Línea de tiempo personal

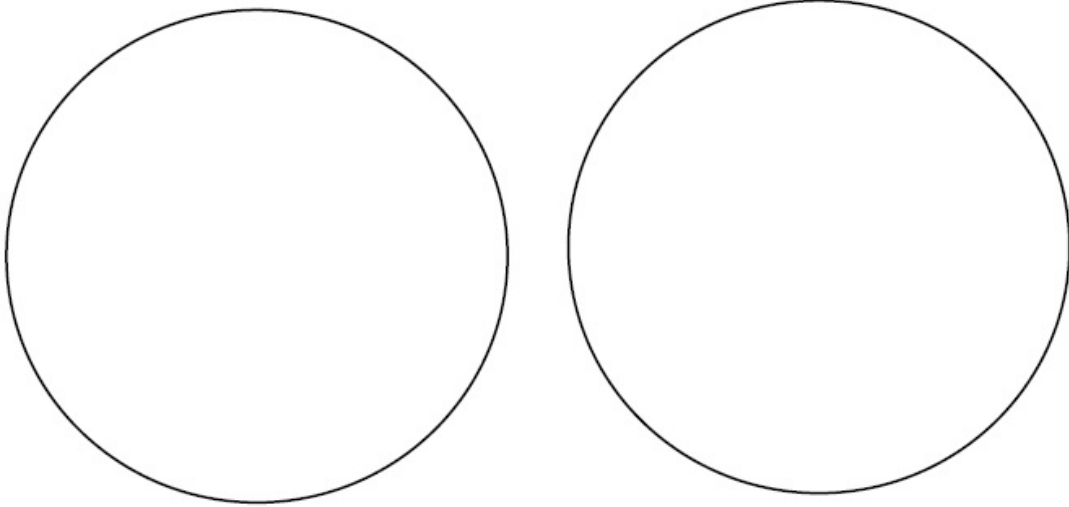
1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
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⇒ ⇒

TÉRMINO Y DEFENSA DE TESIS DE LICENCIATURA: Datos de convivencia Generación o matrícula: _____

Marque al centro la palabra YO. Escriba los nombres de 5-7 personas con las que convivió al inicio y término de su escritura de tesis.

Inicio tesis: Término tesis:



Guía de preguntas

Gracias por venir. Me interesa mucho platicar con usted debido a que terminó y defendió su tesis de licenciatura. Muchas felicidades por este logro.

El propósito de esta(s) entrevista(s) es el de conocer un poco más acerca de los factores o elementos que favorecieron o retrasaron el proceso de escritura de su tesis, así como de las acciones en particular que usted llevó a cabo para lograr su objetivo, que era terminar su tesis.

Primero me gustaría que me ayudara a llenar este formato con algunos datos (hoja datos de temporalidad). Si gusta, puede llevarse esta hoja para llenarla con datos más precisos y hacérmela llegar después.

¿Cómo se siente ahora que ya terminó su tesis?

(Mostrar calendarios correspondientes al tiempo en el que escribieron sus tesis) Estos son los meses y años de su vida que usted dedicó a la escritura de su tesis. ¿Me podría compartir qué sucedía en su vida mientras duró la escritura de su tesis? Durante ese periodo de tiempo, ¿hubo algún momento o evento del que no se haya olvidado? ¿Podría marcar esos momentos o eventos en los calendarios? ¿Qué cosas recuerda más? ¿Estos momentos, afectaron su proceso de escritura de tesis, ya sea positiva o negativamente?

Por favor recuerde usted a la gente que le rodeaba en aquellos días (hoja datos de convivencia) ¿Hubo alguien que afectara o influyera en su escritura de tesis? ¿Hubo alguien que fuera de poca o mucha ayuda? ¿Quién o quiénes? ¿Quién o quiénes fueron una fuente de motivación o de desaliento?

Ahora le voy a preguntar sobre el proceso de escritura de su tesis en sí. Si hay algo que recuerde sobre las preguntas anteriores, con toda libertad, puede interrumpirme y hacer su comentario. Aquí tengo una copia de su tesis, una vez más, felicidades por este logro. ¿Tiene algún comentario antes de que empiece con las preguntas? Gracias.

Muy bien. Primero que nada, ¿recuerda usted cómo se encuentra estructurada su tesis? ¿En cuántos capítulos se divide? ¿Se acuerda cómo se titula cada capítulo? ¿Escribió sus capítulos "en orden" (primero el 1, luego el 2 y así sucesivamente)?

