Revisiting the Concept of Self-Efficacy as a Language Learning Enhancer[1]

Revisando el Concepto de Autoeficacia como un Potenciador del Aprendizaje de Idiomas

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" If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire
the capacity to do it even If may not have it at the beginning"
Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract

Individuals' self-efficacy beliefs determine the ways they perform in any domain, since they reflect the extent to which people feel capable to achieve certain accomplishments Bandura (1997). This paper describes how a group of intermediate school students'constant failure in the exams, demotivating attitudes, apathy and reluctance to learn English as a foreign language, relate with their perceived capability, self-perception and their prior experiences as language learners. This descriptive and exploratory case study was developed in a private language centre and involved 11 participants. The goal of the study was to understand the causes of the students' demotivation and reluctance to the language. For this purpose, autobiographies become a springboard to examine students' language learning experiences. This information was analysed based on the grounded theory approach proposed by Freeman(1998), and findings reveal that the inadequate teachers' discourse, classroom environment, rapport and feedback strategies influenced students' perceived capability to perform in the English class. In addition, the data showed that the supportive role of parents and relatives, encouraged learners to adopt a resilient attitude with respect to the difficulties while learning the language.

Resumen

Las creencias de los individuos acerca de su autoeficacia determina la manera en la que se desempeñan en cualquier escenario, puesto que éstas reflejan la manera en la que las personas se consideran capaces de alcanzar ciertos logros. Bandura (1997). Este artículo, describe la forma en la que la continua pérdida, la desmotivación, la apatía y el rechazo hacia el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera de un grupo de estudiantes de nivel intermedio, se relacionan con su autoeficacia, su auto percepción y experiencias como aprendices de Inglés como lengua extranjera. Debido a su carácter cualitativo y exploratorio, este estudio de caso fue llevado a cabo en un centro de idiomas de carácter privado y comprendió la participación de once estudiantes. El propósito del estudio se enmarcó en la comprensión de las causas por las cuales dichos estudiantes mostraron desmotivación y rechazo al idioma. Por ello, las autobiografías se convierten en una herramienta para indagar acerca de las experiencias de aprendizaje en lengua extranjera de los estudiantes . La información fue analizada a través del análisis temático propuesto por Freeman (1998), y los resultados revelan que un inadecuado discurso por parte del docente, el ambiente de clase, la falta de empatía con los estudiantes y las estrategias de retroalimentación utilizadas, influyeron en la autoeficacia de los estudiantes para desempeñarse en la clase de Inglés. Por otra parte, la información mostró que el apoyo que los estudiantes recibieron de sus padres y familiares, los motivó a adoptar una actitud resiliente con respecto a sus dificultades durante el aprendizaje del Inglés.

Palabras clave: Creencias sobre la autoeficacia, rechazo de los estudiantes al idioma, autobiografías, Contexto de aprendizaje del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

Resumo

As crenças dos indivíduos acerca da sua autoeficácia determinam a maneira na que se desempenhem em qualquer cenário, posto que as mesmas refletem a maneira na que as pessoas se consideram capazes de alcançar certos aproveitamentos. Bandura (1997). Este artigo, descreve a forma na que a contínua perda, a falta de motivação, a apatia e a rejeição em relação à aprendizagem da língua estrangeira de um grupo de estudantes de nível intermédio, relacionam-se com a sua autoeficácia, a sua auto percepção e experiências como aprendizes de inglês como língua estrangeira. Devido ao seu caráter qualitativo e exploratório, este estudo de caso foi realizado em um centro de idiomas de caráter privado e compreendeu a participação de onze estudantes. O propósito do estudo se delimitou na compreensão das causas pelas quais os referidos estudantes mostraram falta de motivação e rejeição ao idioma. Por isso, as autobiografias se convertem em uma ferramenta para indagar acerca das experiências de aprendizagem em língua estrangeira dos

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estudantes. A informação foi analisada através da análise temática proposta por Freeman (1998), e os resultados revelam que um inadequado discurso por parte do docente, o ambiente de classe, a falta de empatia com os estudantes e as estratégias de retroalimentação utilizadas, influíram na autoeficácia dos estudantes para desempenhar-se na aula de inglês. Por outro lado, a informação mostrou que o apoio que os estudantes receberam dos seus padres e familiares, motivou-os a adotar uma atitude resiliente com relação a suas dificuldades durante a aprendizagem do inglês.

Palavras chave: Crenças sobre a autoeficácia, rejeição dos estudantes ao idioma, autobiografias, Contexto de aprendizagem do inglês como Língua Estrangeira

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Introduction

The concept of self-efficacy, entails to what extent individuals believe they are capable of accomplishing something under several circumstances Bandura (1997). This construct becomes an eye opener at the time of understanding the myriad of reasons that interfered with the students' performance in the language learning classroom. This qualitative study aimed at exploring the correlation between the high school learners' prior language learning experiences and their recurrent failure of the English courses, that led them feel demotivated, and have a poor perception of their own potential as language learners and their ability to overcome difficulties. This ten - month research was carried out with a group of 11 students from a private school , who took classes in a private language institute in Ibague.

To accomplish the aim of this research, autobiographies became a powerful source to dig into the students' language learning experiences. With respect to this, Coffey & Street (2008), assert that "the analysis of first -person accounts of the language learning process has gained legitimacy as a qualitative method of inquiry giving voice to the learner's own view of factors both predisposing and sustaining different trajectories of language learning." (p.452).

