

**Teacher education for autonomy: A study of  
modern language student teachers'  
professional development**



**Programa Oficial de Doctorado en Lenguas, Textos y  
Contextos**

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## **List of abbreviations**

CK	Contextual Knowledge
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
FL	Foreign Language
FLL	Foreign Language Learning
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
GC	Generic Competence
GPK	General Pedagogical Knowledge
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LA	Learner Autonomy
L2	Second Language
OLS	Official Language School
PA	Pedagogy for Autonomy
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
SMK	Subject Matter Knowledge
TA	Teacher Autonomy
TEA	Teacher Education for Autonomy
TL	Target Language

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The pressing need to transform school pedagogy so as to respond to the new societal and professional demands which today's rapidly changing world is placing on the individual has made educators and educational researchers alike inquire into how teaching and teaching practices can best prepare learners for life and lifelong learning. Learners need to develop the capacity to take responsibility for their own learning and be able to embark upon a continuous process of retraining and acquisition of skills throughout their life. It is in this discourse that the notion of learner autonomy (henceforth LA) has emerged as a central pillar of education.

The promotion of LA in classroom practice calls for a re-conceptualisation of teaching and learning. It requires replacing the traditional approach, whereby the teacher is the main authority in the classroom (i.e. he/she determines and controls the whole teaching-learning process), with a more democratic approach which allows learners to have control over their learning process and caters for their individual needs, interests, and abilities. In this sense, teacher education is crucial to the development of autonomy in our schools. On the one hand, (student) teachers need to acquire the professional knowledge, skills and competences necessary to promote pedagogy for autonomy (PA) in their classroom. One of these competences is teacher autonomy (TA), whose development is argued to be one of the prerequisites for the promotion of LA in education (Benson and Huang, 2008; Jiménez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira, 2007, 2017; Little, 1995; Thavenius, 1999). To foster LA, (student) teachers themselves must develop their own autonomy as practitioners and learners of teaching. On the other hand, teacher education can help challenge (student) teachers' beliefs about foreign

language teaching (FLT), which are often rooted in a traditional view of language teaching because of the influence of their previous experience as learners (Kennedy, 1991; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992).

Following EU policy, in Spain there are seven basic competences in primary education (age 6-11) and secondary education (age 12-16) where LA is addressed under terms such as ‘learning to learn’, ‘entrepreneurship’, and ‘personal initiative’ (BOE, 2014, 2015):

1. Competence in linguistic communication
2. Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology
3. Digital competence
4. *Competence in learning to learn*
5. Social and civic competence
6. *Entrepreneurship and personal initiative*
7. Cultural awareness and expression

As stated in the LOMCE<sup>1</sup> (MECD, 2013), the notion of autonomy is conceived of as one of the main goals across the curriculum of secondary education: *To develop entrepreneurship and self-confidence, participation, critical awareness, personal initiative and the capacity to learn how to learn, plan, make decisions and assume responsibility* (Article 23). However, the situation is very different in classroom practice. Previous to the present research, I examined the enactment of LA in the Spanish educational setting (Manzano Vázquez, 2015). Through a multi-case study approach, I analysed the teaching practice of six foreign language (FL) teachers in two educational contexts (a secondary school and an Official Language School [OLS]<sup>2</sup>) to determine whether LA was a prominent educational goal in the *practice* of FLT and what principles of PA<sup>3</sup> from the proposal by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) were implemented in the classroom. The results revealed a distinct lack of LA, especially in the context of secondary education. The principles of PA were marginally implemented, which seems to confirm that, as suggested by Jiménez Raya (2011a, 2017a)<sup>4</sup>, there is a gap between theory and practice concerning LA. In other words, the notion of LA seems

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<sup>1</sup> The LOMCE or *Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa* (Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education), passed by the Spanish Government in 2013, is the law which regulates education in Spain at national level.

<sup>2</sup> The OLS is a state school dependent on the Andalusian Education Authority and is specialised in FLT. Both secondary education and the studies at the OLS are regulated by the LOMCE (MECD, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> See section 4.7.2 for a comprehensive explanation of these pedagogical principles.

<sup>4</sup> Jiménez Raya (2011a: 77) argues that the centrality of LA in the Spanish educational system is pervaded by “a culture of double talk”, that is, a discrepancy between what the theory says it should be done and what is actually done in classroom practice.

to remain at a theoretical level since classroom practice is still dominated by a traditional, teacher-centred approach to language learning. Although the results cannot be extrapolated to a wider educational context than those directly studied, this picture accurately reflects the analysis of the situation of education in Spain made by the educationist Richard Gerver. In an interview for a Spanish newspaper<sup>5</sup>, he pointed out that “the Spanish educational system is anchored in the industrial age”, where the emphasis is placed on teaching and adopting a controlling approach in the classroom rather than allowing learners to assume more responsibility and an active role in the learning process.

Previous research has suggested that one of the reasons for the absence of LA in many FL classrooms is the lack of teacher education programmes aimed at preparing FL teachers to foster autonomous learning in their teaching practice (Benson, 2011; Jiménez Raya and Vieira, 2008, 2015; Manzano Vázquez, 2016). In fact, publications on autonomy have focused more on teaching and learning than on teacher education, which stresses the need for more research-based accounts of approaches to teacher education for autonomy (TEA). In the Spanish educational context, the gap between theory and practice concerning LA (and TA) is also evident in teacher education. Seven years ago, pre-service teacher education for secondary education changed in Spain. Until the academic year 2009/10, once student teachers had finished their degree, they had to enrol on a three-month course called CAP or *Curso de Aptitud Pedagógica* (Pedagogical Aptitude Course) if they wanted to become a secondary school teacher. Since then, all pre-service secondary school teachers are required to take a one-year Master’s Degree in Compulsory and Post-Compulsory Secondary Education, Vocational Training and Language Teaching (MECD, 2008). According to the Order ECI/3858/2007 by the Spanish Ministry of Education (BOE, 2007), pre-service teachers must achieve various generic competences (GC) during this teacher education programme. The notions of LA and TA are relevant objectives in initial teacher education as made clear in the following GC:

GC addressing LA

GC5. To design a learning environment focused on equity, ethics, equal rights and opportunities for men and women, a sense of civic responsibility and respect for human

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<sup>5</sup> *El sistema educativo español está anclado en la era industrial* [The Spanish educational system is anchored in the industrial age] (March 13, 2014). *ABC*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.es/familia-educacion/20140313/abci-richard-gerver-educacion-201403112038.html>

rights, thus facilitating ‘life in society’, decision-making and the creation of a sustainable future.

GC6. To adopt strategies to encourage students’ effort and enhance their capacity to learn by themselves and with others, and to develop thinking and decision-making skills that foster autonomy, confidence and personal initiative.

GC14. To develop learning abilities that enable learners to continue studying in a way that will be largely self-directed and autonomous.

GC addressing TA

GC4. To define the curriculum to be implemented in the school and participate in its collective planning, and to develop and implement both individual and group teaching methodologies, adapted to learner diversity.

GC8. To design and conduct formal and informal activities that help make the school a place of participation and culture in the context where it is located; to become a mentor to students in a collaborative and coordinated manner; and to participate in the process of evaluation, research and innovation in teaching and learning.

GC12. To promote a critical, reflective and entrepreneurial spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, as pointed out by Jiménez Raya (2011a, 2017a), pre-service teacher education initiatives addressing LA and TA as educational goals are scarce in Spain. For this reason, there is the urgent need for teacher education pedagogies in the Spanish educational setting which equip prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster a learner-centred and autonomy-oriented approach to language learning.

In view of the dearth of previous research on TEA (which is especially evident in Spain), the main purpose of the present study was to analyse the impact of a pre-service language teacher education initiative for autonomy on a group of student teachers’ beliefs and professional competences concerning the development of PA in the FL classroom. To this end, the following goals were pursued:

- To analyse how a pre-service language teacher education initiative can serve as a tool for mediating student teachers’ cognition about FLT and, more specifically, about PA in FLT;
- To evaluate the effects of a pre-service language teacher education initiative on student teachers’ dimensions of professional competence towards TA/LA (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) in FLT; and
- To draw pedagogical implications for further pre-service language TEA.

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<sup>6</sup> GC14 and GC12 are specific to the pre-service teacher education programme at the University of Granada, where the present research was conducted.

Based on the objectives formulated above, the study aimed to give an answer to the following research questions:

- I. What changes in the student teachers' beliefs about FL teaching and learning (with a particular emphasis on PA) does the present pre-service language teacher education initiative enable?
- II. What dimensions of professional competence towards teacher and learner autonomy (*ibid.*) do the student teachers develop?
- III. Does the initial teacher education initiative studied facilitate the development of the pre-service language teachers' cognition and professional competence towards teacher and learner autonomy?
- IV. What pedagogical implications can be drawn from this research for further work on pre-service language TEA?

The thesis presented in this work is divided into seven chapters, including this introduction (chapter 1). Chapter 2 is devoted to teacher education. It discusses its significance for teacher professional development, the major approaches to teacher preparation and the paradigm shift from transmission to reflection in teacher education. Chapter 3 elaborates on the concept of teacher cognition, examining the notions of teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs. The chapter further reviews previous research on pre-service teachers' cognition. Autonomy is the subject of chapter 4, which explores the notions of LA, TA and PA in modern language education and reviews previous work on the development of language teacher education initiatives for autonomy. Chapter 5 describes the research methodology of the present study. Chapter 6 presents the results obtained in each research instrument. It also discusses the findings in relation to the research questions of the study. Finally, chapter 7 summarises the major conclusions which can be drawn from this research and suggests possible avenues for future research in the field.



## CHAPTER 2

# TEACHER EDUCATION: THE REFLECTIVE PARADIGM

The challenge facing education schools is not to do a better job at what they are already doing, but to do a fundamentally different job. They are now in the business of preparing educators for a new world.

Levine (2006: 104)

### 2.1 Introduction

Teacher education has been, and is still, one of the main subjects of discussion in many specialised books, journal articles and conferences on education due to the pivotal role it plays in preparing teachers for the complex act called teaching. As Darling-Hammond (2000: 166) writes, “the weight of substantial evidence indicates that teachers who have had more preparation for teaching are more confident and successful with students than those who have had little or none”<sup>7</sup>. Teacher education is a critical part of how teachers make their way into the teaching profession and, consequently, of building a good educational system: “we cannot improve the quality of education in our schools without improving the quality of teachers in them” (Beyer, 1995: 26). For this particular reason, teacher education programmes must be carefully designed and conceptualised.

In this case, the teacher education initiative in which the present research was conducted is grounded in a reflective, inquiry-oriented approach to TEA. This chapter is therefore intended to give an answer to the following question: why can the reflective model of teacher education be more effective in preparing teachers for the current

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<sup>7</sup> The quotations used throughout this work are reproduced literally, as taken from the original sources (i.e. respecting spelling, gender selection, etc.). Any modification is specified in square brackets.

demands of teaching? With this goal in mind, the chapter discusses the significance of teacher education in supporting teachers' professional development (section 2.2) and the major conceptual approaches to teacher education which have been identified in the relevant literature (section 2.3), paying special attention to the strong advocacy for reflective teacher education to the detriment of a more behaviourist approach to teacher preparation (section 2.4).

## **2.2 The significance of teacher education**

Teacher education is a crucial stage in teachers' professional development for various reasons. The first reason for promoting teacher education makes reference to the much higher level of specialisation that there is in the teaching profession today (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2006; Green, 2014). Teaching has been traditionally permeated by the belief that 'good teachers are born', suggesting that anybody can teach as long as he/she has a vocation for teaching. Nevertheless, it is not enough for teachers to have just a great love for teaching and children. Like professional pilots, doctors, or architects, teachers must be specially prepared to do their job. Teaching is a career which calls for the acquisition and development of a specialised knowledge base as well as specific skills and competences. In other words, teaching is not a natural-born skill, but has to be learned by means of formal training.

Second, teachers need to be prepared for the great challenges of teaching. As Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald (2009: 273) accurately observe, "teaching is complex work that looks deceptively simple". From the perspective of an outsider, it may look like a person talking in front of a group of learners, handing out papers, giving assignments, and administering tests. Teaching, however, is more complex and variable than this widely-held perception shows. Rand Spiro and his colleagues (1987, 1988) contend that teaching is to be defined as an 'ill-structured domain' characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity, in which there are no absolutes or right answers. On a daily basis, teachers are required to deal with many different teaching and learning dilemmas which confront them with complex decisions and judgements. For example, they have to find ways to motivate students and keep them in the path of interest, curiosity, and enthusiasm for learning. They must be aware of the many ways in which student learning can unfold regarding his/her learning abilities. They must be able to identify



the essence of a problematic teaching situation, seek possible solutions, and decide on the best path to follow. They need to know how to readjust their plans and curricular decisions in order to fit the continually changing and uncertain conditions of classroom life (e.g. learners' learning needs and difficulties, the variety of interests within the classroom, and individual approaches to learning). In this respect, teacher education is of paramount importance in preparing and equipping teachers with the skills necessary to face the demanding realities of the classroom. These skills may include, for instance, creativity, flexibility, adaptability, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Another reason why teacher education is of particular relevance refers to the pressing need to prepare teachers for a new paradigm of education. Teaching is often defined too narrowly as “your job is to teach” (Kosnik and Beck, 2009: 132), understood as the act of merely transmitting knowledge to learners. This image represents a view of education which is traceable back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which teachers were typically expected to operate within a closed input-output circle (i.e. what they taught, learners had to memorise and reproduce). However, what ‘used to work’ does not remain appropriate nowadays. Teachers need to think about knowledge and education in new ways. They are now expected to focus on addressing their learners’ needs and preparing them for the complex educational and social demands of a world which is constantly reinventing itself. These demands are frequently summarised under the umbrella term of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competences. To function effectively in the society of the new century, teachers have to equip their learners with the ability to manage information, produce new knowledge, regulate their learning, exercise greater independence, solve complex problems, think critically, communicate effectively, be creative and entrepreneurs, and work collaboratively. This paradigm shift from transmissive pedagogies to more learner-centred pedagogies requires both a *cognitive* (i.e. beliefs, attitudes, etc.) and *behavioural change* (i.e. teaching practices, strategies, etc.) in teachers (Almarza, 1996). Teacher education needs to help them recast their conceptions and understandings of teaching and learning, replacing those which may prove to be inappropriate with more relevant views of education; and train them to be innovative and creative in their classrooms by experiencing concrete models of alternative instructional practices which target the teaching and development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Teacher education programmes must also lay the groundwork for genuine ongoing teacher development. During their preparation, teachers have the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of subject matter, teaching strategies, and classroom management, but teacher learning will never be complete, especially in the continuously evolving society where we live today. Classrooms and schools are increasingly becoming dynamic environments, changing according to the learners and the curriculum. This means that we cannot anticipate the teaching situations in which teachers will find themselves or the learning needs they will have to respond to. Consequently, a major goal of teacher education must be to enable teachers to become ‘adaptive experts’ (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005), that is, teachers who develop the capacity to respond to the unpredictable by updating their professional knowledge base about teaching and adding to their skills and competences as professionals. For this aim to be achieved, teacher education must provide a wide variety of strategies and tools for teachers to embark on a lifelong process of professional development.

### **2.3 Conceptual approaches to teacher education**

If there is a need to reconstruct current models of teaching, there is unavoidably a need to rethink and broaden current approaches to teacher education, but what major models for teacher preparation can be identified in the specialised literature? Both Zeichner (1983) and Feiman-Nemser (1990) offer detailed analyses of varying conceptual approaches to teacher education. Zeichner (1983) argues that four teacher education paradigms have dominated the discourse of debate in teacher education. These paradigms are: a) behaviouristic, b) personalistic, c) traditional-craft, and d) inquiry-oriented. The behaviouristic paradigm focuses mainly on the transmission of theoretical concepts and principles which teachers later have to reproduce in their classroom practice. The aim of personalistic teacher education, according to Zeichner (pp. 4-5), is “to promote the psychological maturity of prospective teachers [...] Teacher education is a form of adult development, a process of ‘becoming’ rather than merely a process of educating someone how to teach”. In this paradigm, competence in teaching is equated with personal growth and, for this reason, the teacher plays an active role in determining the substance and direction of his/her professional education. The third paradigm, traditional-craft teacher education, views teaching as a craft and teacher education as a

process of mimetic apprenticeship. Trainees learn to teach by observing and imitating the techniques and behaviours of more experienced teachers. This paradigm, however, is criticised for fostering the maintenance of existing teaching practices. The inquiry-oriented paradigm seeks to develop in teachers the disposition to reflect on their teaching, on the context in which it is carried out, and on its future impact upon students.

Feiman-Nemser (1990) provides a classification of teacher education into five major conceptual orientations: a) academic, b) personal, c) technological, d) practical, and e) critical. The academic orientation views the role of the teacher as focused on dispensing knowledge and developing student understanding. To this end, teachers need to develop subject matter knowledge (SMK) and what Shulman (1986, 1987) calls pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (see section 3.3.2). In the personal orientation, learning to teach involves “learning to understand, develop and use oneself effectively” (Feiman-Nemser, 1990: 225). The emphasis in this model is on the teacher’s quest for self-understanding, self-discovery, and personal development. The technological orientation (associated with ‘competency-based’ or ‘performance-based’ teacher education) is a top-down approach which emphasises scientific knowledge and systematic training. The primary goal is to prepare teachers to acquire and apply research-based principles and practices to their teaching. The practical orientation stresses apprenticeship and the ‘wisdom of practice’, regarding experience as a primary source of knowledge about teaching and the most effective means for learning to teach. Finally, the critical orientation highlights the role of the teacher as a critical, reflective agent of change. It establishes that teacher education must prepare teachers to adopt a democratic perspective of education and to question their tacit assumptions about teaching and learning.

If we compare Zeichner’s and Feiman-Nemser’s classifications of teacher education, we can observe that there is considerable overlap between the two taxonomies: Feiman-Nemser’s practical orientation is similar to Zeichner’s traditional-craft paradigm; the technological orientation aligns with the behaviouristic paradigm; and the personal and critical orientations are close to the personalistic and inquiry-oriented paradigms. In the section that follows, I shall discuss the two most predominant traditions in discussions of teacher education: the transmissive (or behaviouristic) tradition and the reflective (or inquiry-oriented) tradition.

## **2.4 From transmission to reflection in teacher education**

Traditional teacher education programmes, based on lecturing and transmitting a pre-determined body of knowledge from the teacher educator to the teacher, are increasingly said to fail in preparing (prospective) teachers for the complex realities of the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Korthagen, Loughran and Russell, 2006; Manzano Vázquez, 2014). This situation has emphasised the need for a reconsideration of the nature of teacher education programmes whereby there is a shift from behaviourist, product-based, transmission-oriented models to constructivist, process-based, reflection-oriented approaches to teacher education (Richardson, 1996a).

### **2.4.1 Transmissive teacher education**

The transmissive model of teacher education rests fundamentally upon the foundations of a positivist and behaviourist view of education, and it still represents the mainstream of current practice in many teacher education programmes. In the literature, this model has appeared under the guise of various terms. Schön (1987), for instance, critically called it the ‘technical-rationality model’. In the context of language teaching, Richards and Farrell (2005) have discussed it under the label of ‘teacher training’, whereas Wallace (1995) identified it as the ‘theory-to-practice model’. Kumaravadivelu (2003) has pointed to this teacher education paradigm as being representative of the ‘method’ tradition.

The transmissive model is in essence a theory-driven and top-down approach in which the hegemony of academic knowledge is favoured and the teacher is viewed as a technician and passive consumer. Professional knowledge is conceived and constructed in academic circles (i.e. by researchers, scholars, and experts) and consists of theoretical concepts, principles and teaching strategies which are directly transmitted to teachers as ‘products’. The primary role of the teacher is simply to store this body of knowledge received during the teacher education experience and then translate it into his/her classroom practice. The idea is that once they are inside the school, teachers will confine themselves to using the research-based knowledge offered to them.

As noted above, this view of teacher education is being challenged. For Vieira (2007a: 23, original italics), this approach conveys an anti-democratic perspective of education since “it denies *the validity of teachers’ practical knowledge* and their *role as*

*critical intellectuals*”. Teachers are assigned little critical voice concerning the creation of new knowledge. They are not encouraged to pose questions about their teaching, to explore their pedagogical beliefs, or to critically examine the validity and relevance of the instructional strategies handed down to them. Additionally, teachers are rarely enabled to construct their own teaching philosophy, but they must follow the dictates of teaching methods formulated in the academic world. This is why the transmissive approach is considered “so passive, so unchallenging, so boring that teachers often lose their sense of wonder and excitement about learning to teach” (Kincheloe, 1993, quoted in Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 9). It encourages conformity, conservatism, and intellectual passivity. The approach has been further criticised for being overly theoretical (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2005). The emphasis is placed on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, which is regarded as more valid and superior to practical knowledge coming from experience. This assumption has translated into a distinct gap between theory and practice in teaching.

Ultimately, research has concluded that the transmission-oriented model is not very effective in bringing about substantial changes in classroom practice (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Lamb, 1995). This approach reflects a traditional vision of teaching as knowledge transmission and, consequently, produces teachers who also end up playing the role of purveyors of information, thus reproducing rather than subverting the pedagogical *status quo*. As Bullough and Gitlin (1991: 38) note, “it should not be totally surprising that when these students become teachers it seems only natural to them to think of learning as the consumption of information”. If this model is not the most appropriate one to prepare teachers for the new demands and changes required by 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching, how can teacher education be improved to achieve this objective? The answer seems to be in the notion of reflection.