¿Qué tan fácil o difícil fue escribir cada capítulo? ¿Qué capítulo le tomó más tiempo o trabajo? ¿Hubo algún factor, evento o persona que le impidiera escribir su tesis? ¿Hubo alguna situación que usted tuvo que atender o que tuviera que enfrentar? ¿Cómo le hizo para retomar su proceso de escritura?

Escribir su tesis, ¿le ayudaba a usted en algo? Por ejemplo, ¿le ayudaba a olvidarse de algún problema, a enfocar su atención en otra cosa, al menos por un rato?

¿Puedo preguntarle por su salud? ¿Usted se encontraba saludable, se sentía sano durante el tiempo que escribió su tesis? ¿Notó algún cambio en su bienestar general? ¿Tuvo alguna dolencia menor o molestia física de algún tipo durante el tiempo que escribió su tesis? ¿Eran recurrentes?

(Mostrar fotografías de estudiantes a la computadora) ¿Me puede describir el lugar o lugares en el/los que usted escribía su tesis? ¿Usaba una oficina, una recámara, la cocina de su casa, la biblioteca de la escuela? ¿Qué tan cómodo era su asiento? ¿Qué podía observar desde donde usted se encontraba sentado(a)? ¿Qué equipo de oficina y artículos de papelería tenía disponibles? ¿Cómo resolvía la falta de alguno de estos recursos?

¿Cómo se organizaba la lectura de sus materiales y su producción escrita? ¿Llevaba libretas, fotocopias? ¿Cómo llevaba registro de sus búsquedas en línea? ¿En tarjetas, impresas?

¿Cómo procedía para hacer las correcciones a su trabajo? ¿Qué hacía inmediatamente después de recibir su retroalimentación o de su sesión de asesoría? ¿Qué hacía?

¿Cómo definiría su capacidad lectora y de escritura durante ese tiempo? ¿Fluida, frecuente, masiva, pobre, esporádica?

¿Hay algo más que le gustaría comentar o compartir conmigo? ¿Tiene usted alguna pregunta para mí? ¿Le gustaría hacer una cita más para una segunda entrevista?

Muchas gracias por su generosidad y tiempo



Appendix C

Table 1: Preliminary commonalities (Adapted from Olmos López, 2010)

	Ellie (F)	Loren (F)	Ruth (F)
Age	48(+)	44	43
Urban / rural areas	Urban – NOT same state as FLD	Urban – same city as FLD	Urban – same city as FLD
Need to write and defend thesis	YES (failed course or GPA below 8.5)	YES (failed course or GPA below 8.5)	YES (failed course or GPA below 8.5)
Working / holding a teaching position	YES: Classroom teacher, self-access center assistant; high school – public system from State University	YES: Classroom teacher; high school – public system, Mexican Ministry of Education	YES: Classroom teacher; junior high school – public system, Mexican Ministry of Education
Timeline: Events right after school credits were finished / start-finish thesis writing	14 years later-first attempt to start 23 years later-second attempt 25 years later-finish 2 years to write a thesis	17 years later-start 20 years later-finish 3 years to write a thesis	16 years later-start 18 years later-finish 2 years to write a thesis
Beginning and end of thesis writing social circles	2 children (sons, 10 & 15 years after marriage, older in junior high school) Husband: very close and caring, would drive her from hometown to FLD in another state The workplace: Two friends from the workplace were also writing their thesis, accomplices	2 children (sons, 17 & 11) helping with technology Husband: perceived to be distant Family: mother, siblings, close friends The workplace: People from the workplace were supportive and expressed their admiration for her	2 children (sons, 10 & 12) helping with technology Husband: perceived to be very distant Family: did not inform them about it The workplace: Friends from the same workplace were helpful and supportive /, but other coworkers were unhelpful / envious