Furthermore, Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik (2014) assert that "autobiographical accounts tend to bring the emotional dimensions of language teaching and learning, which are often suppressed by other research approaches, to the fore." (p.12). This helped us to understand the relevance of this type of instrument at the time of inquiring into students' experiences, and made us aware of the importance of narrative inquiry as a useful approach to make sense of the learners' experiences and the way they represent them to others Barkhuizen et al., (2014). The reasons above, guided the following research question: ***How are the relationships between students' language learning experiences and their perceived capability evident in learners' narratives?*** which has to do with the role of autobiographies in informing about students' previous experiences, and their relationship with their sense of capability or self-efficacy to learn and be successful in the language learning.

The decision of inquiring into students' language learning experiences by means of autobiographies uncovered a range of complexities of human behavior that may not be explored through other sources. Moreover, the results of this study revealed the importance of revisiting the concept of self-efficacy in the language learning processes,

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since it can be a foremost alternative to expand the view of teachers with respect to the need of creating safer learning environments and opportunities for students´ improvement, and the decisive role of the educators in students' willingness or unwillingness to learn.

As researchers, we strongly believe that exploring new avenues to understand how emotional competence unfolds becomes at the core of language teaching and learning scenarios. Consequently, this study shows how the concept of self-efficacy regains relevance, and becomes a magnifying glass to see teaching and learning through a new lens.

The oncoming sections of this article will discuss the methodology followed, the different categories that emerged from the analysis of the students' autobiographies in relation to their self-efficacy as language learners and lastly, we present the findings and the conclusions.

Literature Review

This study is supported on a body of constructs and related research that illuminated our path to explore and find answers to our inquiry. We begin by clearing the ground on the notion of self-efficacy, the sources that nourish individuals' self-efficacy beliefs and then present some research that has been undertaken in the field of language teaching. Finally, we conceptualize the autobiographies and inform about some studies in which they have been used to inquire into individuals' experiences.

Revisiting the concept of Self-efficacy

To conduct this study, we took largely into consideration the definition of self-efficacy coined by Bandura (1997), since he started to do some research on the field, which has enriched the scope of the topic in studies done by some psychologists and educators, as well as encouraged new researchers to expand knowledge in the direction of learners' perceived capability.

Bandura (1997), states that self-efficacy is related to how capable individuals believe they are at the moment of carrying out a specific task in any domain. According to this author, the individuals' self-efficacy influence their thought processes, level of persistency, motivation and affective states. That is, the individuals' self-efficacy determines the performance of individuals increasing or diminishing their beliefs concerning their capability to do something; therefore, we can say that people also build some self-efficacy beliefs. To understand this concept

more deeply, it is necessary to elaborate on the notion of beliefs as follows.

In line with Pajares (1992), beliefs represent a subject of inquiry in different fields, which makes them feasible to be explored through the appropriate methodologies and designs. In addition, Sigel (1985) described that beliefs are "mental constructions of experience- often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts" (p.351).

Sigel's definition is complementary to the one provided by Rokeack (1968), since he considers that beliefs have two additional components apart from the one that represents the mental constructions of experience: the affective and behavioural. The affective component incites emotion and the behavioural one is activated when certain actions require it. This implies beliefs are a representation of what a person thinks about certain situations in relation to their emotions and the different settings that demand a specific behaviour from their part.

These components are distinctive features of the individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, which can be weak or strong. With respect to this, Bandura (1997) states:

> People who doubt their capabilities in particular domains of activity shy away from difficult tasks in those domains. They find it hard to motivate themselves or increase their confidence to carry out a task since they slacken[3] their efforts or give up quickly in the face of obstacles. (p. 39).

On the contrary, people whose self-efficacy beliefs are strong can overcome difficult situations easily because they conceive them as challenges instead of threats to avoid. Additionally, they set challenging goals and are consistent to achieve them in spite of failures or setbacks, which they surpass quickly. These outcomes make individuals have successful orientations towards the accomplishment of certain performances, and confirms that self-efficacy beliefs are "active producers instead of merely foretellers of attainments, which makes them the unique dispositional make up of efficaciousness of any person"(Bandura,1997, p.42).

Due to the characteristics already mentioned, self-efficacy beliefs form part of the big term called self-efficacy which was defined above and is related to factors such as self-regulation and motivation, and operates as a key factor in a generative system of human competence or performances.

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[3] To become less productive or fail.

It's important to say that according to Bandura (1997), people build their self-efficacy beliefs selecting, interpreting and integrating the different information they receive. To do so, there are four main sources where they get this information, which correspond to *enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states.*

Enactive Mastery Experiences: this is related to the different successful or unsuccessful experiences an individual has had. In turn, these appear closely connected to the cognitive, behavioural and self-regulatory tools people use to face and overcome different kinds of circumstances without diminishing their self-efficacy beliefs.

Vicarious experiences: Bandura (1997) claimed that "Social comparison operates as a primary factor in the self-appraisal of capabilities" (p.87). This social comparison, refers to the vicarious experiences a person can have, that is, the second-hand experiences that model people's level of perceived self-efficacy, in the sense that the performance of others are useful to make them conscious of their own capabilities to succeed and get the same or even, better results; this way their self-efficacy beliefs can be increased.

Verbal persuasion: this source refers to the encouragement given by others to recognize one's capabilities and efforts to do certain attainments. In line with Bandura (1997), people who are persuaded verbally regarding their capabilities to do something successfully, are more able to mobilize great effort and sustain it even in harder circumstances. Thus, self-efficacy beliefs can be encouraged through verbal persuasion.