#### **2.4.2 Reflective teacher education**

Terms such as ‘reflective practice’, ‘inquiry’, ‘reflection-in-action’, ‘reflection-on-action’, ‘teacher as problem-solver’, ‘teacher as decision-maker’, and ‘teacher as researcher’ are becoming prevalent constructs in teaching and teacher education. The popularity of cognitive as opposed to behavioural psychology, the democratisation of professional knowledge and educational research by allowing teachers’ voices to be heard, and the growing need for models of teacher education which transcend mere

training in the use of specific behavioural competences have contributed to the shift towards more constructivist, reflection-oriented approaches to teacher education, identified in the literature as ‘inquiry-oriented paradigm’ (Zeichner, 1983), ‘critical orientation’ (Feiman-Nemser, 1990), ‘reflective model’ (Wallace, 1995), ‘teacher development’ (Richards and Farrell, 2005), and ‘post-transmission model’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

#### *2.4.2.1 Defining and describing reflection*

The notion of reflection has become a buzzword in education, losing its real, core meaning. This situation has indeed resulted in a state of conceptual confusion:

Today’s discourse of reflection incorporates an array of meanings: a demonstration of self consciousness, a scientific approach to planning for the future, a tacit and intuitive understanding of practice, a discipline to become more professional, a way to tap into one’s authentic inner voice, a means to become a more reflective teacher, and a strategy to redress injustices in society. Reflective teaching has become a catchall term for competing programs of teacher education reform. (Fendler, 2003: 20)

For that reason, it is imperative to specify what one really means when referring to reflection. One common feature among the definitions provided is the conception that reflection is more than mere thinking. Dewey (1933: 9) originally defined reflection as the “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends”. This definition acknowledges that reflection is central to the examination of our assumptions and knowledge and to the assessment of the future implications of our actions. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985, quoted in Benson, 2011: 104) describe reflection as “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations”. The implication here is that reflective practice enables individuals to see and understand reality from a new perspective. Moon (1999: 23), on the other hand, interprets reflection as being conducive to a better understanding of a dilemma or problematic situation and the various ways of solving it, that is, “a form of mental processing with a purpose and/or anticipated outcome that is applied to complex or unstructured ideas for which there is no obvious solution”.

The notion of reflection in teaching recognises the thoughtful nature of teachers’ work. For Ross (1989), reflection makes reference to a way of thinking about

educational matters which involves making rational choices and assuming responsibility for them. In a similar fashion, van Manen (1991: quoted in Fat'hi and Behzadpour, 2011: 245) describes reflective teaching as a deliberative process requiring teachers to think systematically about what they do. He argues that reflection “in the field of education carries the connotation of deliberation, of making choices, of coming to decisions about alternative courses of action” related to teaching. Richards and Lockhart (1994) maintain that reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of the teaching process. Building on Dewey’s definition, various scholars (e.g. Farrell, 2003; Korthagen, 2004) view reflection as the process whereby teachers subject both their often taken-for-granted conceptions of teaching and their teaching practices to a critical analysis. Other authors, such as Lyons (1998), point out that the main purpose of reflection is to improve one’s teaching in order to make it more meaningful to learners: “reflective practice is defined preliminarily as ways in which teachers interrogate their teaching practices, asking questions about their effectiveness and how they might be refined to meet the needs of students” (p. 115). Most definitions of reflection tend to portray it as largely a solitary process involving the teacher and the specific teaching situation he/she faces. In relation to this point, Jay and Johnson (2002) have emphasised the dialogical dimension of reflective teaching as a social process taking place within a particular community of practice (i.e. the school):

Reflection [in teaching] is a process, both individual and collaborative, involving experience and uncertainty. It is comprised of identifying questions and key elements of a matter that has emerged as significant, then taking one’s thought into dialogue with oneself and with others. One evaluates insights gained from that process with reference to (1) additional perspectives, (2) one’s own values, experiences and beliefs, and (3) the larger context within which the questions are raised. (p. 76)

The lack of a clear-cut definition with respect to the notion of reflection has bred the proliferation of different typologies to operationalise it in teaching. The earliest attempt to define types of reflection was made by van Manen (1977), who outlined three levels undertaken by reflective teachers. The first one, *technical reflection*, is mainly concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of particular teaching strategies for achieving certain educational outcomes. It aims at the achievement of short-term objectives in order to improve performance. *Practical reflection* focuses on analysing and clarifying the meanings and assumptions associated with alternative educational goals and assessing the implications and consequences of particular actions. The third

level of reflection refers to *critical reflection*, which we will focus on more deeply because of its particular relevance to TEA.

The notion of critical reflection encompasses careful consideration of broader societal, ethical, and political dimensions of teaching, and it is deeply influenced by the tradition of critical pedagogy, mainly represented in the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire<sup>8</sup>. For van Manen (*ibid.*), this type of reflection addresses both moral and ethical concerns to search for educational goals, activities, and experiences which will provide justice, equality, caring, and emancipation in education. Bartlett (1994: 205) contends that the significance of critical reflection lies in the fact that it “explores consciously the relationship (which may be a part of unconscious knowledge) between individual teaching actions and the purposes of education in society”, stressing the need “to transcend the technicalities of teaching”. While reflection tends to remain at the technical level, i.e. understanding the *how* and *how-to* of our actions; critical reflection is concerned with the *why*, i.e. the reasons and the consequences of our actions. Hence critical reflection is at a higher, more complicated level than ‘ordinary’ reflection.

Critical reflection in teaching may also function as a precursor of transformative action inasmuch as it invites teachers to embark on a project of pedagogical reinvention. By means of critical reflection, teachers can engage in challenging the conventional practices of teaching and the way school is organised. On the one hand, as Mezirow (1990: 1) puts it, critical reflection “involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built [...] and challenging our established and habitual practices of expectation”. Brookfield (1995) has referred to the process as ‘hunting assumptions’. Teachers reflect critically on the assumptions and values they bring to teaching and challenge their validity, leading to a thoroughgoing revision of their professional practice. On the other hand, according to Kemmis (1986, quoted in Bartlett, 1994: 204), critical reflection further entails questioning the prevalent structures in education: “through reflection and the action which it informs, we may transform the social relations which characterise our work and our working situations”. This means that as a critically reflective practitioner the teacher is in a better position to redress the unequal power relations pervading schools, empowering themselves and their learners (see also section 4.6 on the notion of TA).

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<sup>8</sup> Critical pedagogy fosters the development of a critical consciousness towards emancipatory education. See section 4.3 for more details on the thought of Paulo Freire.



#### 2.4.2.2 *Origins of reflective teacher education*

The emergence of reflective practice in teacher education can be traced back to the seminal work by John Dewey and Donald Schön, who advocated that professional learning must be contingent upon the integration of personal experience with reflection and of theory with practice.

Writing in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dewey (1933, 1938) was one of the first educational theorists to view teachers as reflective practitioners. He was a fierce critic of what he considered a highly ‘mechanical’ focus on the preparation of teachers, arguing that teacher education must aim at empowering teachers with greater understanding of teaching rather than controlling them with simplistic formulas or ready-made recipes for teaching. To this end, he promoted reflection as a means of professional development in the teaching profession. According to Dewey (1933), reflection is an active and deliberative cognitive process growing from a state of doubt, hesitation, or perplexity felt in a directly experienced situation and leading to purposeful inquiry and problem resolution. In teaching, reflection allows teachers the opportunity to reframe problems in a variety of ways, look at teaching practice from multiple perspectives, and play an active role in educational reform. By engaging in reflective thinking, teachers will act with foresight and planning rather than relying on tradition, authority, and impulse, what Dewey (1938) called *routine action*.

For Dewey (1933), the development of effective reflection requires that teachers acquire skills such as observation and reasoning and develop three attitudes which are integral to reflective action: *open-mindedness*, *wholeheartedness*, and *responsibility*. Open-mindedness was described by Dewey as the “freedom from prejudice, partisanship, and such other habits as close the mind and make it unwilling to consider new problems and entertain new ideas” (p. 30). Being open-minded requires listening to different ways of thinking, paying full attention to alternative possibilities, and acknowledging the limitations and errors of our own assumptions and beliefs. Open-minded teachers will be open to change and will have the capacity to be critical of themselves and their work in the classroom. In contrast, those teachers who are narrow-minded will unquestioningly accept the pedagogical *status quo* and will be unable to acknowledge their errors.

Wholeheartedness refers to the genuine, consistent, and continuous devotion to an idea which “buoys [the] mind up and gives an onward impetus to thinking” (p. 32). This

attitude enables teachers to overcome their fears and uncertainties and to throw themselves into something with their whole heart. Teachers who are wholehearted are willing to take risks, continually strive to understand their own teaching and how it affects their learners, and approach all situations with the attitude that they can learn something new. Responsibility is the careful consideration of the consequences of one's actions: "to be intellectually responsible is to consider the consequences of a projected step; it means to be willing to adopt these consequences when they follow reasonably from any position already taken" (*ibid.*). Thus, responsible teachers regularly ask themselves the reasons why they do what they are doing in the classroom and consider the ways in which it is working, why it is working and, most importantly, for whom it is working. Dewey was also aware that teaching is a moral activity and that responsibility requires that teachers consider the consequences that their actions will have beyond the classroom, that is, in learners' lives.

Although Schön did not specifically address teacher education<sup>9</sup>, the ideas he presented in *The Reflective Practitioner* and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* have contributed to this field by calling for a re-conceptualisation of professional practice and arguing for the importance of reflection in the development of professional knowledge and expertise: "the professional schools must rethink both the epistemology of practice and the pedagogical assumptions on which their curricula are based and must bend their institutions to accommodate the reflective practicum as a key element of professional education" (Schön, 1987: 18). Schön rejected the 'technical-rationality' model based on the dominant view of professional competence as the application of scientific theories and techniques to the instrumental problems of practice. Because "the problems of real-world practice do not present themselves to practitioners as well-formed structures" (p. 4), Schön contended that professional education must develop in practitioners the ability for reflective practice. Through reflection, they can engage in framing and reframing the often complex problems they encounter, view the situation from a range of new perspectives, test out different alternatives, and modify their actions as a result. Although Schön drew on and expanded on Dewey's work, in some cases he distanced himself from the Deweyan conception of reflection. Reflection for Dewey was equal to professionalism and knowledge was based on rational, scientific approaches, whereas

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<sup>9</sup> Schön studied professionals like architects, engineers, and psychotherapists.

Schön believed that reflection was an intuitive, personal, non-rational activity and that knowledge was the direct result of practice.

In his work, Schön advocated a new epistemology of practice where professional growth and artistry (i.e. “the competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice” [p. 13]) are promoted by means of encouraging practitioners’ *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-in-action*. In teaching, for example, reflection-on-action refers to the act whereby teachers think back on what they have done in the classroom in order to gain new knowledge and insight from their experience. Reflection-in-action, however, is concerned with thinking about what they are doing in the classroom while they are doing it. In the view of Schön (1983), when practitioners reflect *in* and *on* action, they become researchers into their practice context. Reflective practice enables them to make “new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness” they experience (p. 61) and construct their own knowledge and theory about practice.

The power of reflection in professional growth is not reduced to making new sense of practice. Schön further explained that in the process of reflection:

There is some puzzling, or troubling, or interesting phenomenon with which the individual is trying to deal. As he tries to make sense of it, he also reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understandings which he surfaces, criticizes, restructures, and embodies in further action. (p. 50)

These understandings (or ‘frames’ as Schön also labelled them) make reference to *knowledge-in-action* or *knowing-in-action*<sup>10</sup>. According to Schön, experienced practitioners construct their representations of practice on the basis of the frames available to them from their previous experience and their existing knowledge. They draw on this “repertoire of examples, images, understanding and actions” (p. 138), in which rational analysis plays no role, to guide responses which are automatic, routinised, and spontaneous. Schön (1987) wrote that much of the workaday behaviour of the practitioner relies on this tacit knowledge-in-action and that, in this sense, both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action have a critical function to fulfil. They contribute to practitioners’ greater awareness of their knowledge-in-action and to the

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<sup>10</sup> Schön (1987: 25-26, original italics) explained the distinction between knowing-in-action and knowledge-in-action as follows:

I shall use *knowing-in-action* to refer to the sorts of know-how we reveal in our intelligent action- publicly observable, physical performances like riding a bicycle and private operations like instant analysis of a balance sheet [...] *Knowing* suggests the dynamic quality of knowing-in-action, which, when we describe it, we convert to *knowledge-in-action*.

questioning of its complex structure: “[the practitioner] may, in the process, restructure strategies of action, understandings of phenomena, or ways of framing problems” (p. 27).

#### *2.4.2.3 Orientations to reflective teacher education*

The specialised literature has discussed different orientations to reflective teacher education. The most relevant classifications are provided by Zeichner and Liston (1996) and Valli (1997). Zeichner and Liston (1996) identify five different traditions of reflective practice to guide reform efforts in teaching and teacher education. These are the academic, social efficiency, developmentalist, social reconstructionist, and generic traditions. The academic tradition entails reflection on subject matter and the representation and translation of that subject matter knowledge to promote student understanding. This tradition is represented by authors like Shulman (1986) and Wilson, Shulman, and Richert (1987) and their ideas about pedagogical reasoning. The social efficiency tradition prioritises reflection about how well teachers’ classroom practice matches what external research says they should be doing. In my view, this tradition is of limited value when it comes to fostering TA since it reinforces the behaviourist view of teachers as skilled technicians who have to comply with teaching strategies which have been suggested elsewhere.

In the developmentalist tradition, reflection is learner-centred and focuses on students’ thinking and understandings, their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, their interests, and their patterns of developmental growth. The basic assumption underlying this tradition is that the natural development of the learner provides the basis for determining what should be taught to students and how it should be taught. The social reconstructionist tradition allows for reflection on the social and political context of schooling and how teaching can enhance equity, justice, dialogue, democratic involvement, and more humane conditions in our schools and society. The last tradition, the generic tradition, encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching in general without much attention to how teachers reflect, what they reflect on, or the degree to which their reflections should involve an examination of the social and institutional contexts in which they work. The implication in this tradition is that teachers’ actions are better just because they are more deliberate and intentional. The problem here is that reflection may become a ‘ritualistic’ practice (Moore, 2004; see also section 2.4.2.5).

In her review of reflective teacher education programmes, Valli (1997) also identifies five approaches to reflective teacher preparation: 1) technical reflection, 2) reflection-in and on-action, 3) deliberative reflection, 4) personalistic reflection, and 5) critical reflection. Technical reflection, which Valli is highly critical of, matches Zeichner and Liston's (1996) social efficiency tradition. Teachers judge whether their teaching practices match external guidelines established by education authorities and researchers. The focus of teacher education programmes emphasising technical reflection is on the application of particular teaching techniques and behaviours<sup>11</sup>. Valli borrows the terms 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' from Schön (1983, 1987) for the second approach. In reflection-in and on-action, the teacher reflects on his/her own unique teaching situation or experience: "each teacher's values, beliefs, classroom context, and students provide the source of knowledge for reflective action" (Valli, 1997: 76). Unlike technical reflection, the teacher's voice is heard in this approach. Third, deliberative reflection views the teacher as a decision-maker and highlights decision-making based on a variety of sources: research, experience, personal beliefs and values, and other teachers' advice. Teachers weigh up competing viewpoints and theories about teaching and make the best decision.

Personalistic reflection promotes reflection, on the one hand, about teachers' own personal and professional growth and, on the other, about their learners' lives. Teachers reflect on what experiences help them become good teachers and what experiences hinder their professional development. Concerning students, the scope of reflection goes beyond learners' academic performance. It is centred on their personal desires, concerns, and hopes for the future. Valli states that teachers who reflect in a personalistic manner will be caretakers, not just information dispensers. Finally, critical reflection is geared to critically examining the moral, social, and political dimensions of education in general. The aim is to understand and improve the quality of life of disadvantaged groups. This type of reflection looks at ways in which "schools and teachers contribute to social injustices and inequality and ways in which they can help overcome these inequalities" (p. 79).

From these orientations to reflective teacher education it could be argued that, due to their emphasis on learners and the promotion of democratic values, Zeichner and

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<sup>11</sup> The social efficiency tradition (Zeichner and Liston, 1996) and technical reflection (Valli, 1997) relate to the 'technical-rationality' model rejected by Schön (1983, 1987), but including a reflective component.

Liston's (1996) developmentalist and social reconstructionist traditions and Valli's (1997) conceptions of personalistic and critical reflection can contribute to the promotion of a more learner-centred approach in education, whereas both personalistic and deliberative reflection can enhance TA.

#### 2.4.2.4 *Why reflective teacher education?*

Over the last years, there has been a great deal of advocacy for reflection as an integral part of teaching and (pre-service and in-service) teacher education (see, for example, Akbari, 2007; Bean and Stevens, 2002; Beauchamp, 2015; Freese, 2006; Harford and MacRuairc, 2008; Jay and Johnson, 2002; Sellars, 2012; Walkington, 2005; Ward and McCotter, 2004). Reflection is widely regarded as a standard professional disposition for all teachers. In this section, I discuss the various reasons supporting the implementation of reflective practice in teacher education.

First, reflection can be a valuable tool for preventing the 'uncritical acceptance' (Beyer, 1984) of prevailing teaching practices or, in other words, the tendency "to accept existing classroom situations as given, essentially unalterable, and beyond criticism" (p. 38). Teachers' (especially student teachers') socialisation into the culture of teaching often leads them to reproduce the pedagogical *status quo* and replicate what other teachers regard as 'natural' or 'correct' practices. In this sense, the use of reflective practice has been put forward as a counteraction against a ritualised and mechanistic way of teaching to which teachers have to accommodate and adjust rather than revise or restructure (James and McCormick, 2009).

Many teachers enter and leave their teacher education programmes with the same beliefs about teaching and learning. One primary goal of reflective teacher education is to contribute to the process of belief revision (Farrell, 2003; Korthagen, 2004). As has been noted previously, critical reflection has the potential to make tacit beliefs explicit, leading to new ways of knowing and thinking about the teaching-learning process. Reflective teacher education enables teachers to develop greater awareness of their personal beliefs while they dig and investigate the 'why' of these beliefs. They can examine the bases for their assumptions (e.g. past teachers, previous learning experience), question their adequacy for teaching, and ultimately replace them with more relevant views. Thus, they will be more open to change and transform their

teaching practice. Those teachers who do not engage in critical reflection upon their own assumptions will be likely to teach as they were taught, an issue to which I shall return in more detail in section 3.4.4.1.

In teaching, reflection is the basis for pedagogical inquiry and “the process which underlies all forms of high professional competence” (Bright, 1996: 166). Reflective practice helps teachers adopt a critical stance towards their teaching and the context in which it is embedded. The teacher is viewed as a researcher and action research as an effective strategy for analysing, assessing, and improving teaching practice. Those teachers who engage in pedagogical inquiry develop more informed practice since they think critically about their teaching and their role in the classroom; question the educational goals, principles, and values underpinning their work; identify classroom dilemmas or problems to solve them; and constantly assess the impact of their teaching on their students’ learning. They take more responsibility for shaping and readjusting their practice and, at the same time, become empowered, confident decision-makers. Moreover, reflective teachers gain a deeper understanding of the social and political context in which they work and become aware of the opportunities, conditions, and constraints provided by this context (Zeichner and Liston, 1996).

The promotion of reflective inquiry builds upon the idea that professional experience plays a significant role in teachers’ professional knowledge and empowerment. Numerous authors (e.g. Featherstone, Munby, and Russell, 1997; Giroux, 2011; Jiménez Raya and Vieira, 2015; Smyth, 1995; Vieira, 2007a, 2007b, 2010) have advocated the need for teachers to develop a voice in teaching and teacher education. Their argument is based on the premise that teachers need to be empowered so that they can have an influence on future directions in education (e.g. curriculum development, educational reform, and knowledge production). Unlike the transmissive model, reflective teacher education is largely practice-driven<sup>12</sup>, inquiry-based and, most importantly, bottom-up. It recognises an active role on the part of teachers and attaches greater value to their practical knowledge rather than to scientific knowledge produced by academic researchers. Teachers are no longer seen as passive consumers of knowledge. Reflective inquiry becomes a catalyst for teachers to give meaning to their teaching practice, construct their professional knowledge from their experience, and

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<sup>12</sup> This view of teacher education does not deny theory, but it links this with practice in a dialogic way, that is, “theory informs practice and *practice contributes to the refinement of theory*” (Flamini and Jiménez Raya, 2007: 110, emphasis added).

formulate their *personal theories* of teaching and learning as opposed to just complying with *professional theories* which are developed and propagated by experts (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). In this way, teachers can “go beyond the technician role and become the authors of their own thought and action, within an interpretive view of education” (Vieira, 1999: 27). One approach which holds promise for teacher preparation through reflective inquiry and experiential learning is the case method, which was adopted in the module where the present research was conducted (see section 5.5.5).

Teacher education must prepare teachers not only to teach, but also to develop professionally throughout their teaching career. Reflective teacher education thus emerges as a way of enabling teachers to participate consciously in their own professional growth and development, either individually or in close contact with other colleagues. For Lange (1994), there is an intimate relationship between reflective practice and teacher development:

The reflective process allows developing teachers latitude to experiment within a framework of growing knowledge and experience. It gives them the opportunity to examine their relations with students, their values, their abilities, and their successes and failures in a realistic context. It begins the developing teacher’s path toward becoming an ‘expert teacher’. (pp. 249-250)

Reflective thinking can trigger both a deeper understanding of the profession and a sense of self-as-teacher. Fullan (1995: 256, original italics) argues that reflection “means internalizing norms, habits and techniques for *continuous learning*”. Reflective teachers constantly make new sense of their classroom practice and revise their ideas and knowledge about teaching. On the other hand, Bartlett (1994) sees reflective practice as a springboard for self-appraisal, giving teachers a better insight into their personal orientation and capabilities. Through reflection, teachers can become aware of where they are and where they want to go with respect to their future development as teachers.