Appendix D

Original participants' quotes

- Loren: *No, no para escribir no, yo fui la que sufrí mucho ahí, no yo fui la que hizo la tesis, si en escribirla no, en alentarme y echarme porras si muchísima gente, muchísima gente pero en escribir no, pues yo sola. Mucho apoyo moral, muchísimo, de lo de escritura no pues yo solita. Pero ahí era en la sala de maestros y en la casa, en la casa, en el comedor de la casa, siempre yo solita he trabajado, yo sola yo sola si prendía la radio y la televisión para escucharlo nada más. [1]*
- Ruth: *Y en un momento determinado yo con tantas situaciones pues a lo mejor también hubiera renunciado ¿no? o me hubiera quedado a la mitad, pero afortunadamente pues no paso así porque le digo pues [supervisor] estuvo conmigo hasta el final. [2]*
- Loren: *Si, si el 8 de mayo. Si, perfectamente de la fecha, nunca se me va a olvidar, nunca se me va a olvidar esa fecha. Presente mi examen, bueno presente mi tesis, a mis jurados que fueron el maestro Jorge, el maestro Luis y (supervisor) que fue mi asesora. [3]*
- Ellie: *Primero que nada fue mis asesores ..., lo que fue [supervisor], ustedes, y después allá en [ciudad de residencia] tenía el apoyo de [amigo hablante nativo] de hecho apenas, apenas la semana pasada le fui a entregar una copia, Ajá, y este se la di y todo, y lo menciono a él en una al principio, ajá y ya estaba muy contento porque qué bueno ya terminaste y que saliste muy bien felicidades y que no sé qué. [4]*
- Ruth: *Era como que el temor y también decía: 'ay no es que ... [supervisor] usaba computación y decía yo no es que no sé, es que no, ósea todo eso no, y pues poco a poco irlo superando ¿no? El apoyo para la computadora cuando ellos [hijos] sabían me, les decía a ver ayúdame como se hace esto y ya me trataban de ayudar y eso. [5]*
- Ellie: *'¿Ma y cómo vas con tu tesis, y como estás haciéndole, y las citas, como las llevas?' Pues él ya llevaba redacción y todo eso y me decía, 'yo sé que van así...'*
En la secundaria sí, me decía, 'yo sé que son así mamá, pero si no ven vamos a investigar' y como él le entiende perfectamente al internet se movía y todo y me decía mira, es así y asa y él me apoyó mucho. [6]
- Loren: *Yo les preguntaba algo les decía oye hijo ven ayúdame por ejemplo aquí en la computadora se me dificultaba mucho ve es que me cuesta mucho trabajo, no escribir si no bueno teclear sino las funciones de la computadora y luego mi hijo me decía te voy a enseñar una vez nada más, más no, se hace así y ponme atención. Me traumaba más, pero eso me servía y me decía te educas o te educas, pero este... él fue quien me ayudó mucho. [7]*
- Ellie: *Si, anteriormente los tenía yo en fichas, los tenía por fichas los primeros libros, ya los últimos lo tengo en la lap y ya ahí yo leía, subrayaba lo más importante, todo eso ya se quedó ahí en la lap,...*
Si llevaba también una libretita también para hacer mis resúmenes cuando consideraba que era difícil o complicado la información, pero importante, sacaba mi libretita y hacia mis notas para después pasarlas a mi tesis ya en mis propias palabras y de manera más sencilla.
Yo creo que era constante, siempre había algo que encontraba yo, estaba buscando algo y salía otra cosa 'uy bueno' dije 'lo guardo, sigo buscando lo que estoy buscando guardo eso para otra ocasión' entonces buscaba y lo que encontraba en el momento lo leía y todo y regresaba a lo que había dejado pendiente y a ver si lo entendía o no lo entendía y en ocasiones era muy buena información. [8]