Physiological and affective states: it refers to the way people judge their capabilities by getting information from the somatic indicators they show when facing situations of vulnerability or aversive arousal for them. Hence, as teachers, to help students get the right information from this source we are expected to "(…) enhance physical status, reduce the stress levels and negative emotional proclivities, and correct misinterpretations of bodily states" (Bandura & Cioffi, 1997, p.106)

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These sources constitute a way to understand the origin of the students' perceived capability. In the case of this study, the sources mentioned showed how the students' self-efficacy was influenced by the different experiences they lived in the English classroom, which made them have a good or a poor attitude towards the language learning.

Self-efficacy and English language teaching

Previous studies have reported interesting research in the field of self-efficacy, English language teaching and learning and other domains of knowledge. Although the investigations undertaken don't represent a considerable number, some important contributions are acknowledged below.

Shi (2017), an assistant professor of the China University, presents a review with respect to self-efficacy, based on previous research done in the SLA field, specifically in the motivation area. According to the writer, the term self-efficacy is part of a paradigm called the expectancy value theory, which proposes that learners' motivation is influenced greatly by their expected success in a task and the value they give it.

Some of the studies this professor presents, refer to the research done by Teng (2005), Tilfalioglu and Cinkara (2009), Rahimi and Abedini (2009), Naseri and Zaferanieh (2012), and Idrus and Sivapalan (2010). These authors whose studies were conducted in Taiwan, Turkey and Iran, found a correlation between the participants' self-efficacy and their self-directed learning, as well as their reading and listening comprehension skills. Besides, the researchers also pointed that the individuals' proficiency level, their writing and speaking performance and the ability to acquire new vocabulary, could be successful or not depending on their self-efficacy beliefs.

These studies document how the subject of self-efficacy has been explored in the ELT field, which supports the nature of this study and suggest the exploration of the language learners' self-efficacy beliefs in light of theory.

Another important study that confirms the influence of the individuals' self-efficacy beliefs in their development was conducted by Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli (2003). These authors explored and measured 464 adolescents' self-efficacy beliefs to regulate negative affect as well as positive and negative emotions to carry out interpersonal transactions and academic tasks. According to the findings, having a strong sense of self-efficacy to manage one's positive and negative emotional life, that is to say having strong self-efficacy beliefs to control one's affective states contributes to the development of successful academic activities. Likewise, the analysis of the data showed that the perceived self-efficacy of individuals is a general contributor to manage academic issues and to develop a perceived self-efficacy that improves the individuals psychological functioning.

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With reference to the role of self-efficacy in human functioning, the research project conducted by Bandura, Martinez - Pons, & Zimmerman (1996) gives also relevant information. These authors selected 102 ninth and tenth graders to answer two different scales, referred to the type of self-regulating strategies they used and the strategies they implemented to reach a successful academic achievement in the social studies subject. In line with the results, the learners' self-efficacy beliefs for academic achievement influenced their final score considerably. Moreover, it was found that the students' perceived self-efficacy for achievement had a direct influence on their outcomes and goals.

At a local level, some interesting research studies have been conducted, and one of those was aimed at developing students' self-efficacy. Cardona, J., & Novoa, L. (2013), encouraged 20 students from a private and a public school to develop their self-efficacy to write argumentative texts using modeling strategies and giving constant feedback. After interpreting the data collected through written samples, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, findings revealed that students' motivation to write increased markedly, and attitudes like persistence and resilience were constant when they had to carry out different written tasks.

Another relevant research study was done by Contreras, F. E., J. Esguerra, G. Haikal, A. Polanía, A. Rodríguez, A. (2005). These teachers identified the self-efficacy beliefs of 120 highschool students from a private school in Bogota, to analyse the extent to which self-efficacy and anxiety were related to students' performance in five specific subjects: arts, English, social studies and mathematics. To identify learners' beliefs, they used a general scale used for these purposes. Data revealed that the students' self-efficacy beliefs were producers of their academic development, that is, the learners' self-efficacy beliefs influenced their performance in the areas mentioned above, which verifies their vital role in humans' performance.

Although the studies above show the importance of the topic of self-efficacy in the language learning process, there has not been an extensive research on the field in our country. Therefore, we consider this study can contribute to the understanding of the different ways students have built their self-efficacy beliefs throughout their experiences as language learners, and how these ones give information on their possible reluctance, apathy and poor performance in the language.

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Autobiographies and Students' Language Learning Experiences

Since this study seeks to inquire into the students' self-efficacy beliefs, we decided to dig into their language learning experiences, so we could get relevant information of the ways they have built their perception of English as a foreign language and how this perception has influenced their perceived capability as learners. To do so, we chose the autobiographies as the main source of information in this study, because they are useful to explore peoples' beliefs and perceptions towards the learning process, and to understand how individuals construct meaning out of the experiences they have lived. Durán, Lastra, & Morales (2013).

Furthermore, Johnson (1999), asserts that autobiographies shed light on people's prior experiences and beliefs, so they can be analysed critically to comprehend how complex is their understanding of the learning process; in other words, autobiographies can inform about people's experiences, which may give important insights about how they have learnt and use the language.

A study that confirms how autobiographies help teachers dig into students' experiences is the one conducted by Barclay-McLaughlin, Kershaw & Roberts (2007). The participants were aimed to write an autobiography including different stages of their childhood, elementary, middle and high school, the people that related to these phases and the context where these events took place. After sharing the personal accounts to each other, they found out that the cultural autobiographies enhanced the individuals' self- and social awareness, and also the understanding of others.