To conclude, it should be noted that reflective practice suggests both challenge and commitment. Teachers must be prepared to be reflective. Reflection requires ways of thinking which teachers may not be used to, so they need to develop the skills of, and the disposition for, reflective practice: “reflection is a complex cognitive and affective process which takes time and practice to develop and integrate into one’s mind, heart and life” (Stanley, 1999: 111). Furthermore, reflection requires teachers’ commitment to



take responsibility for their professional development, to be open-minded, and to engage in analysing and improving their teaching practice as well as accommodating it to their learners' changing needs. In this sense, teacher education can play a decisive role in instilling the professional habit of reflection into (prospective) teachers. It can provide them with a safe environment in which they feel free to explore what they think and know about teaching and construct their own philosophy of teaching.

#### *2.4.2.5 Criticisms of reflection and reflective teacher education*

In spite of the many arguments in the literature supporting reflection, significant criticisms of the concept have come from several directions. Gore and Zeichner (1991), for instance, raised questions about how reflection is carried out in teaching and teacher preparation. They noted that “in some extreme cases, the impression is given that as long as teachers reflect about something, in some manner, whatever they decide to do is acceptable, since they have reflected about it” (p. 120). For the authors, however, reflective practice should have a clear purpose: to understand and improve one's own teaching. To this end, it is necessary to determine what teachers should be reflecting on and what kinds of criteria should be used to evaluate the quality of reflection. Otherwise, there is the possibility, as Moore (2004) points out, that reflection may become ‘ritualistic’, that is, a routine or practice without meaning. A further problem with reflective practice is that “rationalization may masquerade as reflection” (Loughran, 2002: 35). Instead of looking for new alternatives and solutions to teaching practices, Loughran warns that teachers may use reflection to rationalise and reinforce existing beliefs and justify the way they teach. Concerning teacher preparation, Zeichner and Liu (2009) assert that reflection in teacher education has not necessarily contributed to fostering genuine teacher development or to enhancing teachers' role in educational reform. Instead, “an illusion of teacher development has often been created which has maintained in more subtle ways the subservient position of the teacher” (p. 70).

There have also been doubts as to whether prospective teachers can actually engage in reflection during initial teacher education, or even if pre-service teacher education and reflection are compatible concepts. Some researchers (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Russell, 1988) hold that at this early stage of their professional development student teachers are mainly concerned with the mastery of the technical skills of

teaching, classroom management, and their self-image as a teacher, so their attention is not focused on reflecting and being self-critical of their work. Korthagen (1988: 39) does not consider pre-service teacher education to be the “auspicious moment for learning the art of reflection” since during this period student teachers experience a great deal of anxiety and their main concern is to ‘get through’. A similar opinion is expressed by Calderhead (1992) who thinks that developing reflective practice may be better addressed ten or fifteen years into a teaching career. Experience is identified as an important factor for reflection. As we have seen, one of the aims of the reflective activity is to frame and reframe problems which may arise in the teaching practice. In this respect, Akbari (2007) suggests that identifying such problems is not an automatic process and requires trained eyes which inexperienced teachers, like student teachers, tend to lack. Another critique of reflection suggested by some scholars is the lack of empirical research supporting the view that reflective teaching results in more innovative, creative educational practices with trainee teachers or in better learning for them (Cornford, 2002; Griffiths, 2000; Korthagen and Wubbels, 1995; Thiessen, 2000).

Nevertheless, it is my contention that pre-service teacher education is a critical stage in teacher professional development and, for that reason, critical reflection should be a central component in it. If student teachers do not reflect on how they view and enact teaching at this initial stage of their teaching career, they will surely continue to teach as they were taught as learners and will never feel the need to improve their teaching practice and take charge of their own professional development. Furthermore, there is research which has shown that student teachers can successfully engage in critical reflection on their teaching and that reflective practice can result in substantial benefits such as fostering student teachers’ critical awareness of themselves as teachers, improving their sense of self-efficacy, and challenging traditional pedagogical beliefs and practices (see, for instance, Bean and Stevens, 2002; Francis, 1995; Harford and MacRuarie, 2008; Walkington, 2005).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

With the growing recognition that teacher quality is a crucial contributor to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000), special attention is being drawn to how teachers are prepared for the uncertain business of teaching. This chapter has discussed

the significance of teacher education and how it can make a difference in teachers' professional development, their teaching practice and, consequently, their learners' learning. Education has entered a new era influenced by the constant changes our society is undergoing and the increasing demands which are imposed on learners in terms of new competences and skills (e.g. critical thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity, independence, problem-solving, and decision-making). This situation calls for a re-conceptualisation of teacher education. Teachers can no longer be trained to be mere transmitters of knowledge to learners but *transformative intellectuals* (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) who strive for academic advancement and personal transformation, both for themselves and for their learners.

The chapter has emphasised in this regard that teacher education needs to shift its focus from a transmissive model in nature to a more reflection-oriented approach. The notion of reflection is to be incorporated into teacher education programmes as a powerful means for teachers to constantly revise the ideas and principles informing their practice, to engage in a lifelong process of professional development, and to reflect critically on the immediate consequences of their teaching for their learners' opportunities in life. It is for this reason that the present study was framed within a critically reflective, inquiry-oriented approach to teacher education. By means of critical reflection and inquiry into experience, the participants explored what they knew and believed about FL teaching and learning, thus helping them construct their professional knowledge and recast their educational beliefs in line with a more learner-centred approach to teaching.

The following chapter discusses an essential component in teacher education and professional development: the notion of teacher cognition, with special emphasis on teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs.



## CHAPTER 3

# TEACHER COGNITION IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

[T]eacher cognition plays a pivotal role in teachers' lives.

Borg (2003: 81)

### 3.1 Introduction

Research into teacher professional development has acquired a new dimension over the last decades. The emphasis has shifted from focusing on teacher behaviour<sup>13</sup> (what the teacher does in the classroom) to analysing teacher cognition (what the teacher thinks, believes, and knows). Borg (1999: 19) defines teacher cognition as “the store of beliefs, knowledge, assumptions, theories, and attitudes about all aspects of their work which teachers hold and which have a powerful impact on teachers’ classroom practices”. Understanding teacher cognition is therefore central to understanding teaching. The present chapter comprises three main sections which will explore this concept. The first of these sections (section 3.3) deals with *teacher knowledge*. It defines the concept (section 3.3.1) and examines the various domains of teacher knowledge identified in the relevant literature (section 3.3.2).

The second main section of the chapter (section 3.4) focuses on the concept of *teacher beliefs*. Beliefs are thought to exercise a significant influence on teachers’ thoughts, judgements, decisions, and behaviour in the classroom (Pajares, 1992), and they are further described as the most valuable psychological construct to teacher

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<sup>13</sup> Teacher behaviour was the emphasis of *process-product research*. This area of research explored the relationship between specific teaching behaviours (processes)- wait time, time on task, question asking, classroom management techniques, and so on- which correlated with good student achievement (product).

education (Pintrich, 1990), inasmuch as they play a critical role in how (student) teachers learn to teach and develop professionally. This section first provides an overview of the definition and major characteristics of teacher beliefs (sections 3.4.1, 3.4.2, and 3.4.3). It then proceeds to discuss the significance of teacher beliefs for teaching, learning, and learning to teach (section 3.4.4). The section concludes by exploring the role of teacher education in challenging prospective teachers' beliefs (section 3.4.5). It must be noted that although the chapter discusses teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs in two different sections, it was not within the scope of the present research to distinguish beliefs from knowledge. The term 'belief' in this study refers to any views held by the participants about the nature of FL teaching and learning. Finally, section 3.5 reviews previous studies on pre-service teachers' cognition.

Before focusing on the discussion of teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, and previous research on the topic, the chapter begins by giving a brief account of the complexity of learning to teach in section 3.2.

### **3.2 Complexity of learning to teach**

Learning to teach is a highly complex process, taking many forms, involving multiple influences, and requiring various types of engagement and experiences. As formulated by Calderhead (1990, quoted in Roberts, 1998: 107), the difficulty of learning to teach resides in the fact that:

[B]ecoming a teacher involves complex changes and development not only in behaviour but also in cognition, affect and knowledge, and that these changes occur within a powerful ideological context. Learning to teach involves acquiring a repertoire of pedagogical behaviour, but it also requires the development of ways of thinking about children, the curriculum and the task of teaching, resolving certain commitments and beliefs about teaching and about one's role as a teacher, acquiring knowledge related to the teaching task, and adapting and interacting with the pressures that school and the educational context bring to bear upon teachers' work.

Not long ago, learning to teach entailed mastering the specific content the teacher was to teach and the teaching methodologies for conveying that content to learners. These days, the situation is completely different as higher demands are placed on teachers. To illustrate this point, I will discuss how the complexity of learning to teach is conceptualised by Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005) and Feiman-Nemser (2008).

Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005) have set a framework for teacher learning in which (prospective) teachers should be enabled “to develop a *vision* for their practice; *knowledge* about teaching, learning, and [learners]; *dispositions* about how to use this knowledge; *practices* that allow them to act on their intentions and beliefs; and *tools* that support their efforts” (p. 39, original italics). First, learning to teach involves teachers in developing a vision of teaching, i.e. how they want to teach, on what theoretical foundations they want their teaching to rest, and how they want their learners to learn. This vision can prove particularly valuable for helping teachers guide their teaching practice and direct their future learning. As further discussed in section 3.3, teacher knowledge will need to encompass a rich map of components, including knowledge of the subject, learners (e.g. their cognitive and personal development), the context, the curriculum, and so forth.

To put this knowledge or understanding into practice, teachers need to develop tools. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden make the distinction between conceptual and practical tools, noting that conceptual tools include learning theories, theoretical frameworks and ideas about teaching and learning, whereas practical tools include instructional approaches, strategies, and resources (e.g. textbooks, assessment tools, and curriculum guides). These understandings and tools need to be integrated into a set of practices. Sometimes, this process is not as straightforward as it may seem. When being taught the theoretical principles behind a particular vision of teaching, teachers may find it difficult to put them into practice in the classroom, especially if they have never experienced this kind of teaching as learners. This difficulty has been termed ‘the problem of enactment’ (Kennedy, 1999) or how theoretical principles translate into classroom action and behaviour. To conclude, Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005) argue that in learning to teach teachers need to develop certain professional dispositions or “habits of thinking and action” (p. 39). These dispositions are closely related to a reflection-oriented approach to teaching, including the disposition to reflect on practice, learn from experience, and study and evaluate one’s teaching.

Feiman-Nemser (2008), on the other hand, has determined that learning to teach can be conceptualised around four broad themes: 1) learning to *think* like a teacher, 2) learning to *know* like a teacher, 3) learning to *feel* like a teacher, and 4) learning to *act* like a teacher. Learning to think like a teacher, according to Feiman-Nemser, “requires a critical examination of one’s existing beliefs, a transition to pedagogical thinking, and

the development of meta-cognitive awareness” (p. 698). Teachers come to think about and understand teaching in ways quite different from their own previous experience as learners. Learning to know like a teacher highlights the different kinds of knowledge which good teaching depends on and the teacher must be in possession of. The act of teaching is influenced by affective, moral, and emotional factors which shape teachers’ classroom practices. Learning to feel like a teacher points to the deeply personal work which is embedded in teaching and learning to teach, engaging teachers’ emotions, identity, and intellect. Finally, learning to act like a teacher entails mastering a wide array of skills, strategies and routines for teaching as well as the professional judgement to figure out what to do when (p. 699).

In what follows, I proceed to discuss teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs, two key components in the learning-to-teach process.

### **3.3 Teacher knowledge**

#### **3.3.1 Defining teacher knowledge**

Like any other professional domain, teaching is based on a wide base of specialised knowledge. Borg (2003: 81, emphasis added) argues that “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of *knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs*”. What teachers do in the classroom is partly informed by the knowledge they gain in their teaching career and in programmes of teacher preparation. Accordingly, teacher knowledge is a major focus of interest to educational researchers, teacher educators, and policy makers.

Research on teacher knowledge began in the 1980s. Since then, increasing attention has been awarded to the knowledge which is embedded in teachers and their classroom practices. In their literature review of teacher knowledge research, Clark and Lampert (1986) concluded that the knowledge teachers use is characterised by being contextual, interactive (it is constructed and redefined through interaction with learners), and speculative (i.e. “tentative, subject to change and transient rather than fixed, objective and unchanging” [p. 29]). Carter (1992: 110-112) has likewise discussed the nature of teacher knowledge, emphasising the following characteristics: 1) teacher



knowledge is practical and contextualised, 2) it is personal, 3) it affects how teachers organise instruction and represent the curriculum to learners, 4) it is task-specific and event-structured, and 5) it is constructed from repeated experience in accomplishing tasks in a particular domain.

In regard to what teachers know about teaching and learning, research has suggested that the sources for teacher knowledge differ when we refer to pre-service and in-service teachers. Experienced teachers' knowledge is highly determined by their previous experience as learners, the educational theories acquired in training courses, and their teaching experience (Ariogul, 2007; Verloop, Van Driel, and Meijer, 2001). In contrast, what student teachers know about teaching resides in the theoretical knowledge they may have received during their undergraduate degree and in what they have learned by observing their past teachers since primary education. Lortie (1975) referred to this process as 'the apprenticeship of observation'. As Calderhead (1991) points out, student teachers have acquired their knowledge from a student perspective and it is from this perspective that they understand what teaching is, how it is put into practice, and how problematic teaching situations are dealt with.

Over the last years, teacher knowledge has gained special prominence in the design and conceptualisation of teacher education programmes. As discussed in chapter 2, the educational landscape is changing at a brisk pace and is becoming increasingly complex. New educational and social demands are required of learners and their respective teachers. Traditionally, knowledge bases of teacher education have focused on the transmission of content knowledge to teachers (Shulman, 1998), due to the behaviourist approach dominating the context of teacher preparation. Nowadays, however, teacher knowledge cannot be just limited to subject matter competence. There is a growing consensus in this regard that (pre-service and in-service) teacher education programmes have to broaden their perspectives concerning the knowledge base of teachers (see Ben-Peretz, 2011; Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Kelly *et al.*, 2004).

In addition to knowledge about content, today's teachers need a much deeper knowledge base about learners and their learning, about the particular context and environment in which they work, and about alternative teaching practices. To begin with, teachers need an understanding of what their learners know and what they need to learn. This is important when adapting and maximising the learning process, so that

learners learn the right things at the right times. Second, teachers need knowledge about motivational and developmental aspects of how their learners learn more effectively (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Classrooms are generally characterised by encompassing a wide variety of individual learner differences such as intelligence, motivation, personality, aptitude, and learning beliefs and preferences. Therefore, teachers need to know how to respond to different learning styles and abilities, how to cater for diverse learning needs, how to build on learners' experiences and prior knowledge in making connections to the new knowledge to be acquired, and how to motivate their pupils. The essence of education is to prepare learners for economic and social life (Hansen, 2008) and, in this sense, teachers need to know how they can prepare their learners to be effective citizens in this rapidly changing world. This requires that teachers are aware of the changes undergone by society and how they translate into new requirements and challenges for learners to be met as future citizens. In brief, teachers need to gain knowledge about 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and how to help their learners acquire them.

### **3.3.2 Types of teacher knowledge**

Teacher knowledge is viewed as a multi-dimensional concept. The act of teaching is informed by multiple forms of knowledge, for instance, knowledge about the subject, teaching strategies, the curriculum, learners, and the educational context. Our current understanding of the knowledge base for teaching is deeply indebted to the work carried out by Lee Shulman (1986, 1987) and his research colleagues<sup>14</sup> in the 'Knowledge Growth in Teaching' project at Stanford University. They identified three main areas of professional knowledge for effective teaching: general pedagogical knowledge (GPK), PCK, and SMK. In addition to these areas, Shulman (1986) suggested the following categories as integral components of teacher knowledge: curricular knowledge; knowledge of learners and their characteristics; knowledge of educational contexts; and knowledge of educational aims, purposes, and values (including their philosophical and historical grounds).

The most traditional area of teacher knowledge is SMK which refers to the teacher's knowledge of his/her subject. The second area identified by Shulman and his

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<sup>14</sup> Grossman (1990), Wilson (1992), and Wilson *et al.* (1987).

colleagues, GPK, encompasses general knowledge about teaching, learning and learners as well as the skill in the use of teaching methods and strategies. This area of teacher knowledge includes understanding of theories and pedagogical principles of teaching and learning; techniques for effective classroom management; strategies for creating positive learning environments, organising and conducting lessons in varied ways, and providing meaningful instruction which is motivating and engaging; and knowledge about learners, how they learn, and how their learning can be fostered by means of teaching. Furthermore, in our present-day society where we are witnessing how the use of new technologies is spreading and the social demands of daily life are increasing exponentially, GPK will need to include knowledge of how to make use of these technologies in teaching and how to promote skills such as critical thinking, learning to learn, entrepreneurship, and creativity among learners.

The domain of PCK involves specific knowledge of how to teach a particular topic or content area in a particular subject domain. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into teachers' professional understanding or, in other words, the manner in which teachers relate their GPK to their SMK. According to Shulman (1986), PCK:

[E]mbodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability. Within the category of pedagogical content knowledge I include, for the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations- in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others. (p. 9)

PCK goes beyond knowledge of the content *per se* to incorporate issues of teaching such as knowledge about the range of alternatives or methodological options available to teachers in the teaching of content, a deeper understanding of learners' common learning difficulties and the conceptions they bring to the learning process, knowledge about enhancing student learning in a variety of ways, and greater awareness of curricular choices.

Grossman (1990) elaborated upon Shulman's (1986) conception by identifying and describing four central components of PCK: overarching conception of teaching a subject, knowledge of instructional strategies and representations, knowledge of learners' understanding and potential misunderstandings, and knowledge of curriculum and curricular materials. Wilson (1992: 69) asserts that PCK is not "simply a bag of tricks", but also involves a way of thinking, reasoning, and solving problems in teaching. Wilson *et al.* (1987) described the process by which PCK is generated as

*pedagogical reasoning*. This process encompasses six common aspects of the teaching act: comprehension, transformation, instruction, evaluation, reflection, and new comprehension (pp. 119-120). Pedagogical reasoning begins with *comprehension* or teachers' understanding of the subject matter, how a given idea relates to other ideas within the same subject area and to ideas in other subjects. It continues with the *transformation* process which comprises four sub-processes: critical interpretation, representation, adaptation, and tailoring. *Critical interpretation* involves the teacher in reviewing the materials for instruction in the light of his/her own understanding of the subject matter. Then, the teacher considers alternative ways of *representing* ideas to learners. *Adaptation* requires the teacher to fit the materials to the student population in general, whereas *tailoring* refers to adapting the material to the characteristics of a specific group of learners. The fourth step, *instruction*, refers to the observable performance of the teacher and the features of effective direct instruction. Next, the teacher checks for understanding and misunderstanding in his/her learners and *evaluates* his/her teaching by means of *reflection*. The cycle of pedagogical reasoning ends where it started, with *new comprehension*: "this comprehension is a new understanding that has been enhanced with increased awareness of the purposes of instruction, the subject matter of instruction and the participants" (p. 120).

One essential component of PCK is curricular knowledge. On the one hand, curricular knowledge can be described as knowledge of the mandated learning goals and objectives in the national curriculum. It further includes an understanding of how this curriculum can be organised in the light of learners' needs and the school's characteristics. This type of knowledge, according to Shulman (1986: 10), is:

[R]epresented by the full range of programs designed for the teaching of particular subjects and topics at a given level, the variety of instructional materials available in relation to those programs, and the set of characteristics that serve as both the indications and contraindications for the use of particular curriculum or program materials in particular circumstances.

Shulman's description of curricular knowledge includes knowledge of the curricular alternatives for instruction and their effectiveness for given contexts, knowledge of curriculum content and materials in other subject areas (lateral curricular knowledge), and knowledge of how topics and content have been and will be developed across the subject area during the preceding and later academic years (vertical curricular knowledge).

Another area of professional knowledge in teaching is practical knowledge. Based on a review of studies, Meijer, Verloop, and Beijaard (1999) identified the major characteristics of teachers' practical knowledge. They concluded that: a) practical knowledge is personal and unique to each teacher; b) it is context-sensitive, defined in and adapted to the specific classroom situation; c) it is built from reflection on teaching experience; d) it is mainly tacit; e) it guides teaching practice; and f) it is related to the content or subject to be taught. The term was first coined by Elbaz (1983). She argued that teachers' practical knowledge "encompasses firsthand experience of students' learning styles, interests, needs, strengths and difficulties, and a repertoire of instructional techniques and classroom management skills" as well as teachers' knowledge "of their own attitudes, values, beliefs and goals- all shaped by their practical classroom experience" (p. 5). In her work, Elbaz further established that five categories of knowledge make up the practical knowledge a teacher uses when making instructional decisions. These categories are knowledge of self, knowledge of the milieu or teaching context, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of curriculum development, and knowledge of instruction.

In the literature, practical knowledge is characterised by the variety of terms which make reference to this concept. These terms include, for example, 'personal practical knowledge' (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988), 'practical theory' (Buitink, 2009), 'professional craft knowledge' (Brown and McIntyre, 1993) and 'practical philosophy' (Goodman, 1988). Shulman (1987) referred to this practical dimension of teacher knowledge as the 'wisdom of practice', that is, the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and values which practising teachers have acquired through years of experience and reflection. Pre-service teachers normally lack this kind of knowledge when they enter teacher education since they lack teaching experience. It is at this stage when they begin to build their practical knowledge.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) view personal practical knowledge as a rich interweaving of images, understandings, and personal stories which guide and inform teachers' actions in particular classroom situations and which are derived from teachers' experiences. Personal practical knowledge is:

[A] term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any

teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (p. 25)

This view of teacher knowledge suggests that teachers carry in themselves the knowledge required for teaching. In other words, teachers do not apply knowledge to teaching; they create and bring with themselves their own personal, practical knowledge about teaching. This type of teacher knowledge is largely “experiential, value laden, purposeful and oriented to practice” (Clandinin, 1986: 19-20) and, for that reason, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) see the construction of narrative accounts of teachers’ own experience as the perfect medium for the study of personal practical knowledge. Narratives give teachers the space to explore and understand their teaching practices through conscious reflection, what the authors call *narrative inquiry*.