- Ruth: *Bueno me gusta la biblioteca porque era un lugar tranquilo este, pues donde se podía pensar, leer con calma... ósea en lugares tranquilos donde podía yo sentarme a escribir y pensar o leer*
No, tenía yo este, bueno en la casa pues la computadora, había internet este... pues era, era básicamente lo que yo necesitaba, cuando leía mis resúmenes los hacía yo casi más en, me gusta más escribirlo en hojas que en la computadora, todavía no me habitué mucho a estudiar así no, entonces me gusta más escribir las cosas este en hojas ... hojas reciclables donde podía yo escribir mis notas y luego... Si, las iba yo guardando porque me servían después como este... pues para alguna anotación o algo así o recordar algo que yo decía es que yo lo vi en la lectura tal y era esto y esto y entonces ya como para cómo desarrollar un poquito no, guardaba yo mis hojas. [9]
- Loren: *Pues me sentaba, sacaba mi compu, sacaba mis biografías y me sentaba otra vez a tratar de escribir, escribir y escribir que era lo que más. Escribir y escribir y ya dejaba un poquito todo, apagaba radio, apagaba tele, corría a mis hijos, los sacaba para que me dejaran trabajar, en vacaciones más que nada. Fue como en ese periodo de Junio-Julio cuando me dediqué de lleno me senté a escribir, escribir, escribir, escribir y escribir. Cuando ya no tenía que estar trabajando. Primero fue acá no, en la biblioteca fue donde venía a buscar información.*
No, en la biblioteca no, siempre la escribía en la casa, en la casa, [...] ahí tenía las tardes noches para sentarme en el comedor y ahí era el lugar para sentarme y escribir. [10]
- Ellie: *Si, siento que quedó este... al final ya casi fue al término de la tesis que encontré lo que es el término, de mensaje (INAUDIBLE) y me llamo la atención porque a lo mejor por ahí hubiera empezado y aunque lo comento aquí al final y todo este... si me quedo esa (INAUDIBLE) de seguir, de seguir investigando ... considero que son importantes, como que siento que no me quedaron muy claras, como que quiero investigar más acerca de ellas porque son como que unos términos un poquito complicados, como que siento que si investigo más podré tener más clara la idea...*
Que cada vez conforme me iba involucrando me iba saliendo más interés por investigar, por saber más cosas, de hecho hasta la fecha ahorita este... que termine ya la tesis este... empecé a hacer otro proyecto ahí en la... donde trabajo y me dice mi compañera [nombre] 'ay no, tú no descansas, que bárbara apenas tiene un mes que terminaste y ya estás en otra cosa' le digo 'es que aunque no lo creas el hacer la tesis como que me provocó esa ansiedad de querer estar haciendo algo, de querer investigar más, no sé, de estar trabajando, siento que... que si aprendí eso'. [11]
- Ruth: *Pues lo que yo siento ahorita es que a lo mejor si me faltó leer mucho más porque hay mucha información ¿no? siento que quizá me faltó leer mucho más o quizá comprometerme todavía más con esto.*
Y también como que me quede con ese sentimiento de la presión que tenía yo de que tienes que estudiar, tienes que investigar, tienes que buscar, como que me hace hasta cierto punto como que me hace falta porque ya me había yo acostumbrado a que, a que bajo esa presión se trabaja no, si ya me hace falta.
Ahí en el trabajo por ejemplo ya este ya me anotaron que ya tengo, porque estaba yo como pasante ahorita ya tengo el grado de titulado, pues tengo como que el, la intención de seguir estudiando, de no dejarlo así y este... y pues si me siento... me siento bien, me siento más tranquila, me siento un poquito más tranquila, ya mejor. [12]
- Loren: *Un diplomado que se me ocurrió tomar para certificarme en competencia docente, entonces yo le dedico un poco más de tiempo al diplomado, descuido la tesis, porque me atormentaba porque*

se me hacía difícil, porque me costaba trabajo, porque el pensar sentarme a escribir me daba miedo, me daba pánico, entonces me dedicaba hacer el diplomado como era en español y ya ¿no?

Me considero mejor para hablar un poco para expresarme para darme a entender que para poder redactar, si siento que fue uno de mis varios problemas durante la carrera el poder redactar porque yo para poder enseñar a mis alumnos siento que, si puedo, o sea les enseño, les explico y ellos dicen que me entiendes perfectamente bien, pero para que yo escriba para que yo redacte los textos... cuando ya empecé hacer esto ya me di cuenta que no, me costaba, me costaba trabajo, no, no es mi habilidad. [13]

Loren: *Ese día de mi examen yo tuve muchos mensajes en mi celular, me felicitaron muchos compañeros, amigos, amigos muy cercanos me mandaron mensajes como que échale ganas tu puedes si vas a poder, Loren..*

Fui a otra consulta y me dice el doctor: 'Oye de veras ¿y la presión? ¿Cómo sigue de la presión?' 'Ya no tengo doctor, ya no me duele la cabeza', le digo. '¿Ya presentó el examen?' Le dije 'ya' y me dijo 'le dije que era una crisis de estrés', si con este ojo yo no veía y fue como 20 días antes, pero yo trataba de disimular y decía no, no, no ahorita no me puede pasar esto.

Yo me siento muy feliz por haberla hecho así, me siento muy contenta porque pensé que es algo que no lo iba hacer yo pensé que no lo iba a terminar ósea yo lo veía muy difícil muy lejano muy complicado para mi sobre todo por mi edad ya, no por la edad de que este grande. [14]

Appendix E

Table 2: No need to write-defend a thesis policy for BA programs

<p>In order to expedite degree requirements for all BA students at this large public university, a <i>“Titulación Automática”</i> (no need to write-defend a thesis) policy is used. These are the requirements for all BA students:</p>		
<p><i>“Titulación Automática”</i> (no need to write-defend a thesis): 1) GPA of 8.5 or above 2) No failed courses 3) Documents (student ID, library ID, etc.)</p> <p>Student may write/defend thesis if he/she wants to. Will graduate with honors.</p>	<p>BA students who fail a course: They have to write-defend a thesis.</p> <p>Documents as in <i>“Titulación Automática”</i></p> <p>Will graduate, but without honors.</p>	<p>BA students whose GPA is below 8.5: They have to write-defend a thesis.</p> <p>Documents as in <i>“Titulación Automática”</i></p> <p>Will graduate, but without honors.</p>