It's also important to say, that autobiographies have been used in other areas of education to explore student attitudes and behaviors, as Tse (2000) claims in her research report, concerning the analysis of students' autobiographies in the English classroom. In this study, the researcher asked 37 undergraduate and graduate students to write some autobiographies in order to get to know their experiences as language learners, and their attributions to success and failure. After analysing the data, the researcher concluded that learners considered that an appropriate classroom atmosphere and a caring teacher were essential to succeed when learning a language, together with the contribution of family or community sources Tse (2000). That is why they also claimed that attributions for failure also included the teacher, the classroom environment and the teacher-student interactions.

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Clearly, due to its main characteristics, autobiographies can give important information on the ways learners build their self-efficacy beliefs in the process of learning the language selecting, interpreting

and integrating several information from the four sources mentioned by Bandura (1997). Because of this, we considered these were an appropriate method and an object of inquiry to advance the understanding of students' poor perception as learners and their unwillingness to study English, going beyond their academic performance and exploring their affective dimension, which in line with Brown (2007) "is the emotional side of human behaviour and can be juxtaposed to the cognitive side" (p.153).

That is to say that both affective and cognitive sides are important when talking about a person's learning process, in the sense that the beings' personality and sociocultural factors are taken into consideration to understand his or her development. In words of Arnold (1999) and Brown (2007), these factors can be categorized as individual and relational and refer to anxiety, inhibition, self-esteem, motivation, resilience, receptivity, willingness to communicate, risk taking, empathy and classroom transactions, and relate to the recognition of emotion, feeling, mood or attitude in the English class.

It is also worth noting, that the studies above provided an important opportunity to advance in the understanding of autobiographies as a source of inquiry, and reclaims the relevance of narratives at the moment of exploring people's experiences, as Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik (2014) claim: "a focus on narrative content can certainly contribute to a richer and more rounded understanding of language teaching and learning as lived experience" (p.3).

This is verified by an important study carried out by Beheshti & Noor (2013), in which the authors were intended to analyze the impact of different journaling techniques on sixty Iranian language learners. The results of the study showed that encouraging students to keep a journal through which they could reflect about their experiences as learners maximized the sources that nourished their self-efficacy beliefs.

In keeping with the previous literature review, it is evident that the issue of self-efficacy is of central importance for teachers, and in particular language teachers to understand the reasons behind the learners' poor or successful performance at the time of learning English as a foreign language. Indeed, the previous studies showed how the students' self-efficacy can have a positive or a negative impact in their performance, which gives support and relevance to the exploration of the students' language learning experiences in relation to their self-efficacy beliefs.

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Methodology

Research Design

This study falls in line with the principles and procedures of a qualitative case study since it pursues "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit" Merriam (1988) p.14. In this case and as the same author states, the interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in the context, rather than specific variables, in discovery rather than confirmation and it is reflected in the following research question that guides the study: ***How do students' narratives inform about the relationships between their language learning experiences and their perceived self-efficacy in the language learning process?***

Furthermore, for the purposes of this study it is clear that the understanding of the relationship between students' language learning experiences and their self-efficacy, is central to improve practice, as it will be shown at the end of this chapter. By the same token the grounded theory approach proposed by Freeman (1998), becomes the mode of exploration of the phenomenon of the self-efficacy of the students and its relation with their language learning experiences. This was done by the establishment of commonalities between the data and their possible connections with the phenomenon under study. In this way, as researchers we could go beyond the apparent students' reluctance and indifference towards learning and lack of interest, to turn failure into a new challenge or opportunity to move forward.

The form of narrative considered for the purposes of this study was the autobiographies, which are also defined as histories in this case of language learning. According to Benson (2011), the term history suggests a long - term account as well as periods over a person has learned a language such as a year, or semester or an incident that lasts not more than a few minutes. This was a key aspect for this exploration because the study lasted ten months, and the participant students had taken English courses during two years approximately which turned into an interesting amount of time and range of experiences to look at.

Context and participants

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The population who participated in this study was a group of 11 intermediate students who were ninth and eleventh graders, and their ages ranged from 13 to 15 years old. The criteria for the selection of this population, was the presence of a phenomenon of constant failure and reluctance of the students towards learning the foreign language, and the purpose of understanding the situation further and hopefully to

come up with alternatives to overcome the issue under study, in these students and others in similar circumstances.

The students were enrolled in an agreement between their school and a recognized language centre of the city, which established 16 levels of English (two per month) as a requirement to graduate from high school; that is to say the learners had to go to the institute to have English lessons two days (five hours) a week, so, they could take the courses as a school subject.

Data Collection Instruments

The participants were encouraged to write an autobiography (See appendix 1) using a time line through which they could talk about the most important experiences and childhood memories they have lived as kids or youngsters, and as students of English as a foreign language. Subsequently, the teacher researcher showed them their own autobiography (see appendix 2), in order to motivate them to do the activity and give them some ideas.

It is important to say that learners were guided through some questions (See appendix 3), which were aligned to their former language learning experiences and the sources they used to learn English. This was done to see eventual connections between those facts and the way they have built their self-efficacy beliefs.

With the purpose of conducting the study ethically, it was considered the parents' permission to use the students' narratives taking into account their ages. Consequently, the parents signed a consent form (See appendix 4) where they were told the information was going to be used for research purposes only.