In order to keep up with the pace of change in education, teachers will have to take responsibility for their own professional development. They will have to constantly update their knowledge base for teaching and add to their professional skills and competences. To this end, it is essential that teachers gain *knowledge of self* (Elbaz, 1983) or knowledge about themselves as teachers and learners. Eraut (1988) used the term *self-knowledge* to refer to knowledge of one’s own knowledge and skills. This type of knowledge in turn contributes to the development of *control knowledge* which he described as encompassing:

[S]elf-awareness and sensitivity; self-knowledge about one’s strengths and weaknesses, the gap between what one says and what one does, and what one knows and does not know; self-management [...]; self-development in its broadest sense; and the metacognitive skills one uses in organizing and controlling one’s thinking. (p. 203)

To conclude this review of the professional knowledge landscape, a number of scholars (e.g. Clark and Lampert, 1986; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1986) have advocated the need for teachers to develop contextual knowledge (CK) or, in other words, full awareness of the characteristics, demands, opportunities, and limitations of the context in which they operate. This context comprises the classroom, the school, and the wider society. CK requires that teachers gain knowledge of the structural demands and educational concerns of their schools, and of the entire local community. Concerning the classroom and what happens in it, teachers need to have knowledge about ways in which they can organise and manage classroom spaces and routines and how they can respond to classroom situations and exigencies. This understanding relates to the situational knowledge discussed by Eraut (1988) and the classroom knowledge

pointed out by Carter and Doyle (1987). In brief, when proceeding to teach, teachers will have to adapt their SMK, GPK, and PCK to the particular context and situation where they are.

All these knowledge bases are deployed simultaneously and interdependently, and they constitute an integrated and coherent whole. Pre-service teacher education can provide student teachers with knowledge in the early stages of teaching, but this will need to be developed throughout the teaching career. Therefore, one of the purposes of initial teacher education should be to help prospective teachers develop the skills, abilities, and competences (e.g. observation, reasoning, inquiry, and an analytical mind) to learn from their experience and continuously redefine their professional knowledge. It is my contention that the promotion of reflective practice and the use of tools like learning portfolios and cases can become valuable strategies to reach such a goal.

### **3.4 Teacher beliefs**

#### **3.4.1 Defining teacher beliefs**

The notion of belief has been of particular interest to educational researchers since the late 1970s due to the profound influence beliefs exert on teachers' decisions and classroom behaviour. However, there is still little consensus when it comes to defining teacher beliefs. One of the main reasons for this definitional confusion has been the wide variety of terms used to refer to this concept. The conceptual ambiguity embracing the notion of belief in teaching arises because identical terms have been defined in different ways and different terms have been used to describe similar concepts. Pajares (1992: 309) states in this regard that "defining beliefs is at best a game of player's choice". In his review of research on teacher beliefs, he characterises pedagogical beliefs as a messy construct which travels in disguise and often under various aliases. These aliases can include terms such as 'personal theories' (Sendan and Roberts, 1998), 'implicit theories' (Clark, 1988), 'maxims' (Richards, 2000), 'images' (Calderhead, 1988; Clandinin, 1986), 'theories for practice' (Burns, 1996), 'judgements' (Yero, 2002), and 'conceptions of classroom practice' (Calderhead and Robson, 1991), to name but a few which can be found in the specialised literature. Below, I will go through some relevant terms referring to teacher beliefs in education.

One of the first attempts at defining teacher beliefs and explaining their influence on the act of teaching was made by Sharp and Green (1975, quoted in Ball, 1987: 14). They contended that in the classroom each teacher is usually guided by his/her own *teaching ideology*, that is:

[A] connected set of systematically related beliefs and ideas about what are felt to be the essential features of teaching. A teaching ideology involves both cognitive and evaluative aspects, it will include general ideas and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and of human nature- the latter entailing beliefs about motivation, learning and educability. It will include some characterization of society and the role and functions of education in the wider social context. There will also be assumptions about the nature of the tasks teachers have to perform, the specific skills and techniques required together with ideas about how these might be acquired and developed. Finally, the ideology will include criteria to assess adequate performance, both of the material on whom teachers 'work', i.e. pupils, and for self-evaluation [...] In short, a teaching ideology involves a broad definition of the task and a set of prescriptions for performing it, all held at a relatively high level of abstraction.

Researchers such as Goodman (1988), Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984), and Zeichner, Tabachnick, and Densmore (1987) have developed the concept of *teacher perspectives*. This term makes reference to teachers' interpretation of a specific teaching situation which serves as the basis for subsequent action. Teacher perspectives are created by a combination of beliefs, intentions, interpretations and behaviour which interact continually, and they include both the ways in which teachers think about their work (e.g. in terms of purposes, goals, curriculum, and conceptions of students) and the ways in which they give meaning to these beliefs by their behaviour in the classroom (Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1984).

Other researchers have opted to discuss teacher beliefs under the label of theories. Clark (1988), for example, has referred to these beliefs as *implicit theories*. He argues that "teachers' implicit theories tend to be eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases and prejudices" (p. 6). These theories are robust, idiosyncratic, incomplete, sensitive to the experiences of the holder, and not clearly articulated. Sendan and Roberts (1998) conceptualise teacher beliefs as a set of *personal theories*, that is, "an underlying system of constructs that student teachers draw upon in thinking about evaluating, classifying and guiding pedagogic practice" (p. 230). Writing from a similar perspective, Martinez (2008) uses the term *subjective theories* which she characterises as "very complex cognitive structures; they are highly individual, relatively stable, and relatively enduring" (p. 106). She adds that the significance of



teacher beliefs in education is crucial, for they serve as strong predictors of subsequent teaching behaviour. Teachers will interpret any new information and new approach in the FL classroom on the basis of their subjective theories about teaching and learning.

However, one of the first references to beliefs as theories is found in the work by Argyris and Schön (1974). According to these authors, individuals have mental maps with regard to how to act in specific situations and contexts, and it is these maps that bias the way they plan, implement and review their actions and not the theories they explicitly espouse. With this, Argyris and Schön suggest that there is a difference between what people say they believe and what they actually do, idea which is formulated in their *theory of action*. This theory has been adopted in the field of teaching to explain the contradiction between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices, that is, the theories teachers claim to follow as practitioners, or *espoused theories*, and the theories which are implicit in their actual behaviour, or *theories-in-use*.

In building practical knowledge, teacher beliefs play a very important role (Beijaard and De Vries, 1997). This is why the term *image* has been widely used to describe teachers' practical knowledge and, more specifically, their general beliefs when thinking about teaching. According to Elbaz (1983: 254), an image is "a brief, descriptive and sometimes metaphoric statement" of how teaching should be, based on teachers' previous experience, theoretical knowledge, and personal beliefs. Clandinin (1986) refers to the concept of image as a central construct for understanding teachers' overall concept of teaching. The idea is that images, often revealed under the guise of metaphors, summarise the way individual teachers think about classroom processes, for instance, 'the classroom as a mini-society of cooperation', 'instruction as planting the little seed', 'the teacher as a little island', and 'teaching as a process of helping children to be makers'. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) point out that teachers' pedagogical images have strong affective and moral connotations and they are frequently rooted in past life experiences. Johnston (1992) holds that images do not only represent beliefs about teaching but also act as models for action in the classroom. They reflect how teachers view themselves in their teaching context and, at the same time, they form the subconscious assumptions on which their teaching practices are based. For Calderhead (1988), the term image refers broadly to "the snapshots of perception that continually enter into teachers' thinking, the largely visual memories that teachers have of particular children, incidents or behaviours that come to mind as they plan to teach" (p. 55).

Teachers frequently draw upon these images to help them interpret and solve teaching problems.

Closely related to the concept of image, various researchers have proposed the term *metaphor* as a means of identifying how teachers understand themselves and their profession. The interest in the study of metaphor in education stems in large measure from Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal publication, *Metaphors We Live By*. The basic premise of their work is that metaphors provide powerful means by which individuals conceptualise and eventually come to understand their life experiences. In summary, metaphors shape how we think and act:

Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature [...] Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. (p. 3)

Metaphors have been used in research on teacher thinking as a useful tool to investigate how teachers conceive teaching, learning, learners, and the school. Considerable research has suggested that there is a close relationship between the metaphors teachers construct and their practical theory of teaching (see Farrell, 2006; Martínez, Sauleda, and Huber, 2001; Saban, Kocbeker, and Saban, 2007). Examples of metaphors in education are 'teaching as gardening and planting seeds', 'the school as a community', 'the classroom as a home', and 'teaching as telling'. Korthagen and his colleagues (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen *et al.*, 2001), however, prefer the term *gestalt* to the concept of image or metaphor. A *gestalt* is considered to be a dynamic and constantly changing entity encompassing a teacher's earlier experiences, role models, feelings, values, notions, images, and routines about teaching, which are evoked by concrete classroom situations. These scholars stress that *gestalts* influence unconsciously the teacher's perception of the situation and his/her behaviour in it.

In the context of language teacher education, Richards (2000: 66) holds that teachers' educational beliefs tend to be organised in belief systems which encompass "the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning that teachers build over time and bring with them to the classroom". These belief systems lead to the development of *maxims* or "rational principles that serve as a source of how teachers interpret their responsibilities and

implement their plans, and that motivate their interactive decisions during a lesson” (p. 53). Some examples of maxims are, for instance, the ‘maxim of empowerment’ (to enable learners to take control over the learning process), ‘the maxim of order’ (to maintain order and discipline throughout the lesson), and ‘the maxim of accuracy’ (to work for learners’ accurate output). According to Richards, maxims function as teachers’ personal working principles, reflecting their individual philosophies of teaching and guiding their actions in the classroom; and they differ from images in that “maxims are more specific and practical items than the ‘images’ that have been described by Clandinin [...] They can be regarded as images that have been transformed into models for practical action” (*ibid.*).

### **3.4.2 Beliefs vs. Knowledge**

Apart from a problem of terminology, educational theorists have suggested that the confusion over the notion of belief in teaching revolves around the broad distinction between knowledge and beliefs. In the literature, knowledge is conceived of either as being different from beliefs by nature, or as an inclusive or grouping term which encompasses what we know and what we believe.

On the one hand, it is argued that beliefs and knowledge differ in several aspects. First, beliefs are embedded in emotion and affect, whereas knowledge is considered to be emotionally neutral. According to Ernest (1989), knowledge is the cognitive outcome of thought and belief represents the affective outcome. Nespor (1987) holds that beliefs have stronger affective and evaluative components than knowledge. To Pajares (1992), the difference between beliefs and knowledge lies in the degree of subjectivity or objectivity which is intrinsic to the concept. Thus, he maintains that beliefs are largely based on personal evaluation and judgement, whereas knowledge relies on objective fact. Second, belief systems are different from knowledge systems in that they include understandings, assumptions, premises, images, or propositions which are accepted as true by the individual holding them (Borg, 2001; Richardson, 1996b) but, in actuality, they may not be true. Third, beliefs differ from knowledge in that they do not require general or group consensus. While beliefs are highly individual and deeply personal, knowledge can be shared by other members of the community. For Yero (2002), the confusion focuses on the distinction between beliefs and facts. She defines facts as “statements that from a particular perspective are part of ‘consensus’ reality” and beliefs

as “judgments and evaluations that we make about ourselves, about others, and about the world around us” (p. 21).

Knowledge is conscious and often changes. In contrast, beliefs are basically tacit and may endure unaltered, and when they change, they do it as a result of a “conversion or gestalt shift” (Nespor, 1987: 321) rather than with argument or sound reasoning. Nespor further contends that knowledge system is semantically stored, whereas the power of beliefs resides in episodic memory which is derived from previous personal experiences, episodes, or events. Ultimately, beliefs are recognised to be more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organise and define specific tasks and problems, and they are stronger predictors of human behaviour (Pajares, 1992; Williams and Burden, 1997).

Nonetheless, for some educational theorists the distinction between knowledge and beliefs is still blurry. In reviewing terms for knowledge constructs, Alexander, Schallert, and Hare (1991) put forth the following conception of knowledge in which this encompasses, among other things, one’s personal beliefs:

For researchers in the field of cognition and literature, it goes without saying that knowledge refers to an individual’s personal stock of information, skills, experiences, beliefs, and memories [...] In the literature we are reviewing here, *knowledge* encompasses all that a person knows or believes to be true, whether or not it is verified as true in some sort of objective or external way. (p. 317, original italics)

In discussions of teacher cognition, Zembylas (2005) identifies teacher beliefs as important components of teacher knowledge. Kagan (1992a) describes beliefs as a “particularly provocative form of personal knowledge” (p. 65) and emphasises that most of a teacher’s professional knowledge can be more accurately regarded as belief. According to Kagan, teacher knowledge increases with the teacher’s growing experience in the profession, becoming part of a personalised pedagogy or belief system which affects his/her judgement and practices in the classroom.

Woods (1996), for instance, argues that the distinction between teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs is not tenable: “in many cases it cannot be clearly determined whether the interpretations of events are based on what the teacher knows, what the teacher believes or what the teacher believes s/he knows” (p. 194). Instead, he proposes the notion of BAK (Beliefs, Attitudes, and Knowledge) to reflect his view that, rather than being distinct concepts, beliefs, assumptions and knowledge form an integrated network of meaning in the teacher’s mind, “posited in terms of interrelated

propositions, in which certain propositions presuppose others” (p. 196). In a similar vein, Verloop *et al.* (2001) maintain that the concept ‘knowledge’ in the label ‘teacher knowledge’ is an overarching concept, “summarizing a large variety of cognitions, from conscious and well-balanced opinions to unconscious and unreflected intuitions” (p. 446). Their main argument is that, in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined.

### **3.4.3 The nature of teacher beliefs**

Research has provided converging evidence about the nature of teacher beliefs. It is generally agreed that teacher beliefs exist as a system. Pajares (1992) suggests that beliefs are created through a process of enculturation and social transmission and that, after this process, they group around belief systems. He characterises teachers’ educational beliefs as a belief substructure and concludes that these beliefs do not operate in isolation, but are instead interrelated to all other beliefs of the system. Breen *et al.* (2001) agree that educational beliefs exist in connection to other teacher beliefs, but this does not necessarily mean that they have to concur. They may in fact contradict one another, reflecting the enormous complexity of teacher belief systems.

An important characteristic of beliefs is their implicit or tacit nature, representing in most cases unconscious views about the world (Borg, 2001; Kagan, 1992b; Richardson, 1996b). In educational research, Kagan (1992b) describes teacher beliefs as unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, learning, and teaching. Due to their implicit nature, beliefs frequently guide a teacher’s classroom behaviour without the teacher’s conscious awareness of this situation. As Torff and Sternberg (2001: 3) indicate, beliefs “predispose individuals to think and act in particular ways without much conscious reflection” on what they do and why they do it. For this reason, various scholars like Almarza (1996), Bramald, Hardman, and Leat (1995), and Farrell and Ives (2015) advocate the pressing need for teachers to be made aware of this significant relationship and be afforded the opportunity to identify and examine their educational beliefs and teaching practice through critical reflection.

A substantial body of research has suggested that beliefs (e.g. teacher beliefs) can be deep-rooted and extremely resistant to change even in the face of contradictory evidence, what has become known as the phenomenon of *belief perseverance*. Nisbett

and Ross (1980) posited that the resistance of beliefs to change is such that they persist even when they are no longer accurate representations of reality. This argument is also reflected in Pajares (1992), who points out that beliefs “tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience” (p. 324). In addition, he maintains that those beliefs which are formed early in life are more likely to remain unaltered since “the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter” (p. 317). In contrast, Woods (1996) contend that beliefs vary along a central-peripheral dimension and suggest that the more central the belief is and the more tightly interconnected it is with other beliefs, the more it will resist change. In a similar way, Borg (2006) distinguishes between core beliefs and peripheral beliefs. The basic distinction between them is one of strength: core beliefs are more stable than peripheral beliefs.

Teacher cognition research has concluded that one of the main reasons for belief perseverance is the important affective component of beliefs. A belief, as Borg (2001: 186) recognises, may be held consciously or unconsciously, but it is always “imbued with emotive commitment”. Nespor (1987) identifies ‘affective loading’ as one of the four salient features of beliefs, while Eraut (1994: 47) warns that beliefs are embedded in deeply personal habits and “digging them out is difficult, painful and usually unpopular”. Nevertheless, it is Pajares (1992) who best summarises the relationship between beliefs and emotions. He explains that the resistant-to-change nature of (teacher) belief systems is produced by the profound influence that emotions and affect exercise on beliefs:

[Beliefs] help individuals to identify with one another and form groups and social systems. On a social and cultural level, they provide elements of structure, order, direction and shared values. From both a personal and socio/cultural perspective, belief systems reduce dissonance and confusion, even when dissonance is logically justified by the inconsistent beliefs one holds. This is one reason why they acquire emotional dimensions and resist change. People grow comfortable with their beliefs, and these beliefs become their “self”, so that individuals come to be identified and understood by the very nature of the beliefs, the habits, they own. (pp. 317-318)

Changing personal beliefs is therefore equivalent to uncovering and changing who we are as individuals. In a nutshell, it is a long journey of self-discovery and self-reconstruction.

### 3.4.4 The significance of teacher beliefs

Research on teacher thinking suggests that teachers' classroom practices and professional development are largely coloured by the educational beliefs they possess (Sercu and St. John, 2007). Beliefs shape what teachers say and do in the classroom and what and how they learn during teacher education. In this section, I turn to discuss the significant influence of beliefs on the teaching-learning and learning-to-teach process.

#### 3.4.4.1 Influence of teacher beliefs on teaching and learning

When teachers enter the classroom they are not 'blank slates' or '*tabulae rasae*', but they bring with them their own set of well-established preconceptions about what good teaching is and what it entails. Teachers, for example, hold strong personal beliefs about the learning process, the subject matter, teacher-student roles in the classroom, and the function of schools in society. The specialised literature has suggested a complex of social and individual sources from which teacher beliefs may be derived: previous experience as a pupil, past teachers, personality factors, teacher education experiences, educational theories acquired from training courses or from reading, experience of what works best, and research-based evidence (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Compared to the other sources, prior learning experiences as a learner have proved to be the most influential source to the development of teacher beliefs.

According to Buchmann (1987), teacher beliefs or *folkways of teaching* (as she prefers to term them) develop "unconsciously", are learned by "tradition and imitation", and are authorised by "custom and habit" (p. 155). In particular, these folkways emerge from images based on teachers' early experiences as learners. The educational sociologist Dan Lortie (1975) has referred to this particular phenomenon as 'the apprenticeship of observation'. This apprenticeship makes reference to the thousands of hours that teachers have spent watching their past teachers as learners in primary and secondary school, six hours a day, five days a week, for twelve years or so. During this lengthy period, prospective teachers tend to internalise many of their own teachers' classroom behaviours and develop the concept of teaching or 'hidden pedagogy'<sup>15</sup> which will drive their classroom practices throughout their teaching career. As a result, when these teachers begin to teach, they proceed to do it as they have been taught:

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<sup>15</sup> Teachers' implicit theories about "what the job [of teaching] is all about" (Denscombe, 1982, quoted in Freeman, 2002: 7).

Often, despite their intentions to do otherwise, new teachers teach as they were taught. The power of their ‘apprenticeship of observation’, and of the conventional images of teaching that derive from childhood experiences, makes it very difficult to alter teaching practices and explains in part why teaching has remained so constant over so many decades of reform efforts. (Kennedy, 1991: 16)

This pervasive influence of the apprenticeship of observation on teacher beliefs is well documented in studies such as Bailey *et al.* (1996), Borg (2005), Bramald *et al.* (1995), Freese (2006), Johnson (1994), and Özmen (2012).

In FL education, Richards and Rodgers (2001) affirm that FL teachers possess assumptions about language teaching and learning, and that these provide the basis for a particular approach to language instruction. This argument is also echoed by Williams and Burden (1997: 60) who maintain that teachers’ educational beliefs will subconsciously propel them to adopt particular teaching-learning methods:

Teachers’ beliefs about what is involved in learning will influence the way in which they teach [...] If our aim is to teach enough language items to pass an exam, then this will have significant implications for the way in which we teach. If, on the other hand, we see learning a new language as a lifelong process with much broader social, cultural and educational implications, then we will take a very different approach to teaching it.

As noted earlier, the beliefs that teachers have developed during their apprenticeship of observation make them rely on a similar teaching method to that by which they were taught when they were young learners. The reality is that the continued exposure to a teacher-centred approach as learners leads many teachers and teachers-to-be to conceive of teaching as telling and learning as storing and reproducing what the teacher says (Anderson and Bird, 1995; Loughran, 2006; Özmen, 2012). These conceptions correspond to the image of the teacher as ‘the sage on the stage’ and the learner as an ‘empty vessel or container’. Teachers think that their role is to stand in front of the class and be a transmitter of information which learners have to receive, memorise, and be able to reproduce on an exam- often without even thinking about it. In this view of teaching, the teacher is regarded as the sole source of knowledge.

Within the traditional teacher-centred approach to FLT, grammar is generally perceived as the knowledge teachers have to transmit to their learners. Research on teacher cognition has found that a common idea among (pre-service) language teachers is that grammar teaching is essential in any language course syllabus (Borg, 1999; Farrell, 1999; Farrell and Lim, 2005). Teachers believe that the emphasis in FL classes needs to be mainly placed on explicit grammar instruction and the completion of



mechanical exercises aimed at practising grammar rules. As Borg (1999) notes, the decision to integrate explicit formal instruction does not necessarily imply a belief on the teacher's part that such instruction will promote language learning. Instead, it represents the teacher's reluctance to dismiss traditional grammar teaching (Farrell and Lim, 2005). Unless FL teachers encounter teaching situations which enable them to experience alternative practices and experiment with new ideas in the classroom (e.g. introducing a communicative approach or fostering PA), these traditional conceptions of teaching will remain remarkably resistant to change.