Data analysis and Interpretation

The autobiographies were collected and immediately read as the first step in the analysis, which was supported on the grounded theory approach as it was mentioned before Freeman (1998). In this sense, the data was read repeatedly and colour coded according to the recurrence of themes. Patterns in the themes which connected the autobiographical accounts were identified leading to the interpretation of them. This interpretation was done through the categorization of data extracts and their reorganization under thematic headings Polkinghorne (1995). The preliminary categories were also generated from the analysis of points of similarity and difference throughout the data to have a broader analytical viewpoint and later, they were rearranged based on theoretical

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arguments to provide more validity to the findings, as it is shown in the following figure:
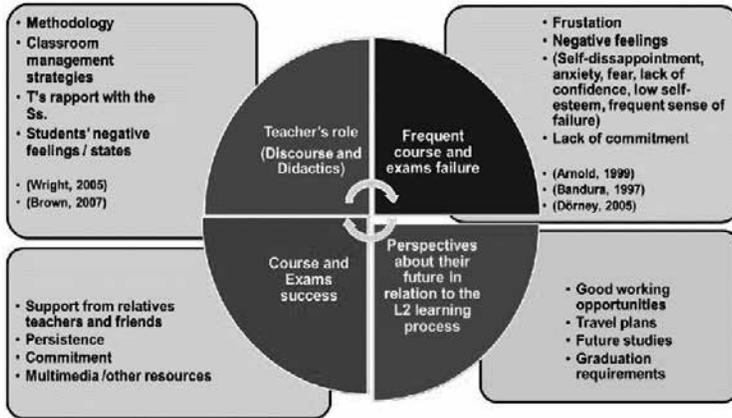

Figure 1. Similarities and differences of data

The themes above were specified and explicit to display initial findings and interrelations, and subsequently configure the categories that emerged from the data analysis. The following categories bring to surface issues connected to students' previous experiences, and different dimensions of interactions in and outside the classroom, that seem to have shaped the way they see themselves as successful or academically disadvantaged learners. Next there are the two main categories that were generated out the data analysis: **learners' discouraging experiences and Students' negative states.**

Discouraging experiences: particularly, after the analysis the data through the grounded theory approach, it was found that the majority of the students' have had discouraging experiences when learning English. One of the consequences of these demotivating experiences is their repetitive failure of the English courses and the exams. According to the data and grouping commonalities, this continuous deficiency could be explained by the aspects below:

Teachers' discourse and didactics: turning to the teachers' discourse and didactics, students mentioned how the inadequate classroom management and error correction techniques used by their teachers, as well as their poor appraisal to learners' work, the teachers' centred lessons, and their inadequate discourse remarks made them feel apprehensive, inhibited and demotivated to learn the language. This implies that the teacher's performance seems to have influenced

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learners' states in the English classroom, which have tended to be negative, as it is shown next:

"Pues una de mis malas experiencias fue con una profesora del centro de Idiomas, por su forma de enseñar no le entendía nada y eso me frustraba un poco y pues su forma de corregirnos no era la más apropiada, por lo que daba miedo y pues el Inglés no es una de mis materias preferidas y así como que menos uno le halla el gusto" (Participant G, personal communication, June 25, 2015):

"Hasta donde tengo memoria, unos pocos profesores mostraron interés por mi proceso de aprendizaje a lo largo de los años. Una profesora llamada Dora, fue la única de los profesores que fue paciente conmigo. Sus clases eran dinámicas y algunas otras eran normales (...) Dora me decía que le gustaban mis presentaciones y la manera como ponía atención en clase, porque ella siempre esperaba sentirse orgullosa de nuestro aprendizaje y avance, más allá de darnos una nota. Para ella, enseñar era más que un trabajo" (Participant B, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

Classroom transactions: According to Arnold (1999) and Brown (2007), classroom transactions imply that learners need to be encouraged and assisted in the classroom. In this respect, students' autobiographies showed that most of them were not motivated enough to learn and use the language in their English classes; on the contrary, they were inhibited, embarrassed in public and demotivated instead, as a consequence of the inadequate classroom transactions and the inappropriate discourse. These are factors educators tend to take for granted, or assume as a common place in the classroom daily basis practice or discourse, disregarding the negative influence these traits bring to the students' prospective performance and behaviour:

"Lo mismo me pasó con el mini proyecto; lo hice pero cuando iba a la mitad de la presentación me dijo: "si no va a aprender que usted se tiene que memorizar lo que trajo no lo presente; y además yo no la pienso pasar con cosas tan mediocres. Desde ahí fue cuando comencé a decirme que soy una bruta que no sirvo para nada etc". (Participant F, personal communication, June 25, 2015)

"yo siempre sentía que ella me tenía rabia ya que no era como unos niños que sabían más que yo. Entonces yo nunca le participaba porque ella nunca me dio esa confianza, siempre me sentía insegura en todo no podía hacer algo sola porque siempre pensaba que me iba a quedar mal ya que ella siempre me ignoraba o todo me decía que me quedaba mal; nunca me explicaba." (Participant F, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

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Once again, it is shown that learners' self-efficacy beliefs could have been diminished dramatically by some of their teachers through an inappropriate discourse and classroom transactions that show they neglected students' affective domain, which according to Brown (2007) is "the emotional side of human behaviour and can be juxtaposed to the cognitive side" (p.153). This explains why educators need to create good conditions that predispose students positively to learn the foreign language and handle adversity in a proactive way. Wright (2005).