#### *3.4.4.2 Influence of teacher beliefs on learning to teach*

Learning to teach is a complex process in which beliefs are highly influential. First, teaching is not something new or unknown to teachers since they are already familiar with it after their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). Having been insiders in the world of teaching, some teachers tend to hold a simplistic view of the teaching profession. In other words, they regard teaching as an activity they are already knowledgeable about and, consequently, capable of performing with the greatest ease.

Second, beliefs are widely acknowledged to have a filtering effect on teachers' thinking and information processing (Anderson and Bird, 1995; Feiman-Nemser *et al.*, 1989; Kagan, 1992b; Pajares, 1992). They operate as a selective 'filter' or 'lens' through which teachers make instructional choices, decisions, and judgements; evaluate their own experience; interpret new information about teaching and learning; and construct a professional identity of their own. For this reason, beliefs play a critical role in the context of teacher education, especially in formal pre-service programme interventions:

Prospective teachers bring to their teacher education more than their desire to teach. They bring their implicit institutional biographies- the cumulative experience of school lives- which, in turn, inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum. All this contributes to well-worn and commonsensical images of the teacher's work. (Britzman, 1986, quoted in Fisher, Fox, and Paille, 1996: 425)

There is substantial evidence in research on teacher cognition to suggest that beliefs affect the acquisition and critical interpretation of knowledge in initial teacher education. Calderhead and Robson (1991) and Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) observed in their respective studies that preconceived beliefs exerted a strong influence on how

the trainees interpreted new content in the course and how that information was subsequently translated into classroom practice. Goodman (1988), for example, conducted an ethnographic study to investigate student teachers' professional perspectives regarding teaching, and he discovered that the trainees in his sample were heavily influenced by guiding images from earlier learning experiences, images which created *intuitive screens* through which newly presented information was filtered.

Furthermore, personal beliefs can define what a student teacher considers to be relevant or negligible information and how that information is incorporated into the cognitive system. In her comprehensive research review, Kagan (1992b) concludes that deeply held beliefs lead teacher candidates to resist accepting the information encountered in teacher education as contradictory to their conception of teaching. Instead, trainees turn any kind of conflicting evidence provided in the programme into support for their pre-existing beliefs. Drawing on Piaget's (1954) concepts of assimilation and accommodation, this means that new information is *assimilated* (i.e. it is incorporated into existing beliefs) rather than *accommodated* (i.e. it cannot be assimilated and existing beliefs must be replaced or reorganised), resulting in no belief revision. If teacher education is to transform student teachers' educational beliefs, it must place emphasis on the process of belief accommodation rather than assimilation.

#### **3.4.5 Teacher education for challenging pre-service teachers' beliefs**

Changing prospective teachers' traditional conceptions of teaching is a difficult undertaking in teacher education, but critical in the process of learning to teach (Cabaroglu and Roberts, 2000). Traditional teacher education programmes have largely ignored the personal beliefs which student teachers bring to teacher education. To quote Feiman-Nemser *et al.* (1989: 18), "confronting and addressing students' preconceptions about teaching is rarely part of a pre-service programme". As a consequence, trainees frequently tend to perpetuate conservative teaching practices which maintain, rather than change, the *status quo*. For this reason, work on beliefs needs to be considered an integral part of any teacher education programme. As Thornbury (1996: 284) has noted, without adjustments at the level of prior beliefs, "the effects of training may only be superficial".

The essence of conceptual change is to alter existing views about teaching. One of the most prominent conceptual change theories was defined by Posner *et al.* (1982). Influenced by Piaget's (1954) concepts of assimilation and accommodation, Posner and his colleagues hypothesised that there are four essential conditions for conceptual change: 1) dissatisfaction, 2) intelligibility, 3) plausibility, and 4) fruitfulness. First, there must be dissatisfaction with prior conceptions. Teachers will not alter their conceptions until they find them inadequate for teaching. Second, the new conception must be intelligible enough to make sense to the teacher. He/she has to understand what this conception means and what it entails in the classroom. It must also be seen as plausible for it to be accommodated. Lastly, the new conception must prove fruitful for the teacher in solving current problems. If the teacher is dissatisfied with his/her prior conception of teaching and the new conception is intelligible, plausible and fruitful, accommodation may follow.

In recent years, teacher cognition literature has stressed the importance of awareness-raising and critical reflection as powerful means for engaging prospective teachers in examining the bases for their beliefs and gradually replacing them with more relevant views. To question common assumptions and presuppositions about teaching, Richards (2000) and Bramald *et al.* (1995) call for teacher education programmes to help trainees articulate their pedagogical beliefs and use them to reflect on their own teaching. In a similar fashion, Stuart and Thurlow (2000) recognise the fundamental need for pre-service teachers to bring their beliefs to a conscious level, articulate and examine them. Otherwise, beliefs will remain unaltered. Tatto (1998) maintains that reflecting on how their beliefs influence their teaching is critical to teachers' development and change in both role conceptions and teaching practices. Finally, Kuzborska (2011) contends that reflection can facilitate the adoption of wholly new ways of thinking about teaching and how it should be done: "encouraging teachers to reflect on their existing beliefs and behaviours could help them become more receptive to alternative perspectives and be prepared to modify their knowledge and work in ways that are consistent with their developing views" (p. 103). This emphasis on reflection and awareness-raising in teacher education has promoted the use of tools such as journals (Hacker and Barkhuizen, 2008), portfolios (Wray, 2007), autobiographies (Bailey *et al.*, 1996), and cases (Jiménez Raya and Vieira, 2015) as catalysts for critical reflection on personal beliefs about teaching.

In the context of teacher development programmes for LA, any effort to help student teachers make significant changes in their teaching practice must encourage them to reflect critically on their beliefs so that they could question and abandon those underlying assumptions which are completely inimical to the development of LA in the school context. As Kennedy (1999) suggests, initial teacher education seems the most likely stage in teacher professional development for undertaking this complex task:

Preservice teacher education is ideally situated to foster such a shift in thinking. It is located squarely between teachers' past experiences as students in classrooms and their future experiences as teachers in classrooms. If these ideas are not altered during preservice teacher education, teachers' own continuing experiences will reinforce them, cementing them even more strongly into their understandings of teaching. (p. 57)

One particular strategy for belief change in pre-service TEA has been outlined in Manzano Vázquez (2014). This strategy, which is used in the module where the present research was conducted, encompasses four basic stages: 1) awareness, 2) confrontation (or cognitive dissonance), 3) transformation, and 4) enactment. Due to the tacit nature of beliefs, there is first the need to make student teachers become aware of their personal beliefs about teaching, either by individual reflection or whole-class discussion. In this way, students are encouraged to bring their educational beliefs to a conscious level. They articulate them and explore their origin (e.g. the influence of previous learning experiences, past teachers, personality factors, etc.). Second, student teachers question and examine their own beliefs in the light of a vision of education based on LA. This process inevitably leads them to purposefully confront the possible inadequacy of their beliefs for the development of LA in the classroom. Then, trainees are asked to think of what possible changes they could make in their beliefs about teaching, only if they want to, to adapt them to the implementation of PA. For instance, a teacher-centred belief like “my role in the classroom is to tell learners what to study” could be transformed into a learner-centred image, e.g. “my role as a teacher is to encourage learners to decide what to study”. Finally, the last step in this process of belief change requires that prospective teachers put these new beliefs into practice in the classroom, and one particularly promising approach for doing this is the case method, which will be discussed further in section 5.5.5.

### 3.5 Research on pre-service teachers' cognition

One of the main characteristics of research on pre-service language teacher cognition is the big gap between the research conducted on pre-service language teachers' pedagogical knowledge and pre-service language teachers' educational beliefs. As pointed out by Evens, Elen, and Depaepe (2016) and König *et al.* (2016), studies on pre-service teachers' knowledge are common in the field of mathematics and sciences, but such studies are still very rare in the field of language teaching. In the studies conducted, PCK stands out as being the most predominant type of knowledge studied. Atay, Kaslioglu, and Kurt (2010) investigated the PCK development of Turkish pre-service language teachers through an experiential task focused on the design and presentation of interactive activities about a novel. By means of focus group interviews and written narratives, the study uncovered the participants' difficulties in connecting their content knowledge with pedagogy and revealed that their major concerns in the classroom were classroom management and providing clear instructions to the learners. Wilbur (2007), for example, analysed the role of PCK in 32 teacher education programmes in the United States and observed that when most of the pre-service teachers finished their education, they did not have the PCK needed to cope with diverse learners in their teaching.

Through different tests and statistical analyses, König *et al.* (2016) assessed the relationship among SMK, PCK and GPK in pre-service language teachers at different stages of a teacher education programme in Germany. On the one hand, the authors observed that PCK relied on the integration of both SMK and GPK. On the other hand, the participants at a later stage of the programme outperformed those participants at an earlier stage in terms of PCK and GPK due to the learning opportunities they had had thanks to the *practicum* (or 'induction phase'). This finding highlighted the value of the *practicum* for helping student teachers develop their PCK and GPK and connect them to the classroom context. Although the study by Chacón-Corzo (2015) was not conducted in the context of language teaching, it presents interesting findings about the construction of knowledge in pre-service teachers. The participants were undergraduate students taking a degree in education. The study revealed that the major concern among most of the participants was to master the content they would have to teach and to know their school context and their learners. They also placed great emphasis on gaining knowledge of teaching strategies which help enhance learning. In this sense, they

concluded in the need to make the aims of learning transparent to learners and held that learning should be based on the active construction of knowledge on the part of the learner. Other participants, however, relied on a more traditional conception of teaching and learning, limited to the explanation given by the teacher.

As Johnson (1994: 439) observes, “beliefs, as a psychological construct, are neither easily defined nor studied”. Beliefs do not lend themselves easily to empirical investigation due, in part, to their implicit nature and their strong affective connotations. It was not until the late 1970s that educationists started engaging in systematic research on teacher beliefs, whereas researchers in FLT followed the lead in the 1990s (Borg, 2003). The studies on pre-service teachers’ beliefs reviewed here differ in terms of the number of participants involved and data collection methods. Many provide detailed case studies of individual student teachers (e.g. Borg, 2005; Johnson, 1994), while others report on large-scale surveys of beliefs (e.g. Camilleri, 1999; Peacock, 2001). Data collection methods include, for example, interviews, questionnaires, diaries, focused discussion, and classroom observation of trainees’ practices. Several themes can be identified in research on teacher beliefs. Four of these themes, which relate directly to the present research, will be dealt with in this review: 1) pre-service teachers’ beliefs about FL teaching and learning, 2) pre-service teachers’ pedagogical images and metaphors, 3) changes in pre-service teachers’ initial beliefs, and 4) (pre-service) teachers’ beliefs<sup>16</sup> about LA.

Studies investigating pre-service teachers’ beliefs in contexts of FLT are still scarce. Three examples are MacDonald, Badger, and White (2001), Mattheoudakis (2007), and Busch (2010). MacDonald *et al.* (2001) examined the beliefs about language learning of student teachers undergoing undergraduate and postgraduate TESOL<sup>17</sup> programmes. They found that the subjects’ initial beliefs were predominantly behaviourist in nature, for instance, they strongly agreed that languages are learned mainly through imitation or that teachers should teach simple language structures before complex ones. After the course, the authors observed that these beliefs seemed to move from a behaviourist model of learning to one which attached more importance to the role of the learner in language learning, fitting in “either with a broadly Krashenite view [...] which sees language learning as a largely unconscious process, or with a broadly

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<sup>16</sup> Due to their special relevance to the present research, I include studies on beliefs about LA among prospective and experienced language teachers.

<sup>17</sup> Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

cognitive perspective, which emphasises the potential for conscious language learning” (p. 958). Mattheoudakis (2007) investigated pre-service FL teachers’ beliefs during a three-year teacher education programme in Greece. Her findings revealed that the majority of the student teachers supported the primacy of vocabulary and grammar study in FLT. However, this support weakened over the course of the programme since they began to consider communication as more vital for effective foreign language learning (henceforth FLL). With regard to the role of the teacher, the student teachers increasingly disagreed with the image of the teacher as someone who controls the students, whereas every year there was more general agreement on the role of the teacher as a facilitator. In Busch’s (2010) study, data showed that the student teachers were neutral about the importance of vocabulary and grammar study, but their views about FLL were characterised by features of the audiolingual method (e.g. the importance of repetition and practice).

Similar questionnaire-based studies in the field of pre-service language teacher education have been conducted by Altan (2012), Diab (2009), and Yang (2000). The main limitation of this type of studies concerns the instruments employed for data collection. To elicit their participants’ beliefs, these researchers made use either of Horwitz’s (1985) BALLI or of Lightbown and Spada’s (1996) questionnaire about second language (L2) acquisition<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, they concluded their findings according to the themes of these instruments, which limited the pre-service teachers’ beliefs to the statements included in the BALLI and Lightbown and Spada’s questionnaire. In this sense, Cota Grijalva and Ruiz-Esparza Barajas (2013) combined the BALLI with semi-structured interviews to gain a wider understanding of the beliefs held by 14 student teachers in Mexico. The study revealed that there were two significant changes in the participants’ beliefs. As a result of “the emphasis on promoting learner responsibility carried out by the teachers of the program” (p. 87), some participants stressed the need to give learners responsibility for their learning and to adapt the teaching practice to their needs and interests. Second, most of the student teachers attached less importance to the knowledge of grammar when learning a FL.

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<sup>18</sup> The BALLI or Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (Horwitz, 1985) is a quantitative self-report questionnaire containing a prescriptive set of statements about language learning to which respondents mark their degree of agreement. The questionnaire designed by Lightbown and Spada (1996) contains a series of statements testing key beliefs relating to L2 learning.

Various studies have traced pre-service teachers' beliefs back to their own experience as FL learners (e.g. Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Bramald *et al.*, 1995; Johnson, 1994). Johnson (1994), for instance, observed that four pre-service language teachers' beliefs were largely based on images from their formal language learning experiences (past teachers, materials, and activities, among others) and that these beliefs shaped the ways in which they made sense of the content of their courses. The trainees judged the appropriateness of certain theories, methods, and materials in terms of their own first-hand experiences as FL learners. An interesting case is described in Debreli's (2012) study of three pre-service teachers in Cyprus. Dissatisfied with their previous schooling experiences, the student teachers espoused a vision of FLT which was diametrically opposed to how they were taught as learners. Thus, they professed non-traditional beliefs about FL teaching and learning. They considered grammar to be the least important skill in the FL classroom, and they emphasised the importance of communicative language teaching (hereafter CLT) and the need to pay more attention to students' learning interests and needs.

Some studies (e.g. Bangou, Fleming, and Goff-Kfourri, 2011; Busch, 2010; Miller and Aldred, 2000) have found that educational beliefs are also strongly influenced by the sociocultural context. As an illustration, Miller and Aldred (2000) investigated 24 student teachers' perceptions about CLT in Hong Kong. At the beginning of the study, the participants conceived language teaching in the 'Chinese way': teaching is to be characterised by the teacher's dominant role and learners' passivity. The student teachers were positively disposed towards the adoption of CLT for four reasons: 1) students can learn English in a more active way, 2) it is good for the oral component, 3) it improves the atmosphere in the classroom, and 4) teachers can use it to raise students' interest. Nevertheless, Miller and Aldred concluded that the adoption of this teaching method would be constrained by the student teachers' assumptions that "it is difficult to use CLT to teach grammar", "teachers do not have the time to prepare, as CLT requires a lot of preparation", and "students only want to learn how to pass the test" (p. 12).

Images and metaphors have been widely used as effective means for analysing pre-service teachers' beliefs (and practical knowledge) about teaching and learning. The images and metaphors reported in research are very diverse, depending a great deal on factors such as cultural context, educational background, and previous learning experiences. In terms of images, studies are scarce and have been conducted primarily



in the context of primary education. Calderhead and Robson (1991) followed 12 student teachers to identify the images of teaching, learning and the curriculum which they held during an elementary teacher education programme. These images were, for instance, 'getting learners interested in asking questions', 'building up a good relationship with students', 'having the classroom and the work well organised', 'learning as a curiosity-driven process', 'the teacher as a helper', and 'decisions on teaching are dependent upon tutors and head teachers'. Johnston's (1992) study involved two student teachers in a primary teacher education programme. As a result of the influence of professional and personal experiences, the student teachers created two images of teaching: 'setting up a relationship with the children' and 'giving control to the children'.

Bullough (1991) adopted the use of metaphor analysis to help pre-service teachers examine and refine their conceptions of teaching and learning. The trainees revealed metaphors concerning teaching (e.g. teaching as an extension of mothering/parenting; as a form of nurturing; as gardening, coaching, or cooking; as a conversation; and as telling), learners (e.g. children as clay to be moulded, as players on a team, and as travellers on a journey), and themselves as teachers (e.g. the teacher as a husbandman of the young, as a butterfly, and as a chameleon). Farrell (2006) explored three pre-service English teachers' metaphors in Singapore. These metaphors included views about the classroom as a battlefield, a playground, and a haven; and about the teacher as a general, a facilitator, a motivator, a mentor, a guide, a mother, and a missionary. Saban *et al.* (2007) investigated the metaphors that prospective teachers in Turkey formulated to describe the concept of 'teacher'. Ten conceptual themes were identified, among which there were metaphors ranging between a teacher-centred and a learner-centred view of teaching: the teacher as a knowledge provider, as a moulder/craftsperson, as a curer/repairer, as an authoritative figure, as an agent of change, as an entertainer, as a counsellor, as a nurturer/cultivator, as a facilitator/scaffolder, and as a cooperative/democratic leader.

In Spain, Martínez *et al.* (2001) examined the metaphorical conceptions coming from a group of experienced and prospective teachers who studied Psychopedagogy. These metaphors aligned with three different perspectives: 1) the *behaviourist/empiricist perspective*, which conceives of teaching as a passive process of knowledge transmission (e.g. 'the teacher is like a poet who is writing his/her work on a sheet of paper [i.e. the learner]'); 2) the *cognitivist/constructivist perspective*, which

views learning as an individual process of knowledge construction (e.g. ‘learning is like a detective who looks for and into things’); and 3) the *situative/socio-historic perspective*, which perceives learning as a process of social interaction (e.g. ‘teaching is like a tourist guide who negotiates a route with the tourists’).

Another area of interest in teacher cognition research has been tracing changes in pre-service teachers’ beliefs as a result of the influence of teacher education strategies and interventions. On the one hand, a number of studies have found evidence of the stability of beliefs over time and the little effect of teacher education on altering them (e.g. Bramald *et al.*, 1995; Brown and McGannon, 1998; Hollingsworth, 1989; Nettle, 1998; Peacock, 2001). Peacock (2001), for example, reports on a longitudinal study which examined changes in the beliefs about FLL of 146 student teachers over their three-year teacher education programme. The study revealed that the trainees held three core beliefs<sup>19</sup>. They believed that learning a FL means learning a lot of vocabulary and grammar rules and that people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent. The programme, however, had little effect on these beliefs as no significant changes were found over the three years. It must be noted that one shortcoming of large-scale studies like Peacock’s is the fact that they may mask belief change in individual participants by analysing results at group level. In the late 1980s, Hollingsworth (1989) conducted an extensive qualitative study to investigate changes in pre-service teachers’ beliefs about reading instruction before, during, and after a teacher education programme. Her findings indicated that half of the 14 prospective teachers she studied initially believed that learning is primarily accomplished through teacher-directed information. They assumed that knowledge is a thing to be transmitted intact to students. During the programme, Hollingsworth found almost no change in the participants’ beliefs. She observed that the student teachers, rather than restructuring their initial beliefs, fine-tuned them. Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) concluded in their study that the pre-service teachers’ perspectives tended not to change over the course of the programme but to strengthen and solidify: “it became increasingly clear that the dominant trend was for teaching perspectives to develop and grow in a direction consistent with the ‘latent culture’ that students brought to the experience” (p. 33).

From these studies it is worth highlighting the findings by Almarza (1996) who examined the differences between *behavioural change* and *cognitive change* in four FL

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<sup>19</sup> Peacock’s (2001) instrument to elicit the participants’ beliefs was Horwitz’s (1985) BALLI.

student teachers in the UK. During their teaching practice, the four participants implemented the teaching method they were taught on the programme. Cognitively, however, they varied in their acceptance of the method. While one student teacher accepted the suggested approach, others rejected it since it conflicted with their conceptions of teaching. Almarza reached the conclusion that observable changes in practice do not necessarily accompany meaningful changes in beliefs. Although the language teacher education programme shaped the student teachers' behaviour during their teaching practice, this was only some superficial behaviour since it did not alter significantly the conceptions they brought to the course.

On the other hand, several studies report that teacher education *does* have an impact on pre-service teachers' beliefs (e.g. Cabaroglu and Roberts, 2000; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Okazaki, 1996; Özmen, 2012; Sendan and Roberts, 1998). To test the widespread assumption that beliefs are inflexible, Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) used a sequence of three in-depth interviews to analyse the processes of belief development in 20 students on a PGCE<sup>20</sup> in modern languages. In their study only one student teacher's beliefs about language teaching and learning remained unaltered during the programme. They attributed the success of belief change to two particular course characteristics: early awareness-raising of preconceived beliefs and the opportunities provided for self-regulated learning. Okazaki (1996) also identified changes in Japanese pre-service teachers' beliefs about FLT after taking a one-year methodology course. She found that although the participants' beliefs were not easily swayed, some of them were influenced in the desired direction. Özmen (2012) conducted a four-year longitudinal study of 49 student teachers' beliefs about FL teaching and learning in an English teacher education programme. This programme was based on a constructivist, reflective approach to teacher preparation, which was crucial to the participants' belief change. At first, most of them held a transmissive/traditional view of FLT due to their previous language learning experience. They "believed that an English teacher was the source of the knowledge and had the complete authority in managing the classroom and deciding on what and how to learn" (p. 5). This view, however, changed. At the end of the programme, most of the trainees reported a more constructivist and communicative view of FLT, regarding the teacher as a mentor and counsellor.

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<sup>20</sup> Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

Some of these studies have found that belief change is different in each student teacher and that it does not affect all beliefs in the same way. Richards, Ho, and Giblin (1996) in their study of five FL student teachers in Hong Kong noticed changes in the trainees' cognition regarding 1) their perceptions of their role in the classroom, 2) their knowledge of professional discourse, 3) their concerns for preserving continuity throughout lessons, 4) problematic dimensions of teaching (e.g. timing, presenting new language, etc.), and 5) the way in which they evaluated their own teaching performance. Yet, the trainees' cognitive change was not in a homogeneous way. Richards *et al.* (p. 258) noted that each of them interpreted the course differently, in the light of their own assumptions about themselves, teachers, teaching, and learners. In the context of a CELTA<sup>21</sup> course, Borg (2005) reports on a case study of one pre-service teacher whose beliefs were essentially anti-didactic (or non-traditional) and influenced by her schooling experiences. Over the duration of the course (i.e. four weeks), Borg observed that these beliefs changed in a complex way, involving limited change, some elaboration and, in some areas, little development.

Few studies of language teachers' beliefs about LA are available in the specialised literature. These studies have focused mainly on examining prospective and experienced teachers' attitudes and dispositions towards the adoption of LA in FLT. Al-Shaqsi (2009) surveyed 120 English teachers' cognition about LA in state schools in Oman. He found that the teachers conceived LA in terms of independent learning, self-assessment, holding responsibility, and cooperation. The research project coordinated by Camilleri (1999) sought to find out the attitudes towards LA of 328 teachers from six different European countries (Belarus, Estonia, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and the Netherlands). The results revealed that there were areas of LA which drew most support from the teachers such as deciding on classroom management, assuming responsibility for self-assessment, and finding out their own learning procedures and explanations to classroom tasks. In contrast, the areas of strongest resistance to LA among the participating teachers were selecting textbooks and deciding on the time and place of the lesson. According to Camilleri (p. 30), these areas are the traditional domains of the school system over which teachers and learners have little power. Eight years later, Camilleri Grima (2007) replicated this study with a group of 48 student teachers and practising teachers of modern languages in Malta. When comparing the results to the

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<sup>21</sup> Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults.

Malta cohort in the previous study, she found much similarity between both groups regarding the teachers' positive attitude towards LA and those particular aspects inherent in PA they were more and less supportive of.

Balçikanlı (2010) analysed the perspectives on LA of 112 student teachers of English in Turkey. At the same time, the study examined the areas of LA they considered most important and the constraints they perceived as obstacles to its development. On the whole, the student teachers were favourably disposed towards the adoption of LA and expressed a strong preference for a more autonomous learning process. They supported learner involvement in selecting materials and making decisions on the methodology of the course, classroom management, learner training, and learning strategies. In line with Camilleri's (1999) findings, most of the student teachers did not display any eagerness to involve their future students in deciding on the time and place of the course and selecting the textbooks to be followed since these areas are "viewed as a professional teachers' task" (Balçikanlı, 2010: 95). Finally, the main obstacle to the development of LA for the student teachers is the teacher-centred educational system in Turkey, where "schools are formed in a structure where the authority is not shared, individuality and creativity are less encouraged" (p. 99).

Using a qualitative approach, Martinez (2008) explored the subjective theories about LA of 16 pre-service language teachers. In terms of findings, the student teachers had different attitudes towards LA which proved to be largely influenced by earlier experiences as language learners. These conceptions can be summarised as follows: 1) LA is an alternative and new methodology which is supposed to improve the language learning process, 2) it is equated with individualisation and differentiation, 3) it seems to be a highly unachievable educational goal which cannot be realised in the school, and 4) it is associated with learning in isolation and without a teacher (p. 115). Nicolaidis (2008) investigated a group of Brazilian student teachers' beliefs about the role learners have in the development of their language learning. According to the student teachers, the responsibility for managing the pedagogical act rests with the teacher since he/she owns the knowledge and knows the best way to learn. Only outside the classroom can learners exercise their own autonomy and be empowered to make their decisions.

Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) explored the beliefs about LA held by English teachers at a language centre in Oman. The analysis of the questionnaire and interview data highlighted that the teachers viewed LA as a set of skills or abilities that learners

need to master in order to learn independently. Concerning the role of LA in FLL, the vast majority of the teachers agreed that LA has a positive effect on success as a language learner. They were of the opinion that LA “allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would” (p. 287). Conversely, Borg and Al-Busaidi concluded that the teachers were more positive about the desirability of learner involvement in the learning process than they were about its feasibility, particularly in relation to objectives, assessment, and materials. Similar findings were obtained in the study conducted by Anderson (2015), who surveyed teacher and learner perceptions of LA in Spain. On the teaching side, the participants were 15 FL teachers who taught adult learners in private language academies. The development of LA was widely perceived by the teachers as having a positive effect on FLL, helping learners become more effective, successful, and motivated. They were favourably disposed to promote learners’ independence, responsibility, and involvement in decision-making. However, they thought that it would be difficult to accommodate these decisions to the teaching-learning process. The study also investigated the teachers’ perceived obstacles to LA, which included coursebook restrictions, the pressure of time, the lack of institutional support, and learners’ resistance to autonomous learning.

On the one hand, this review has underlined the lack of research on pre-service language teachers’ knowledge, which makes it difficult to draw relevant conclusions about it. In this sense, there is the need to conduct further research on this topic. On the other hand, the review has highlighted the enormous complexity of educational beliefs in pre-service teachers. Research studies have revealed that when student teachers enter teacher preparation, they hold a variety of beliefs about teaching and learning. These beliefs are predominantly traditional, emphasising a transmissive approach in which grammar study is crucial for effective FLL (see, for example, Mattheoudakis, 2007; Miller and Aldred, 2000; Peacock, 2001). Only a few studies report non-traditional beliefs in their participants (Borg, 2005; Debreli, 2012). It has been further noted how student teachers’ previous learning experiences and sociocultural background have a strong influence on their processes of belief development. Research has reached no consensus on the degree to which pre-service teachers’ beliefs vary or remain consistent. While some researchers have confirmed the stability of beliefs, even after taking three-year teacher education programmes (Peacock, 2001), others have suggested that beliefs may develop and be altered over the course of teacher education

interventions. Furthermore, limitations have been found in these studies, for example, the limited perspective of questionnaire-based studies, the possible concealment of belief change in large group-level studies, or the dearth of studies into prospective teachers' images of teaching in the context of secondary education.

Concerning the study of LA, research has focused on examining what LA means to language teachers in various contexts and educational settings, and what disposition they show towards its implementation in FLT. By and large, existing studies report on teachers' positive attitude towards LA as an educational goal, although there are (prospective) teachers who still harbour certain doubts about its feasibility and place restrictions on its development (see Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012; Martinez, 2008) or who consider it an ability to be exercised by learners outside the classroom (Nicolaidis, 2008). The present study aims to fill a gap in research on LA. It analyses how initial teacher education can have an impact on student teachers' beliefs towards a more autonomy-oriented approach to FLT. The purpose is to explore what beliefs about FLT a group of student teachers hold on entry to a pre-service teacher education programme and trace potential changes in these beliefs towards a learner-centred pedagogy.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

To understand the way student teachers approach FL teaching and learning, we need to understand student teachers' cognition or, in other words, what they think, believe, and know about it. This chapter has discussed the concepts of teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs, making it clear that they exert a significant influence on teachers' professional development and teaching practice. In this respect, it has been noted that the role of initial teacher education is essential. On the one hand, it should provide prospective teachers not only with the professional knowledge necessary for teaching, but also with the skills and abilities to update this knowledge throughout their teaching career. Furthermore, pre-service teacher education programmes need to address student teachers' personal beliefs about the teaching-learning process, helping them articulate and recast them. Otherwise, these beliefs would "crystallize through the process of teaching experience" (Johnson, 1994: 441).

Chapter 4 is the last chapter of the literature review. It focuses on the notion of autonomy as an educational goal for both teachers (i.e. TA) and learners (i.e. LA), its

### Chapter 3. Teacher cognition in professional development

development in teaching practice through PA, and how teacher education is preparing (pre-service) teachers to face the challenge of promoting autonomy in the FL classroom.



## **CHAPTER 4**

# **LEARNER AND TEACHER AUTONOMY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.  
It is not far, it is within reach,  
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know  
Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

### **4.1 Introduction**

Analysing how initial teacher education can engage student teachers in promoting autonomy in FL education, embodied in the concepts of LA and TA, is a key area of research in the present study. Thus, chapter 4 begins by tracing the origins of the notion of autonomy (section 4.2) and how it entered the field of education (section 4.3) and, more specifically, FL education (section 4.4). Next, it discusses definitions of LA and TA and explains why both concepts are crucial issues in modern language education (sections 4.5 and 4.6 respectively). The chapter also focuses on the concept of PA (section 4.7), discussing different theoretical frameworks for its implementation in the FL classroom, the role of the teacher in this pedagogical approach, and potential constraints on its development in formal educational settings. Finally, it concludes with a review of previous work on the development of language teacher education initiatives for TA and LA (section 4.8).

## 4.2 Origins of the notion of autonomy

Etymologically speaking, the word ‘autonomy’ is derived from the Greek term *autonomia*, a compound of the prefix *autos-* meaning ‘self’ and the word *nomos* meaning ‘law’. The term autonomy refers to the idea of self-law or self-governance, i.e. the capacity to rule oneself. Accordingly, the autonomous person can be defined as someone who governs his/her life, free from any external authority, and is responsible for making his/her own decisions.

Originally, the notion of autonomy was primarily a political concept applied to emerging states and institutions which had the power to govern themselves independently (Bonnett and Cuypers, 2003), but it later appeared as a philosophical concept applying specifically to individuals. Personal autonomy has been recognised as a key value in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century moral and political philosophy where it has been central to theoretical accounts of persons, conceptions of moral obligation, and the formulation of social policies. Feinberg (1989), for example, has identified four different meanings of the concept of autonomy in the field of moral and political philosophy: the capacity to govern oneself, the actual condition of self-government, a personal ideal, and a set of rights expressive of one’s sovereignty over oneself.

In moral and political philosophy, autonomy is understood as the ability to impose objective moral law on oneself and the basis for determining social responsibility for one’s actions. This notion of autonomy is rooted in Kant’s ideal of a society of self-governing individuals and Mill’s vision of a society based on mutual respect for individual freedom. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) held that autonomy is the foundation of human dignity, the source of all morality, and the product of the rational independence of human beings. In the Kantian tradition, autonomy is seen as the result of the ability of individuals to freely and rationally apply moral principles to their daily actions, as opposed to heteronomy (i.e. the subordination or subjection to an external law or force). For Kant, the autonomous person has the capacity to act based on rational principles which are completely independent from manipulative external influences as well as internal forces (i.e. desires, preferences, and emotions)<sup>22</sup>. In a similar vein, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was a passionate defender of personal autonomy, liberty, and

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<sup>22</sup> The influence of the Kantian tradition is visible in the work of educational philosophers such as Richard Peters, Israel Scheffler, Charles Bailey, Paul Hirst, and Robert Dearden, who constructed personal autonomy as the most important aim of liberal education.

individuality. Drawing on the metaphor of human beings as living trees, he argued that individuals should be free to develop and cultivate their potential and talents:

Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing. (Mill, 1978, quoted in Aviram and Yonah, 2004: 11)

Human beings build their identity by growing in accordance with their nature and not with social conventions. Moreover, he formulated a society based on mutual respect in which each person could exercise his/her autonomy independently, without invading the freedom of others. According to Mill, the autonomous individual is one who is able to give full expression to his/her needs and desires without causing harm to others.

The liberal conception of autonomy, however, has been criticised by different schools of thought such as feminism, communitarianism, and postmodernism (see Morgan, 1996; Zembylas and Lamb, 2008). Some feminist theories (e.g. Stone, 1990) viewed autonomy as a ‘masculine ideal’ which applied only to the masculine aspects of the self (e.g. individualism and emotional control). Both communitarians and feminists challenged the individualism stressed by liberal thinkers when defining autonomy. They argued that interpersonal relations and social factors are constitutive for the identity of a person, contributing to his/her personal growth and development. The individual is embedded in a particular social context and is constantly in relation to others, so the development of autonomy cannot be completely detached from the social circumstances (i.e. traditions, customs, etc.) and the community in which he/she lives. This view led to the development of the notion of ‘relational autonomy’ defined by Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000: 4) as an umbrella term covering all views of autonomy which share the conviction that “persons are socially embedded and that agents’ identities are formed within the context of social relationships and shaped by a complex of intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity”. In this regard, postmodernism considered the ideal of the self-motivating, self-directing individual unattainable since the person is socially constituted and, consequently, is prone to be governable.

### **4.3 Autonomy in education**

Over the last decades, the notion of autonomy has become a fundamental educational aim in most Western countries (Kerr, 2002; Morgan, 1996) and the central topic in

some of the most relevant publications in philosophy of education (Brighouse, 2000; Callan, 1997; Levinson, 1999). Autonomy began to permeate educational rhetoric due to the influence of the work by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, and Paulo Freire, among others. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rousseau wrote *Emile, or On Education*<sup>23</sup> to propose a model of education in which children could become the protagonists of their own learning by following their natural impulses and inclinations. His emphasis on the learner's responsibility for learning is a key idea of autonomy. He conceived the child as a being who is born to be free, and stated that children should learn what they want to learn and when they want to learn it through observation and direct experience with nature. In the book, Emile is encouraged to draw his own conclusions about the world as a result of his personal experience, emphasising learning by discovery. Instead of being taught other people's ideas, Rousseau stressed the importance of developing ideas for ourselves and making sense of the world in our own way. His essential idea was that education must be individualised and accommodated to the development of the child's natural capacities.

Dewey was highly critical of traditional approaches to education. In his view, traditional education is very much concerned with delivering knowledge and not with understanding learners' actual experiences. The teaching-learning process is based on the transmission of a pre-determined body of knowledge within a classroom culture where "the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience" (Dewey, 1938: 18). Textbooks represent the lore of the past, while teachers act as mere transmitters of that wisdom. Conversely, Dewey argued that education is not a matter of telling and being told, but an active and constructive process. Influenced by Rousseau, he advocated a theory of experience for learning. The core principle in his educational ideal is that learners learn by doing. The classroom is seen as a place where learners are active participants, lead their explorations, reflect on their personal experiences, and interact with their environment. To Dewey, education has a well-defined social purpose, fostering learners' capacity to participate fully in social and political life.

The work of Freire (1970, 1974) has had a great impact on contemporary philosophies on education, especially his ideas on empowering and democratising education which have contributed enormously to the tradition of critical pedagogy. The

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<sup>23</sup> In it, Rousseau explained how children should be educated by providing the example of an imaginary child, Emile.

foundation of his work is the pursuit of ‘education for liberation’ as opposed to ‘education for domestication’. The ‘banking’ model of education, as Freire preferred to label it, views learners as recipients to be passively filled with the knowledge transmitted by the teacher. The goal of this model is to bring about learners’ ‘domestication’. Under this system, learners do not have the opportunity to question or critically evaluate the world in which they live, but they must conform to the logic of the existing social order. Freire argued that human life is one of action rather than of mere passive adaptation. He held a vision of education based on a critical and liberating dialogue between teacher and learner in which learners are empowered to participate in the educational process and develop their ideas in close collaboration with the teacher. Thus, the learner learns from the teacher as the teacher learns from the learner. This vision of education aims at liberation and independence. It breaks with the passivity promoted by the ‘banking’ model and encourages individuals to transform social reality.

#### **4.4 Autonomy in foreign language education**

The interest in the concept of autonomy in the field of FL education was the result of the political turmoil in Europe in the late 1960s. As Holec (1981: 1) puts it:

The end of the 1960s saw the development in all so-called industrially advanced Western countries of a socio-political tendency characterized by a definition of social progress [...] in terms of an improvement in the ‘quality of life’ [...] based on the development of a *respect for the individual in society*. (emphasis added)

During this period, FL education began to experience a shift from behaviourist (e.g. audiolingual method) to more communicative and learner-centred approaches to language learning. This educational reform movement made terms such as ‘self-directed learning’, ‘learner-centredness’, ‘collaborative learning’, or ‘learner autonomy’ commonplace in FL education.

The concept of autonomy first entered the field of FL education through the Council of Europe’s *Modern Languages Project*, established in 1971 within the context of adult education. The primary objective of this project was to promote “the individual’s freedom by developing those abilities which will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives” (*ibid.*). Education was then conceived as a means of providing the individual learner with opportunities for responsible autonomy, personal fulfilment, and equality of opportunity. In the 1990s,

FL education experienced a second wave of interest in autonomy. The notion of LA was beginning to come up in discussions of language teaching and, therefore, more and more curricula began to include it as an educational goal, often addressed under terms such as ‘independent learning’ or ‘learner training’.

Recently, language teaching policies have experienced a considerable change towards principles directly or indirectly related to the development of the autonomous learner. One proof of the renewed and growing interest in the concept of LA is the literature on autonomous learning published since 2000, which exceeds the literature published on the topic over the previous 25 years (Benson, 2006).

## **4.5 Learner autonomy**

### **4.5.1 Defining and describing learner autonomy**

The notion of LA has been defined from different perspectives. In an extensive review of the literature, for instance, Benson and Voller (1997: 1-2) have distinguished five different uses of the term autonomy in language education: 1) for learning situations in which learners study entirely on their own and without the presence of a teacher, 2) for a set of cognitive skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning, 3) for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education, 4) for the exercise of learners’ responsibility for their own learning, and 5) for learners’ right to determine the direction and pace of their own learning. This diversity of meanings, according to Reinders (2010: 41), has made this concept become a “catch-all term”, comprising other concepts such as agency, awareness, self-regulation, and self-direction. This section reviews some of the most relevant definitions of LA in the specialised literature and how they have contributed to the understanding of the concept.

One of the most influential theorists in the field of autonomous learning has been Holec (1981). His book *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning* has exceedingly contributed to the conception of LA in FL education. On the one hand, his definition of LA as the “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3) still remains one of the most widely cited definitions in the field. He further identified the various steps at which the self-directed learner is to be engaged throughout the autonomous learning process: “determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting

methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired” (*ibid.*). This first approach to defining LA was rooted in the development of self-access learning in university language learning centres and, for that reason, it emphasised just the individual dimension of autonomous learning.

By the late 1980s, the notion of LA was under debate between two strands as it was used to refer to a *capacity* for taking control of learning whereas for others it described a particular *learning situation*. In this respect, Holec (1985) emphasised that LA should be used to describe an attribute or capacity of the learner to assume responsibility for learning as opposed to a learning situation in which learners work on their own, without the presence of a teacher, and outside the classroom, what Dickinson (1987, quoted in Benson: 2011: 14) referred to as the development of ‘full autonomy’: “the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. In full autonomy there is no involvement of a ‘teacher’ or institution”. This vision of LA has contributed, in part, to the general belief that autonomous learning is tantamount to ‘teacherless learning’. However, as we will see in section 4.7.3, the role of the teacher is crucial in helping learners develop their autonomy, especially for those learners with a low degree of readiness for it.

In the 90s, Little (1991, 1994, 1997) greatly contributed to the field by adding a psychological dimension to the definition given by Holec (1981). His conception of LA laid more emphasis on the learner’s individual control over the cognitive process taking place in learning. Thus, Little (1991: 4) defined LA as the learner’s:

[C]apacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts.

The assumption here is that not only will the autonomous learner be able to develop the capacity to be responsible for all the decisions he/she makes concerning the learning process but also to apply the knowledge and skills acquired beyond the school setting. More recently, one of the most interesting developments in the field of autonomous learning is the idea that there are different conceptions of LA. Benson (2011) has distinguished three major versions or ways of representing the notion of LA for FLL. To

the technical and psychological conceptions previously set forth (cf. Holec, 1981; Little, 1991), he has added a third one: the political version of LA. Here LA refers to the capacity to take control over the content and processes of one's own learning. In this sense, autonomy denotes self-government, i.e. the capacity to rule oneself.

During a workshop on LA held in Bergen (Norway) in 1989, leading experts in the field of autonomy came up with what has become known as the 'Bergen definition':

Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and *in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person*. (Dam, 1995: 1, emphasis added)

One common belief about LA is that autonomous learning only takes place in isolation. Various authors have used the term *independence* as a synonym for autonomy and, in fact, autonomous learning is often referred to in the literature as independent learning. The 'Bergen definition', however, broadened new horizons in the field as it underscores that the exercise of autonomy in the context of language learning has a social as well as an individual dimension. In other words, LA involves both independence and *interdependence*. Autonomous learning is not just working on and for one's own, but the responsibility for the learning process is also shared by means of cooperative learning and collective decision-making. Learners help one another learn, solve problems in constructive ways, participate responsibly in the decisions affecting the whole group, and work together towards the achievement of common goals.

Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) have formulated perhaps one of the most comprehensive definitions of LA (and TA) to date. They define it as "the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation" (p. 1), and operationalise it as consisting of various sub-competences grouped under three major competences (p. 33): 1) *learning competence* (encompassing metacognitive knowledge, beliefs about learning, and learning strategies), 2) *competence to self-motivate* (including attributions, intrinsic motivation, and self-motivation, among others), and 3) *competence to think critically* (referring basically to critical thinking). This definition is deeply rooted in a democratic vision of education, placing great emphasis on preparing learners to be active participants not only in the management of their own learning but also of their own lives. From this perspective, the notion of LA becomes a collective interest in the



service of democracy whereby learners develop self-determination, social responsibility and critical awareness so as to take control over their learning process throughout their lifetimes and participate critically in the society where they live.