Students' negative states: it is important to say that students' negative states can be categorized into individual and relational factors. According to Arnold (1999), these factors express students' behaviour as individuals and as participants in a sociocultural context. Under these circumstances, some of the negative states learners have had during their experience refer to anxiety, inhibition, low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and lack of empathy from the teachers; as well as other negative emotions, such as fear and frustration, which could be possible consequences of the teachers' inappropriate discourse and classroom transactions. The next extracts from the students confirm this:

"Diría que fue la primera vez en el centro de idiomas pues con este profesor entendía muy poco él no pensaba si entendíamos o no las cosas que él le explicaba, y si hacíamos la actividad mal se ponía furioso y nos regañaba... Recuerdo que no entendía nada, este nivel lo perdí, el castigo fue duro y desde ahí le temo a equivocarme o a perder un nivel". (Participant L, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

"Porque me siento insegura con lo que hago y me dan muchos nervios (...) cuando pienso cosas negativas de mí misma (...) cuando pienso en mis padres en que los he hecho perder mucho dinero en los niveles". (Participant F, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

It is important to say that according to Bandura (1997), people judge how capable they are to do something based on the somatic indicators they show when facing certain situations that are aversive or difficult. These indicators are negative states that prevent learners from performing adequately. For this reason, if students feel: anxiety, fear, confusion, Inhibition, nervousness, self- disappointment, or if they experience: frustration, lack of confidence or low self-esteem when doing certain attainments, their self-efficacy beliefs could be low .

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An evidence of this is provided by the excerpts of the students, which show the learners may have a low level of perceived capability since the negative states mentioned above emerged when they needed to do a specific task. This may be related to the fact that the teachers were not making enough effort to create the optimal conditions for students

to learn and use the language in class. Besides, this also suggests that students' negative states seemed to be linked directly to the kind of rapport their teachers built in the classroom, which is also related to the classroom climate of the lessons Wright (2005). That is to say that learners tended to feel uncomfortable with their educators' teaching style and the kind of relationship they built with them, which seemed to be distant and made students feel fear and other negative states already mentioned.

According to the analysis above, it is evident that the main relationships between the students' language learning experiences and their perceived capability can be understood by the way these experiences shaped their self-efficacy beliefs and the different sources from which they build them. These sources, as it was mentioned in the literature review, refer to enactive mastery experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states. A discussion of how these experiences influenced the self-efficacy beliefs of the learners in this study through the sources mentioned will be provided as follows:

Enactive Mastery Experiences: as reported in the autobiographies, the students were exposed to discouraging experiences in the language where the teachers' discourse and didactics, as well as their classroom transactions and the methodology used created an inadequate classroom climate, that made them feel threatened to express themselves using the language. According to the data, this demotivated them to study and made them feel reluctant towards English. Evidently, this first source coined by Bandura (1997), was not nourished appropriately, which explains why their self-efficacy beliefs were not strong.

Verbal persuasion: in agreement with the learners' personal accounts, the continuous discouragement given by their teachers as well as the inadequate error correction techniques and classroom transactions made them feel insecure and increased their reluctance to the language. As Bandura (1997) argued, when a person is encouraged and praised verbally, the verbal persuasion source is heightened, and as a consequence, his or her perceived capability; In this case, the majority of the students were not encouraged verbally, which may have weakened their self-efficacy beliefs. However, it is important to say that a few of the learners received a support from their parents and relatives that contributed to the enhancement of this source.

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Physiological and affective states: in consonance with the data, this was one of the sources that was diminished the most, since it was evident the way students' negative states such as anxiety, inhibition, fear, frustration, nervousness among others, came into surface when

they tried to participate in class, do oral presentations or take written and oral exams. Besides, the analysis showed how the learners' perception about themselves was affected in a negative way, since the continuous discouraging experiences they have faced and the lack of rapport between them and their teachers, made them feel less confident when learning and using the language in the class; this explains their constant failure patterns in the regular courses.

To summarize, it is evident how the students' language learning experiences shaped their self-efficacy beliefs, which made the learners show a poor performance in the language, have a constant failure in the courses and be reluctant and apathetic to the learning process as a consequence. Moreover, it is clear that the autobiographies were a very valuable instrument to inquire into the participants' language learning experiences, and that this information was validated against the theory and the results of previous studies.

Discussion of the findings

Undeniably, the categories obtained after the analysis of the autobiographies which referred to discouraging experiences, students' lack of commitment, teachers' discourse and didactics, classroom transactions and students negative states, provided relevant information about how weak or nourished were the four main sources proposed by Bandura (1997) *related to enactive mastery experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states*, so the learners' self-efficacy beliefs could be explored.

With regard to the question: *How are the relationships between students' language learning experiences and their perceived capability evident in learners' narratives?*, the ideas stated in the personal accounts showed that the negative experiences of the students when learning, the lack of rapport in the classes, the continuous embarrassment and discouragement they were exposed to, the fear they started to feel to participate, and the fact that their work did not seem to be valued enough in class, weakened three of the afore mentioned sources proposed by Bandura (1997).

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These aspects, explain why the relationships between the students' language learning experiences and the self-efficacy beliefs they acquired during the process were intertwined, since they were shaped by their teachers' discourse and didactics, the classroom environment of the lessons and the classroom transactions that took place and made the students show a continuous reluctance and apathy to the language.

Evidently, the autobiographies gave representative information about this such symbiotic relationship, confirming what Durán Narváez, Lastra Ramírez & Morales Vasco (2013) indicate in their research article about this type of narrative, as a useful tool to dig into the individuals' experiences and to get to know their identity as learners.

In short, it can be claimed that the relationships between students' language learning experiences and their self-efficacy beliefs, were clear in learners' autobiographies. As a result, the research question of the study was answered extensively, and the theoretical constructs that support the relationships between students' self-efficacy beliefs, language learning experiences and narratives were verified in this study.