In sum, LA refers to an attribute (defined either as an ability, capacity, or competence) which allows learners to take responsibility for and control over the learning process (e.g. in terms of goal-setting, decision-making, assessment, and problem-solving), with the fundamental aim of enabling them to participate and function effectively in society. The view of LA in language learning advocated in this work identifies with a more social and democratic understanding of education (Dam, 1995; Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) in which learners develop their autonomy both individually and collaboratively. LA, as noted above, has a well-defined individual dimension (Holec, 1981), but in the context of FLL it cannot be exclusively developed in isolation. Learning a language is a social activity in which interaction, communication and interdependence are essential for the learning process. I argue that in the FL classroom learners develop their autonomy not only by means of taking control over their own learning, but also by participating actively in and being committed to the welfare of the group, as well as assuming responsibility to cooperate with and help one another academically and socially. To this end, teacher and learners must become co-managers of the teaching-learning process.

#### **4.5.2 Arguments for and criticisms against learner autonomy as an educational goal**

Nowadays, the development of LA figures as one of the most important educational goals in discussions of FL education (see, for example, Benson, 2011, 2012; Dam, 1995; Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Lamb and Reinders, 2008; Little, 1994, 2007; Vieira, 2009a). Notions such as education for life, education for lifelong learning and education for democratic citizenship have become increasingly prominent in educational rhetoric, prompting the need to implement pedagogical principles which favour PA in the modern language classroom. In what follows, I will discuss the relevance of LA as an educational aim in the light of four major reasons: 1) the need for enhancing lifelong learning in knowledge-based societies, 2) psychological perspectives supporting the promotion of LA, 3) the conception of LA as a democratic ideal, and 4) the positive

learning gains promoted by the development of LA in the school setting. Furthermore, I will examine some of the criticisms which have been voiced against the notion of LA.

#### *4.5.2.1 Need for lifelong learning*

The importance of LA as an educational goal lies in the urgent need to promote a learning society which is ready and equipped to change. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is to be defined as the knowledge-based era. These days, contemporary society is witnessing how the use of new technologies is spreading and becoming part of our daily lives and how the volume of information continues to grow at an astonishing rate, with knowledge becoming outdated fast. Our world is therefore becoming more and more complex, constantly imposing new societal, cultural, political and professional demands on the individual. This means that learners will never be able to ‘complete’ their education and will be forced to embark upon a continuous process of retraining and acquisition of skills to deal with the complex challenges of our age. As the former European Commissioner for Education warned, the knowledge-based era requires the implementation of a new paradigm in education:

The major future challenges in the educational field are how to reform our learning systems to prepare our young people for jobs that do not exist yet, using technologies that have not been invented yet, in order to solve problems that haven’t been identified yet. (Jan Figel, 2009)

The notion of LA meets the requirements of this new paradigm. In this climate of impermanence, learners will find themselves in a society in which they will constantly need to learn new things, rely on their own resources, apply their knowledge to a variety of new contexts and circumstances, and be able to adapt flexibly to the constant changes the modern world is undergoing: the progressive globalisation, the increased need for plurilinguistic competences, the unstoppable growth of knowledge, and the omnipresence of information and communication technologies (hereafter ICT). As a consequence, teaching cannot be exclusively focused upon transmitting concepts, but needs to put a high premium on learners’ striving for new competences and capacities typically associated with the notion of LA such as creativity, personal initiative, critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving (Aviram and Yonah, 2004). In this sense, the development of LA provides learners with the necessary means for adapting

to a society in which they must be able to regulate their own learning and take full responsibility for their personal fulfilment.

The changing needs of knowledge-based societies definitely make the call for lifelong learning and permanent education a primary target of the educational system: “lifelong learning has become a necessity for all citizens” (European Commission, 2007: 1). Teachers cannot teach learners everything they need to know. Moreover, the rapid pace of change makes it difficult to predict the learning needs learners will have over the course of their lifetime. For that reason, learners must learn to be autonomous, self-directed and capable of developing personal learning strategies which help them improve their competences and abilities in the future. One of the ultimate aims of LA is to foster lifelong learning skills since its development creates in learners the disposition to assume both their learning and their professional development as a lifelong process that they will have to pursue on their own once they leave school.

#### *4.5.2.2 Psychological perspectives supporting learner autonomy*

Insights gained by various disciplines into motivation, cognitive development and human well-being have underpinned the development of autonomy as something essential and natural to human development. Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2008) concludes that autonomy, together with competence and relatedness, is one of the three basic psychological needs which are intrinsic to human beings and must be satisfied in order to achieve a sense of self-fulfilment in life:

Competence involves understanding how to attain various external and internal outcomes and being efficacious in performing the requisite actions; relatedness involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one’s social milieu; and autonomy refers to being self-initiating and self-regulating of one’s own actions. (Deci *et al.*, 1991: 327)

The concept of LA in the school setting entails a degree of freedom to act and make informed choices without being constantly commanded by the teacher. Learners have the opportunity to direct their learning procedures, act on their inherent interests, set their own objectives, and take the most relevant decisions concerning their learning. The result is that they identify more with the learning process, feel more responsible for reaching their learning goals, and have a genuine desire to learn (see, for example, the studies by Serrano Sampedro [1997] and Vansteenkiste *et al.* [2004]). As Ushioda (2011: 224) observes, LA encourages learners “to experience that sense of personal

agency and self-determination that is vital to developing their motivation from within". When autonomy is frustrated, the learner will inevitably experience diminished self-motivation, resistance to work, and gradual disengagement from learning.

Constructivist theories have also contributed substantially to the prominence of LA in language education by conferring an active role in learning upon the learner. As opposed to positivist and behaviourist views of learning, constructivism is based on the claim that learning is more effective and meaningful when learners are active creators of their own knowledge and understanding of the world. It emphasises knowledge construction over knowledge reproduction. Rather than being passively presented to them, knowledge needs to be constructed by learners by bringing what they already know into interaction with the new information, ideas, and experiences they encounter (Piaget, 1954). Constructivists have further emphasised that learning is primarily an active, experiential, reflective, and collaborative activity. This means that learners should be encouraged to be responsible for their learning, to reflect thoughtfully on experience, and to constantly assess their understanding within an interpersonal environment where learners learn with and from others. This social dimension elaborates on the work of Vygotsky (1978) and sociocultural theory. Explicit in his idea of the 'zone of proximal development', Vygotsky contended that the construction of knowledge occurs through interaction in the social world. Vygotsky's influence on the concept of autonomous learning lies mainly in the idea of collaboration as a key factor in the development of autonomy.

Finally, a number of reasons for fostering LA have derived from humanistic approaches to education. Humanistic psychology, represented in the work of Rogers (1983) and Maslow (1954), emphasises that both behaviour and experience are primarily initiated by the individual, and it is concerned with the enhancement of qualities such as personal choice, creativity, self-awareness, and the capacity to become free and responsible. Although Rogers (1983) used the term autonomy only in passing, he defended that meaningful learning must be self-initiated. To do this, the teacher has to promote active learner involvement in the learning process and draw learners' attention to how learning takes place (i.e. learning to learn). Maslow (1954), on the other hand, conceived of people as 'self-actualising' beings striving for health, individual identity, integrity, and autonomy, one of the highest aspirations in human life. Maslow's primary contribution to humanistic psychology was his 'hierarchy of

needs'. He maintained that there are certain universal needs which are innate to human beings. The highest need in the hierarchy is what he called 'self-actualization': "the desire for self-fulfillment [...] the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (p. 93). As an educational goal, the development of LA aims to promote a non-threatening environment where learners feel secure and willing to participate actively in the learning process, become intrinsically motivated, have a sense of well-being, and are able to achieve their true potential.

#### *4.5.2.3 Learner autonomy as a democratic ideal*

Developing LA is one of the most fundamental aims of democratic education as it comes to promote a "discourse of choice, freedom and democracy" in the language classroom (Marsh, Richards, and Smith, 2001: 384). The concept of LA acknowledges learners' right to express their opinion about the learning process and have a voice in deciding what to learn and how to learn it. Furthermore, the promotion of autonomous learning fosters language programmes geared to the particular needs, motivations, and characteristics of all learners; and it makes the process of language learning more democratic by providing learners with the tools for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their learning as well as enabling them to control their own progress. In this way, they come to feel that they are part of the learning process and are actively engaged in the management of their language study.

The chief purpose of democratic education and, in turn, of LA is to prepare learners for democratic citizenship. LA supports the development of attributes and values which will enable individuals to play a significant part in a democratic society and to choose for themselves how to live their own lives. By gaining autonomy, learners can develop as free and self-determining citizens of the community in which they live. In this respect, identity is one of the most important outcomes of LA. Traditional approaches to language learning tend to construct the learner's self as a language learner. In other words, his/her goals, needs and learning process are established and controlled by others, normally, the teacher: "A student's sense of self as a learner is most often constructed against evaluative criteria over which they have no control and through a process in which they have virtually no negotiating rights" (Breen and Mann, 1997: 138). This situation may lead learners to feel completely alienated from the learning process. In contrast, the development of LA, as Benson (2011: 22) argues,

involves “an ongoing sense of being in control of one’s own identity [and development]”. It enables learners to take full control of their personal growth as a learner and, ultimately, as a person:

Autonomy is not just a matter of permitting choice in learning situations, or making pupils responsible for the activities they undertake, but of allowing and encouraging learners, through processes deliberately set up for the purpose, to begin to express who they are, what they think, and what they would like to do, in terms of work they initiate and define for themselves. (Kenny, 1993, quoted in Benson, 2011: 114)

#### *4.5.2.4 Positive learning gains in the promotion of learner autonomy*

Previous research studies have accounted for the effectiveness and positive results of learning programmes implemented to foster LA in the FL classroom. Dam and Legenhausen (1996, 2010) provide accounts of studies on autonomy and language learning in the secondary school context, showing that autonomous learning can be equally effective in terms of language proficiency as mainstream teacher-led approaches. In his different studies in the LAALE<sup>24</sup> project, Legenhausen (1999, 2003, 2010) presents strong arguments for the benefits of promoting LA. When comparing the results obtained in a ‘traditional’ class with an ‘autonomous’ class, he finds out that learners following an autonomous learning approach have better linguistic achievements (e.g. grammatical proficiency, communicative competence, and accuracy) than those learners who follow a textbook-based communicative syllabus. Other relevant studies have described how autonomous learning raises learners’ critical awareness of the learning process. Lamb (1998), Jiménez Raya (1998) and Silva (2008) focus on encouraging learning to learn in the classroom and conclude that by doing so learners express a very conscious awareness of what learning a FL is and feel empowered to decide how and which way to go about learning.

Fostering LA contributes to enhancing learners’ intrinsic motivation and commitment to learning while decreasing their disaffection towards schooling. Dam (1995, 2006) in Denmark and Trebbi *et al.* (2008) in Norway have been highly successful in developing LA with young people learning English as a FL. They have experienced that by getting learners actively involved in planning and taking decisions about what they have to learn and how they have to learn it arouses their interest and motivation for learning the TL. Similarly, Lamb (2009) concludes that providing

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<sup>24</sup> LAALE: Language Acquisition in an Autonomous Learning Environment.

autonomy-supportive learning environments has significant effects for learners becoming more fully dedicated and more genuinely engaged in learning activities and, consequently, the learning process. In the Spanish context, for example, Barbero Espinosa *et al.* (1991) and Serrano Sampedro (1997, 2008) have satisfactorily implemented LA in secondary education. They report that the result of the learning programmes set up was getting learners to be gradually less dependent on the teacher and develop a higher involvement in the learning process. Learners started to show more interest in how to do things and how to learn, they expressed a greater concern for their work, they were able to adapt and design their own activities, and they contributed their ideas and opinions about the learning process.

#### 4.5.2.5 Criticisms against learner autonomy

Despite the many arguments supporting its development, the notion of LA is not exempt from criticism. Different views in the literature have questioned not only the feasibility, but also the desirability of promoting autonomy in education and the school context. Nonetheless, it is my contention in this work that these views can be challenged. Cuypers (1992) was one of the first authors to question the notion of autonomy as an educational goal. He argues that autonomy should not be regarded as the ‘first principle’ of education, but should be replaced by the basic ideal of caring about oneself. His claim is that a person’s identity is constituted by the act of “caring about something” (p. 9) and this something is oneself, so this concern must become the immediate goal of educational practice. This view, however, is somewhat restricted since, as already noted, identity is one of the most important outcomes of LA (see section 4.5.2.3). When learners develop their autonomy, they have the opportunity to forge their own identity or, in other words, autonomy becomes a means for self-expression, self-discovery, and self-construction. Learners can communicate their own meanings and explore and define who they are as learners and, more specifically, as individuals (Benson, 2012). In this sense, LA is a fundamental educational aim for learners’ personal development.

Hand’s (2006) criticisms against autonomy are more explicit than Cuypers’. He contends that we can distinguish between *circumstantial autonomy* (i.e. the freedom to determine one’s own actions) and *dispositional autonomy* (i.e. the inclination to determine one’s own actions), but concludes that “neither circumstantial autonomy nor dispositional autonomy will serve as an aim of education” (p. 539). On the one hand, he

questions whether circumstantial autonomy can be actually taught in formal education contexts: “it is a state of being one cannot confer on a person by *educating* her” (p. 537, original italics). Nevertheless, this assumption can be regarded as erroneous since in the classroom the teacher can gradually enable learners to experience more freedom to think and act independently, so learners can eventually steer their own learning by taking greater responsibility for it, making informed decisions, evaluating their learning outcomes, and so on. One proof is the positive results obtained in those studies which have promoted LA at classroom level (see section 4.5.2.4). Concerning dispositional autonomy, the question which arises when reading Hand’s paper is: Do we want individuals to be able to determine their own actions? Or do we want them to wait for someone else to determine them? In this sense, Hand seems to support the second vision since the society he pictures operates within a system of dependence (or heteronomy):

Since most of us spend much of our lives operating in spheres in which others have greater expertise than we do, and working in organisations in which others have authority over us, it would be nonsense to say that we ought always or generally to determine our own actions. (p. 538)

Thus, he considers that it is nonsense to determine our own actions when there is a person who possesses more expertise and can direct us, as it is the case of the teacher in the classroom. It is true that teachers have greater expertise than learners on how to manage the learning process, but it is also true that they are not always going to be there for learners to submit to their direction. As discussed above, learners need to learn how to be autonomous in order to direct their professional development once they leave school and to develop as self-determining citizens of the society where they live. For this particular reason, LA constitutes a perfectly defensible educational goal.

Another frequently voiced criticism has referred to the cultural appropriateness of autonomy. LA is often conceived as a construct deriving from the Western tradition of liberal thought and, consequently, an inappropriate pedagogical goal in non-Western educational contexts. Following this line of thought, Jones (1995) challenges the idea that individual autonomy is a necessary goal in a self-access centre in Cambodia by questioning its supposed unsuitability in the Asian culture. Riley (1988) suggests that the development of autonomy is ethnographic as some cultures are more or less suitable or favourable to the ideas and practices of learner-centred approaches. According to Pennycook (1997: 43), establishing LA as an educational goal in non-Western contexts may be regarded as a form of cultural imperialism: “the free, enlightened, liberal West



bringing one more form of supposed emancipation to the unenlightened, traditional, backward and authoritarian classrooms of the world”. There are, however, different studies conducted in non-Western countries (e.g. China, Japan, and Hong Kong) whose findings show that many Asian learners positively value freedom in FLL and the opportunity to direct their own learning (see Lee, 1998; Littlewood, 2000; Ruan, 2006).

## **4.6 Teacher autonomy**

### **4.6.1 Defining and describing teacher autonomy**

While LA has been discussed extensively in numerous publications on language education, there have been relatively few attempts within the literature to clarify the meaning or possible meanings of TA. The rise of this notion derives in part from a shift in teacher education from the ‘transmissive model’ (Richards and Farrell, 2005; Wallace, 1995) to the ‘reflective model’ (Dewey, 1933, 1938; Schön, 1983, 1987; Zeichner and Liston, 1996), whose purpose is to encourage teachers to play a leading role in the educational process. Little (1995) was one of the first authors to discuss TA in the field of FL education. He argues that teachers may be:

[A]utonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers. (p. 179)

In this definition, Little stresses critical aspects of TA such as personal responsibility for teaching and teacher freedom, and underlines the significance of reflective practice, inquiry and research into one’s classroom practice to the development of TA.

The term TA has been articulated in the teacher education literature as professional freedom or the degree to which teachers can take control over their professional activity. While non-autonomous teachers simply accept and carry out decisions made by other participants in the education sector (e.g. policy makers, administrators, and academic experts), autonomous teachers are able to exercise their independent judgement to teach what and how they think best. From this perspective, Vieira (2006: 24) emphasises that TA is about “striving for what you believe in and empowering yourself as a teacher”. Similar views in this sense are expressed by Webb (2002: 48), who identifies TA with teachers’ power to make decisions about their

teaching in the face of accountability systems, and by Pearson and Moomaw (2005: 41), who describe it as “the perception that teachers have regarding whether they control themselves and their work environment”.

TA is often examined in relation to the concept of LA, being considered as closely interconnected notions: either because TA is conducive to LA (Barfield *et al.*, 2002; Benson and Huang, 2008; Thavenius, 1999) or because LA is an important aspect of TA (Smith, 2000, 2003a; Smith and Erdoğan, 2008). Aoki (2002: 111), for instance, maintains that TA could be defined by analogy with LA: “if learner autonomy is the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one’s own learning [...] teacher autonomy, by analogy, can be defined as the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one’s own teaching”. Yet, she finds this analogy problematic as “it does not imply in itself that teacher autonomy has any relevance to teachers’ capacity to support the development of the autonomy of their learners” (*ibid.*).

As implied in the above quotation, the promotion of LA is seen as one of the responsibilities of the autonomous teacher. For Thavenius (1999: 160), the autonomous teacher is by definition one who promotes LA: “teacher autonomy can be defined as the teacher’s ability and willingness to help learners take responsibility for their own learning”. Benson and Huang (2008: 430) argue that TA involves “teachers’ willingness to go against the grain of educational systems and struggle to create spaces within their working environments for students to exercise greater control over their learning”, so the role of autonomous teachers is to be mediators between their learners’ capacity for autonomy and the external constraints hampering its development. In a similar fashion, Barfield *et al.* (2002: 218) in the so-called ‘Shizouka definition’ characterise TA as “a continual process of inquiry into how teaching can best promote autonomous learning for learners”. The idea behind this definition is that teachers’ reflective practice will result in the teacher fostering autonomy. This understanding of TA is, in my view, somewhat restrictive and prescriptive since a teacher may be autonomous and decide not to implement PA in his/her classroom.

If LA is learners’ capacity to take charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981), TA is also understood as teachers’ capacity to take control over their process of learning how to teach. This approach emphasises the fact that teachers have a dual role to play as self-directed practitioners and learners. In the context of FL education, Smith (2000,

2003a) and later Smith and Erdoğan (2008) argue that language teachers are also learners, not only of the craft of teaching (e.g. theoretical knowledge and pedagogical skills) but also of the TL they teach. Therefore, they will need to engage in an ongoing process of learning. The basic premise of their argument is that teachers' development of their own autonomy as learners is essential to their professional development:

One *leitmotiv* of recent work in the field of teacher education is that learning constitutes an important part not only of becoming but also of continuing to be a teacher. If this is the case, then learner autonomy is likely to be as necessary for ourselves (as teacher trainees, teachers or teacher trainers) as we consider it to be for language students. (Smith, 2000: 90, original italics)

For this reason, they suggest the term 'teacher-learner autonomy' which makes reference to the capacity and freedom to self-direct one's learning and development as a teacher: "the ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for oneself as a teacher, in cooperation with others" (Smith and Erdoğan, 2008: 88).

Drawing on critical pedagogy, Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007: 1) have provided a common definition for LA and TA (see section 4.5.1). This definition emphasises the moral and political nature of TA in which teachers, in collaboration with learners, struggle for educational and social change. They are individually and collectively empowered to transform the reality of the educational and social context where they teach into a more democratic environment operating on principles such as voice, dialogue, respect for others, negotiation, and cooperation (p. 2).

<b>In relation to professional action (or teaching)</b>	
a. Self-directed professional action	i.e. Self-directed teaching
b. Capacity for self-directed professional action	i.e. TA (capacity to self-direct one's own teaching)
c. Freedom from control over professional action	i.e. TA (freedom to self-direct one's teaching)
<b>In relation to professional development (or teacher-learning)</b>	
d. Self-directed professional development	i.e. Self-directed teacher-learning
e. Capacity for self-directed professional development	i.e. Teacher-learner autonomy (capacity to self-direct one's learning as a teacher)
f. Freedom from control over professional development	i.e. Teacher-learner autonomy (freedom to self-direct one's learning as a teacher)

Table 4.1. Dimensions of TA identified in Smith and Erdoğan (2008)

Discussion on the topic is beginning to suggest that rather than being easily reducible to one single definition, the notion of TA can be seen as a multidimensional construct. According to McGrath (2000), TA can be broadly described in terms of two discrete dimensions: TA "as freedom from control by others" (p. 100) and TA "as self-

directed professional development” (p. 101). The former is concerned with a political perspective of TA, while the latter is perceived from a psychological point of view. Concerning these two dimensions, Smith and Erdoğan (2008: 84-85) point out the need to make a distinction between self-directed professional action (i.e. teaching) and self-directed professional development (i.e. teacher-learning) and identify the following dimensions of TA in terms of capacity and freedom (see Table 4.1).