Conclusions

In line with the information presented in this study, which was part of a larger one, findings reveal that the implementation of autobiographies in the English class can give information on the engagement patterns teachers build in the classroom, which reflect their teaching style, classroom management strategies and the climate where students learn the language Wright (2005). Under these circumstances, implementing autobiographies can shed light on the roles teachers and students perform.

The use of autobiographies enables an understanding of the way students feel when they are heard and valued in the English classroom, since the participants of this study expressed their insights about their language learning process freely for the first time without being judged. Surprisingly, during and after the autobiographies implementation, learners started to be willing to learn the language and go to class, which led them to see English differently. Indeed, feeling that their voice counted in the teaching learning process and their histories were important for the teacher, made students get more interested in the language.

This study confirms earlier work done by Bandura (1997) who asserted the influence of the role of self-efficacy beliefs in the individuals' performance. Moreover, the data demonstrated that the students' self-efficacy beliefs in the language were not strong, which was a result of the discouraging learning experiences they have been exposed to. In consequence, these experiences weakened the learners' perceived capability, which led them show reluctance and apathy to English as well as constant failure patterns.

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This project was restricted by time constraints and the difficulty of the participants to express themselves clearly through the personal accounts, since it was the first time they had the opportunity to write about their learning experiences in the foreign language. This made the grounded theory analysis more extensive but rich, meaningful and fruitful at the same time.

For further research, it would be interesting to expand learners' life stories to understand the way their experiences shape their performance, attitude and above all, their perception and identity as learners.

It can be concluded that inquiring into the learners' self-efficacy beliefs can help the academic community to understand the students beyond the texts books and the grades they can get in a classroom, giving importance to their affective dimension, which underlies their feelings, perceptions, classroom patterns, the type of environment built in the lessons and the different teaching styles that emerge in each encounter.

The issue of re-thinking the role of the teachers in education is of central importance since little attention has been paid to the appraisal of students' previous experiences, the affective dimension in class and the creation of safer classroom environments that boost students' learning; this might be done by becoming educators that empower students "with a profound trust in people and their creative power" (Freire, 1969, p.24) and by recognizing learners' experiences:

Children's... experiences are tremendously valuable resources for education. Our role as teachers is to build upon these experiences and to create an environment where students can make connections to other experiences, construct personal meaning out of what they are learning and become open to new possibilities for growth... Their experiences need to be taken seriously and woven integrally into the curriculum... There must exist continuity between the child and the curriculum in order for learning and growth to occur. Hytten (2000) p. 460 (as cited in Banks-Joseph, Gilmore and Shawer ,2008) (P.4)

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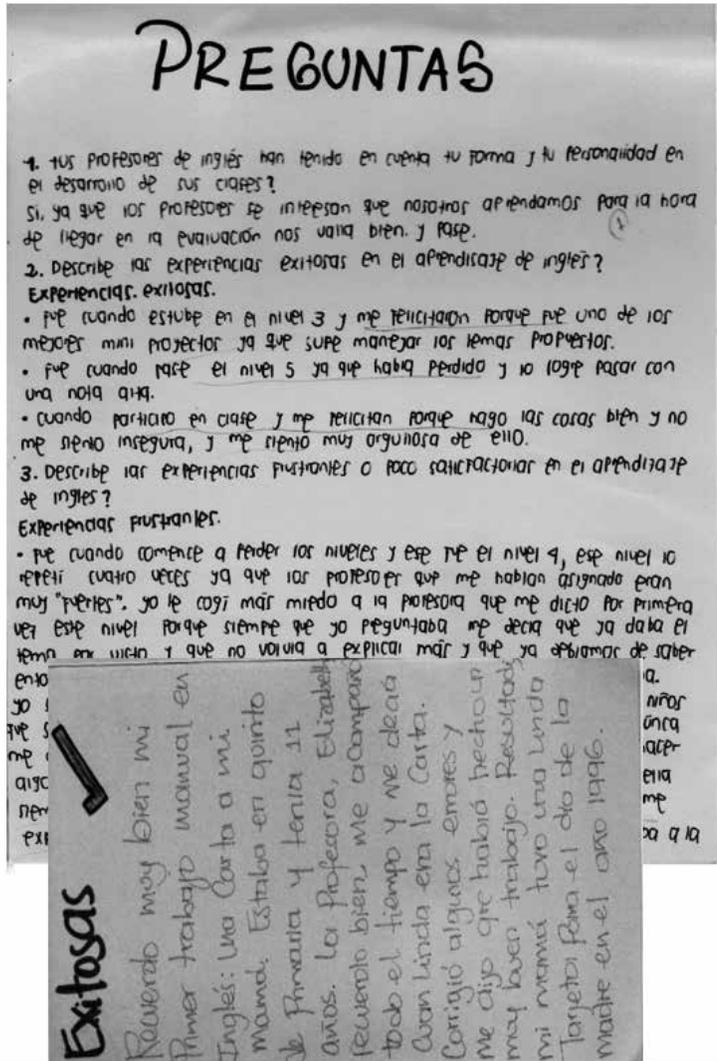
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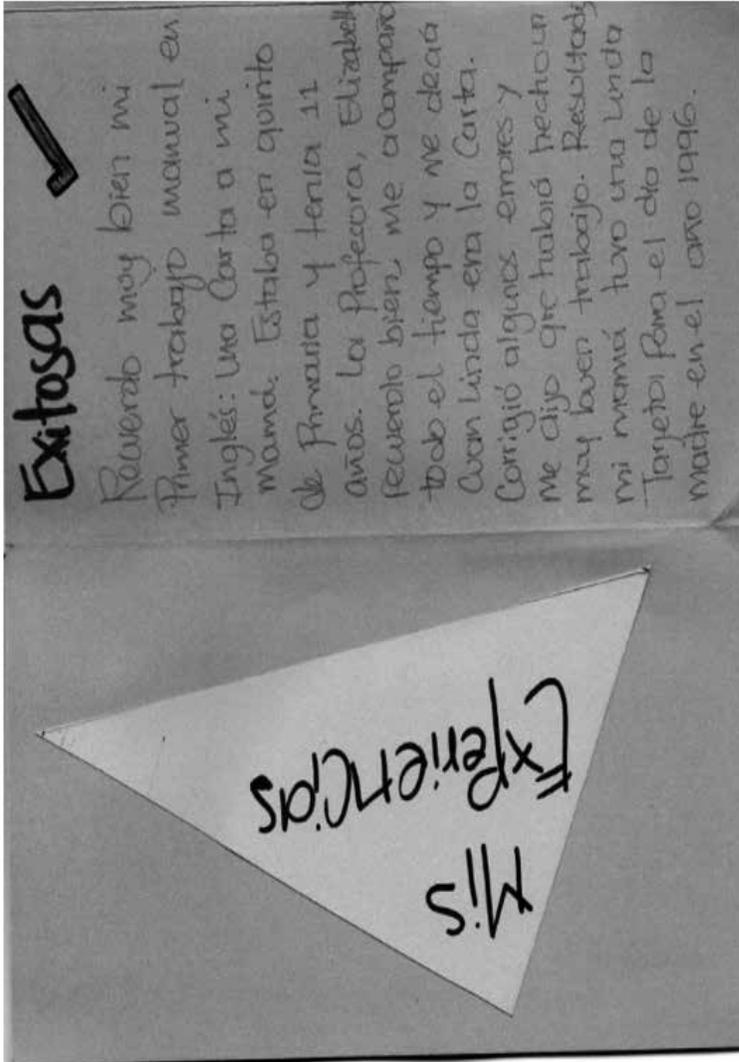Brown, H. (2007). *Principles of Language Teaching.* New Yok: Pearson Longman.

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Apprendix 1

Autobiographies samples

Appendix 2

Teacher's autobiography

Exitosas

Recuerdo muy bien mi primer trabajo manual en Inglés: Una carta a mi mamá. Estaba en quinto de Primaria y tenía 11 años. La Profesora, Elizabeth recuerdo bien, me acompaño todo el tiempo y me decía con linda era la carta. Corrigió algunos errores y me dijo que había hecho un muy buen trabajo. Resultado mi mamá tuvo una linda Tarjeta para el día de la madre en el año 1996.

Mis Experiencias

Appendix 3

Questions (Students' autobiographies)

1. Tus profesores de Inglés han tenido en cuenta tu forma de aprender y tu personalidad en el desarrollo de sus clases?

2. Describe las experiencias exitosas en el aprendizaje del Inglés.

3. Describe las experiencias frustrantes o poco satisfactorias en el aprendizaje del Inglés

4. Que recursos y/o personas han sido fundamentales en tu proceso del aprendizaje del idioma?

5. Que recursos y/o personas han interferido en tu proceso de aprendizaje del Inglés?

6. De qué manera piensas que el Inglés te puede ayudar en tu vida futura? Por qué?

7. Que aspecto/ aspectos han influido en que ganes o apruebes los exámenes y los niveles de Inglés?

8. Que aspecto/ aspectos inciden o han influido en que pierdas las pruebas y los niveles de Inglés?.

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Appendix 4
Consent form

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA DIRECTIVOS Y ESTUDIANTES DEL CONVENIO COLEGIO LA PRESENTACION – UNIVERSIDAD DE IBAGUE

Yo, María Fernanda Bernal identificado (a) con c.c N°_____ o T.I N° 1001630366 he sido invitado(a) a participar en el proyecto de investigación **Sobre el incremento de la auto-eficacia de los estudiantes en la clase de Inglés,** orientado por la docente Carol García perteneciente a la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad del Tolima.

Descripción: La presente investigación es de corte cualitativo, con la cual se pretende develar la forma en la que la confianza de los estudiantes en sus capacidades para hacer uso del idiorna Inglés puede ser fomentada en la clase.

Objetivos:

• Develar las relaciones entre las experiencias de los estudiantes y su auto-eficacia en la clase de Inglés a través de las narrativas.

• Describir las percepciones de los estudiantes con respecto a su nivel de autoeficacia en el proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera.

• Describir el nivel de autoeficacia de los estudiantes en Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

• Analizar de que mánera la escritura reflectiva a través de narrativas fortalece el nivel de autoeficacia de los estudiantes en la clase de Inglés.

Participación de los actores: Los estudiantes participarán de forma activa en el proceso a través de la escritura de autobiografías, entrevistas video y audio grabadas para facilitar el análisis de la información, grupos de discusión y diarios de clase. Los directivos y coordinadores serán informados del proceso así como de los resultados finales de la investigación.

Es importante resaltar, que la información recolectada será de absoluta confidencialidad y anonimato, con el objetivo único de contribuir a la comprensión de las problématicas presentes en el aula, y al planteamiento de futuras soluciones a las mismas.

Padres de Familia:_____ Estudiante:_____ Investigadora:_____

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