In the specialised literature, attention has also been paid to the competences and desirable traits of autonomous teachers. Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007: 52) formulate four dimensions of professional competence or macro-competences towards TA (and LA): 1) developing a critical view of (language) education, 2) managing local constraints so as to open up spaces for manoeuvre, 3) centring teaching on learning, and 4) interacting with others in the professional community. In turn, Barfield *et al.* (2002: 218) argue that TA is based on the principles of critical reflective inquiry, empowerment and dialogue, and they identify some of the essential characteristics of autonomous teachers:

- Commitment to promoting LA,
- Negotiation skills,
- Institutional knowledge to address effectively potential constraints on teaching and learning,
- Willingness to confront external obstacles and turn them into opportunities for change,
- Reflection on the teaching process and the educational context, and
- Readiness to engage in lifelong learning.

The above discussion shows that the concept of TA is highly complex and still remains an issue open to further discussion and clarification. My conception of TA in this research will refer to teachers’ ability and willingness to undertake both self-directed professional action and development in the pursuit of a more democratic environment for teaching and learning where, as a sort of ‘positive contagion’ (Fullan, 1993), teachers can exercise their autonomy to pass on a sense of autonomy and well-being to their learners.

#### **4.6.2 Arguments for teacher autonomy in foreign language education**

TA is a highly controversial issue; yet, it is a basic competence for teachers in modern language education for various reasons. Among the many educational arguments supporting the notion of TA, I would like to highlight the following due to their

relevance to the present research: 1) TA for professional empowerment, 2) TA for self-directed professional development, and 3) TA for LA.

#### 4.6.2.1 *Teacher autonomy for professional empowerment*

The first argument in favour of the promotion of TA refers to the necessity for a more democratic perspective of education. Teachers frequently find themselves in educational settings where they have little or no power to make crucial decisions about education. External factors such as the excessive bureaucracy, accountability systems, school regulations, examination syllabi, or national curricula tend to restrict teachers' freedom in the classroom. Teachers spend most of their time trying to accommodate to top-down educational reforms and initiatives which prescribe what they have to teach and how. As a result, they gradually become disaffected and unmotivated, feeling unable to innovate under such pressure, let alone to encourage LA, and accepting the *status quo*.

On the contrary, if we want teachers focused on being innovative and creative in their classroom, they must act as active agents of change or, in Shulman's (2004: vii) words, *pathfinders* as opposed to *pathfollowers*: "those who behave as most of their disciplinary colleagues expect them to, and those who elect to go against the grain". In his paper on the 'sociocultural turn' in FL teacher education, Johnson (2006: 235) refers to the need for education to sustain "a teaching force of transformative intellectuals who can navigate their professional worlds in ways that enable them to create educationally sound, contextually appropriate, and socially equitable learning opportunities for the students they teach". This requires a sense of control and ownership of the educational process and the decisions governing its development. TA represents teachers' "willingness and ability to manage constraints within a vision of education as liberation and empowerment" (Vieira *et al.*, 2008: 219). Thus, autonomous teachers are able to decide and take action on their own, turning external constraints into opportunities for effecting change in their classrooms. They move away from their conception as passive implementors of ideas conceived elsewhere and are assigned critical voice in determining the substance and direction of their teaching. For this reason, the notion of TA is sometimes perceived as subversive in FL education (Jiménez Raya, 2011a).

#### 4.6.2.2 *Teacher autonomy for self-directed professional development*

Self-directed professional action requires self-directed professional development. TA encourages teachers to become fully responsible for taking control over their own professional growth as teachers (McGrath, 2000; Smith, 2000, 2003a). This conception of TA emerges from the influence of ideas in the broader teacher education literature such as teacher development, reflective practice, and teacher research.

Teacher learning is not complete when teachers leave formal training, but it is a lifelong, largely self-directed process in which they need to be prepared to review and reinvent their practices and skills in response to the constantly changing requirements of the classroom. Self-directed professional development enables teachers to determine the direction of their learning about teaching, develop their distinctive teaching style, and build their personal identity as professionals. Effective autonomous teachers are aware of their professional learning needs as teachers and act accordingly so as to improve their teaching. They are viewed as critical (rather than passive) consumers and creative producers of professional knowledge (Vieira and Moreira, 2008) that they generate by means of systematic inquiry and action research into their classroom practice. Ultimately, teachers come to know what they believe about teaching and learning and how these personal beliefs influence their teaching practice and the construction of their teaching ‘self’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

#### 4.6.2.3 *Teacher autonomy for learner autonomy*

The third argument supporting the notion of TA which I put forward aligns with Jiménez Raya and Vieira’s (2015) understanding of the concept: “[teacher autonomy] is essentially about being willing and able to challenge non-democratic traditions and developing a professional sense of agency in teaching that is *directly* connected with promoting the learners’ agency in learning” (p. 23, original italics). TA is usually conceived of as including the ability to support learners in their development towards autonomy (Barfield *et al.*, 2002; Thavenius, 1999). Although fostering autonomous learning is not a necessary condition for teachers to be considered autonomous (see section 4.6.1), TA is critical to the promotion of LA if we situate both concepts within a broader moral and political perspective of language education (Vieira, 2003), aiming for the creation of educational opportunities based on democratic values like equality,

freedom, and social justice. In this line of argumentation, Lamb (2008: 279) claims that TA should involve a concern for the enactment of LA:

[A]ny consideration of empowerment must embrace not only empowerment of the self [i.e. the teacher] but also empowerment of the other [i.e. learners]. To work towards empowerment of the self without regard for empowerment of the other would entail a reproduction of power structures rather than a radical re-visioning of the world as a more just place.

The autonomy teachers experience must motivate them to reflect on how they can make use of their freedom to better adjust their teaching practices to their learners' individual learning abilities, needs, and interests. TA aims at bringing about a shift in mindset on the part of teachers whereby they no longer consider learners as passive recipients of information, but as co-producers of the lesson. Teachers develop a moral and social responsibility towards their learners in a more democratic environment for teaching and learning. They are willing to change the power balance in the classroom and allow learners' voice to be heard. Moreover, they negotiate aspects of the teaching-learning process with learners and encourage them to contribute significantly to class development by organising learning situations, determining learning content, or setting the pace of learning.

## **4.7 Pedagogy for autonomy**

### **4.7.1 Defining and describing pedagogy for autonomy**

Autonomy, as Holec (1981: 3) notes, is not an inborn capacity "but must be acquired either by 'natural' means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way". The idea that the skills and knowledge associated with autonomy must be taught has given rise to the term 'pedagogy for autonomy'. PA in a formal education context aims at facilitating an approximation of the learner to the learning process and content by giving him/her the opportunity to assume greater responsibility for learning, and acknowledging him/her as a crucial participant in the management and organisation of this learning. PA is thus defined as:

[T]he conscious and deliberately organized implementation of the possibility for learners to set their learning objectives, to establish the procedures and methods for learning, to monitor their progress and to self-evaluate the learning process and outcomes. (Camilleri Grima, 2007: 83)

PA is more than a teaching methodology. It is concerned with a new ideological position on the purposes of education. Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) argue that PA is the pedagogical realisation of a vision of education as *transformation* and *empowerment*: “education that is empowering for teachers and learners and ultimately contributes to the transformation of society at large” (p. 55). As opposed to ‘pedagogy of dependence’ (Vieira, 1999), PA emphasises the emancipatory role of schools as institutions that should aim for liberation and social transformation rather than oppression and reproduction of the established order.

In PA teachers and learners take a critical stance towards teaching and learning. Learners are empowered to play an active role in their own education, taking control over their learning and having a voice in the decision-making process. However, this empowerment goes beyond the confines of the formal educational system. PA empowers learners to take action and bring about change in their lives and the society where they live. The ultimate aim is therefore to enable individuals to grow as self-reliant learners and citizens. On the other hand, teachers play a decisive role in creating the environment in which learners can begin to exercise their autonomy. To do this, they must also feel empowered to subvert the *status quo* and effect change not only in their classrooms, but in the school. They reconstruct established practices and strive to promote a teaching-learning process which is more democratic and just for themselves and for learners.

Below, I will discuss how PA can be implemented in the FL classroom, explaining the theoretical framework which has been followed in the module of the present research; what roles language teachers should adopt in this new pedagogical approach; and what factors may constrain its development.

#### **4.7.2 Implementing pedagogy for autonomy in foreign language education**

PA is an educational process which may take diverse forms for different teachers, depending on the teacher’s understanding of the teaching and learning process, learners’ interests and abilities in the TL, and the context where it is implemented. This is why we should talk about *pedagogies* for autonomy (Vieira and Barbosa, 2009). Different theoretical frameworks have been developed in the specialised literature to encourage the development of LA in language education.



Nunan (1997: 194-195) proposes a model of five levels of learner action for encouraging LA in language education: 1) awareness, 2) involvement, 3) intervention, 4) creation, and 5) transcendence. He points out that these levels contribute to LA by making goals and strategies explicit; involving learners in making choices; enabling them to modify and adapt goals, content and tasks to their emerging learning needs; and helping them develop as truly autonomous learners beyond the classroom (p. 202). In a paper discussing how pedagogy and autonomy can meet, Vieira (1999: 18) formulates a proposal for a common core of basic conditions and pedagogical guidelines to promote autonomy in the FL classroom. Six conditions, with implications for both teaching and learning, are identified in this approach: integration, transparency, specialised activities, negotiation, collaboration, and progression.

Seen from three different domains (communication, learning, and life in general), Littlewood (1997) develops a three-stage model for the development of LA including 'autonomy as a communicator', 'autonomy as a learner', and 'autonomy as a person'. Autonomy as a communicator involves the "ability to operate independently with the language and use it to communicate personal meanings in real, unpredictable situations" (p. 81). Autonomy as a learner emphasises learners' "ability to take responsibility for their own learning and to apply active, personally meaningful strategies to their work both inside and outside the classroom" (pp. 81-82). Finally, autonomy as a person develops in learners "greater generalized autonomy as individuals" (p. 82). As a conclusion, Littlewood argues that the concept of autonomy requires teachers to develop learners' motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills a) to communicate more independently, b) to learn more independently, and c) to be more independent as individuals. At the same time, Macaro (1997: 170-172) proposes a somewhat similar model involving 'autonomy of language competence', 'autonomy of language learning competence', and 'autonomy of choice and action'.

Littlewood (2002) also introduces a distinction between 'proactive' and 'reactive' autonomy. In reactive autonomy, learners organise their resources autonomously to reach a goal which has been previously set by the teacher or the curriculum. In proactive autonomy, learners participate autonomously in setting the goals themselves. Although for many writers "proactive autonomy is the only kind that counts", Littlewood (p. 30) argues that reactive autonomy has "its place either as a preliminary step towards proactive autonomy or as a goal in its own right". Smith (2003b), for example, makes a

general distinction between ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ pedagogies for autonomy. While weak versions of PA are based on the assumption that autonomy is a “capacity which students currently lack (and so need ‘training’ towards)”, Smith associates strong versions of PA with the idea that students are, to a certain degree, “already autonomous and already capable of exercising this capacity” and consequently they focus on “co-creating with students optimal conditions for the exercise of their own autonomy” (pp. 130-131).

Little (2007) argues that the development of autonomy in FLL is governed by three interacting pedagogical principles: principle of learner involvement, principle of learner reflection, and principle of appropriate TL use. The ‘principle of learner involvement’ requires teachers to encourage learners to share responsibility for the learning process, select learning materials, manage classroom interaction, and evaluate learning outcomes. The ‘principle of learner reflection’ embraces learners to reflective intervention, i.e. to think critically when they plan, monitor, and evaluate the process and content of learning. They are encouraged to reflect on the decisions and initiatives which give shape to their language learning process. Lastly, the ‘principle of appropriate TL use’ entails using the TL as the principal medium of language learning and language teaching in the classroom. Little maintains that developing autonomy implies learning how to communicate one’s own meanings and purposes.

For Benson (2011), promoting autonomy entails promoting three different levels of control: control over learning management, control over learning content, and control over cognitive processing. The first level of control encourages learners to manage the planning, organisation and evaluation of their language learning. The second level involves them in choosing what they want to learn. ‘Control over cognitive processing’ is concerned with promoting learners’ control over the cognitive processes whereby learning management and learning content are controlled. These include attention, awareness, reflection, and metacognitive knowledge. These three dimensions of control, according to Benson, are clearly interdependent. Effective learning management depends on control of the cognitive processes involved in learning, whereas control of cognitive processes influences the self-management of learning.

The student teachers participating in this research were introduced to the implementation of PA in the FL classroom by means of the theoretical framework proposed by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007: 58-66), which we consider to be the most comprehensive proposal to date. This framework encompasses the following nine

pedagogical principles, which can be seen as interrelated conditions favouring a pedagogy for LA and TA:

1. Encouraging responsibility, choice, and flexible control
2. Providing opportunities for learning to learn and self-regulation
3. Creating opportunities for cognitive autonomy support
4. Creating opportunities for integration and explicitness
5. Developing intrinsic motivation
6. Accepting and providing for learner differentiation
7. Encouraging action-orientedness
8. Fostering conversational interaction
9. Promoting reflective inquiry<sup>25</sup>

#### *Encouraging responsibility, choice, and flexible control*

Teachers encourage learners to take responsibility for planning, carrying out and evaluating their learning experiences and, at the same time, to make informed choices at successive stages of their learning about what to learn, when, how and with what learning materials. PA enables learners to participate responsibly in the learning process by:

- Identifying their learning interests and needs
- Setting their learning objectives
- Determining the learning content and pace of learning
- Planning and designing learning activities
- Selecting learning materials, methods, and strategies
- Monitoring their own learning procedures
- Evaluating their learning process and learning outcomes

LA, as argued by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007: 30), is not an absolute concept, but it should be understood as “a continuum in which different degrees of self-management and self-regulation can be exercised”. The notion of ‘flexible control’ (Aviram and Yonah, 2004) allows learners to exercise different levels of control determined by the circumstances at different moments of the learning process. Thus, learners can move from states of no control to states of full control over their learning, and from states of total control to states of complete dependence according to the circumstances.

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<sup>25</sup> This framework has been revised in a more recent publication (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2017). In this work, I follow the 2007 edition since it was the one I used to analyse the data (e.g. the ideal English lesson plans and the cases).

*Providing opportunities for learning to learn and self-regulation*

One of the aims of PA is to provide learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to learn. Learning to learn encompasses the promotion of learners' awareness of their learning process, preferred learning strategies, and learning needs; a broad understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in the TL; the capacity to identify available opportunities for learning (inside and outside the classroom); and the ability to overcome possible obstacles in order to learn successfully and effectively. To manage their learning, learners should be given the opportunity to set their personal goals, monitor their progress, and accommodate their learning to the accomplishment of such goals. Self-regulation is a central component of PA. It refers to "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals" (Zimmerman, 2000: 14). Learning situations which allow for responsibility, agency, choice and some degree of learner control are essential for the promotion of self-regulation. Finally, such control over learning requires the development of metacognitive knowledge or knowledge about cognition and its regulation, i.e. how learners direct, plan and monitor their cognitive activity (Wenden, 1998).

*Creating opportunities for cognitive autonomy support*

Cognitive autonomy support (Stefanou *et al.*, 2004) facilitates learners' ownership of the learning process and can include teacher behaviours such as asking them to justify or argue for their point, requiring them to generate their own solution paths, or encouraging them to evaluate their own and others' solutions or ideas. The cognitive component is essential for increasing learners' involvement, motivation, and engagement in learning. Through cognitive autonomy support, learners further engage in deep-level thinking whereby teachers encourage them to reflect critically on existing beliefs they hold about themselves as learners and learning *per se*. Stefanou *et al.* suggest that "it is cognitive autonomy support that truly leads to the psychological investment in learning that educators strive for" (p. 101).

*Creating opportunities for integration and explicitness*

Tudor (1996) advocates a pedagogy which integrates learner training with language activities or, in other words, a pedagogy in which language and learner development take place at the same time. Thus, learners can learn to use the TL while they learn how to learn it. On the one hand, PA requires teachers to promote an explicit focus on learning strategies. This entails an *informed training* (Wenden, 1986) in which learners are taught the why, the how and the when of strategy use in FLL: “inform students of the value and significance of the strategies you train them to use- *tell* them about it and have them *experience* their value” (p. 323, original italics). They can assess the strategy in question with respect to their learning objectives, they can learn to use those strategies which are more suitable for the learning task at hand, and they can evaluate their ability to use them effectively. On the other hand, teachers must encourage *pedagogical explicitness*, i.e. “making the rationale, aims and procedures of language and learner development transparent to the learners” (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007: 62).

*Developing intrinsic motivation*

Motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, has been identified as one of the most important factors contributing to the acquisition of autonomy in FLL (Black and Deci, 2000; Spratt, Humphrey, and Chan, 2002). When learners are intrinsically motivated, they engage in learning because they are interested in and enjoy the learning process. Research on the link between motivation and autonomy has provided a wealth of evidence that intrinsic motivation is enhanced when learners take responsibility for and control over their learning rather than being constantly commanded by the teacher (Dam, 1995; Ushioda, 2011; Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2004). For that reason, PA encourages learners to experience a sense of personal agency and self-determination in what they do: “in autonomy, one experiences the self to be an agent, the ‘locus of causality’ of one’s behaviour” (Ryan, 1991: 210). This leads them to identify more with the learning process since the goals and decisions are seen as their own and therefore they feel more responsible for reaching them.

### *Accepting and providing for learner differentiation*

Within the same group we can find learners who differ in their degree of motivation, attitudes, interests, learning styles, cognitive abilities, prior knowledge, and beliefs about language learning. The aim of PA is therefore to foster “learning situations that are open to learner diversity” (Trebbi, 2011: 102). It makes it possible for the teacher and learners to organise the class and the learning process so that different ways of learning can be put into practice at the same time. According to Convery and Coyle (1999: 7-9), we can differentiate by:

- asking learners to work on the same subject or topic area but using materials at different levels of difficulty;
- providing different kinds of support to individual learners in terms of time, resources, and tasks;
- grouping learners by ability for teaching and learning purposes;
- providing a range of approaches, teaching styles, and activities.

### *Encouraging action-orientedness*

PA contributes to an action-oriented approach to FLL. To foster LA, learners do not only need to develop a sense of responsibility for their learning process, but also to take a pro-active role in making decisions about their learning. Learners have to view themselves as agents of their own learning. In this respect, van Lier (2007) emphasises the importance of the notions of agency, identity and autonomy in the principles of what he calls ‘action-based teaching’. In an action-based pedagogy, as van Lier explains, learners’ work is based on the accomplishment of different language learning tasks, aimed at using the TL as a vehicle for authentic, real-world needs. These tasks are more structured at the beginning, but new structures gradually emerge as learners become more autonomous and are able to define their learning goals independently.

### *Fostering conversational interaction*

In the traditional FL classroom, it is the teacher who has the initiative and control in discourse. This means that he/she decides who talks, to whom, about what, and how. To counteract this situation, the aim of fostering conversational interaction is the enhancement of *discourse power* (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007). Learners are considered to be equal participants when negotiating the learning process and are provided with

opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions among themselves and with the teacher. This pedagogical principle responds to van Lier's (1996) discussion of the need to move from *transmission-oriented communication* to *transformation-oriented communication* in the classroom. Conversational interaction seeks to replace a view of learning as a process in which learners passively take part in the transmission of information from the teacher and the textbook to themselves with a view of learning in which learners actively participate in the construction of personal meaning and the transformation of themselves and their world. Thus, teachers and learners can build a more democratic environment.

#### *Promoting reflective inquiry*

Reflection is a key stage in the development of autonomy. Through reflective inquiry, learners develop a deep understanding of all the relevant aspects and factors that take place in the language learning process (Dam and Legenhausen, 2010). They become aware of their own growth as language learners and of the decisions and initiatives that give shape to that growth. Furthermore, reflective inquiry allows learners to review what they have learned and how they have learned it. In this sense, reflection is said to be “the glue that holds autonomous learning together” (Reinders, 2010: 50) as it helps learners link their accomplishments in the TL with future work through a constant revision of their learning goals. By means of reflection, learners can also turn to their personal beliefs as language learners. Benson (2011: 108) argues that reflection may become an effective tool for ‘deconditioning’ learners from learning habits or ways of thinking about learning which are inimical to autonomy, that is, their beliefs or previous experience with the TL which may predispose them to resist the idea of autonomy.

For the effective implementation of PA, learner reflection must be accompanied by teacher reflection. Teachers must also engage in reflective inquiry into their pedagogical practice and professional development. As it was explained in chapter 2, by means of reflection teachers can uncover personal beliefs and theories about teaching, develop a critical understanding of education which encourages them to transform the *status quo*, take responsibility for their professional growth, be more sensitive to the institutional and social context in which they teach, and play an active role in educational reform and curriculum development.

### **4.7.3 Role of the teacher in pedagogy for autonomy**

One of the earlier misconceptions regarding autonomous learning is the belief that the development of LA refers to learning without a teacher or that it makes the teacher redundant in the FL classroom (Little, 1994). Autonomous learning is by no means a matter of *laissez-faire*, but the teacher has a crucial role to play in supporting learners to gain a degree of independence and providing them with the learning conditions and opportunities for exercising their autonomy. Fostering LA does not imply a total abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher, but it does imply a change in the role of the teacher which teacher education has to prepare teachers for.

In traditional teacher-centred approaches, the role of the teacher is perceived as central. Teachers typically shoulder most of the responsibility for the learning process and they are regarded as an authority figure (Cotterall, 1995), directing and controlling all learning in the classroom. By and large, these traditional approaches to language teaching have not taken seriously learners' capacity to take charge of their own learning and they have mainly revolved around teaching and the leading role of the teacher, forcing learners into conformity with existing patterns of power: "the rights and obligations associated with the teacher and pupil roles are clear, fixed and non-negotiable" (Widdowson, 1991: 185). PA, in contrast, places emphasis on *learning* (and *learners*) rather than on teaching.

For the promotion of LA, FL teachers need to build up a different relationship with their learners, far removed from the hierarchical organisation of the traditional classroom and open to negotiation and interaction with them. The teacher thus becomes a co-learner or helper of the learner rather than an instructor, that is, "a teacher's task is to help each pupil in his/her very personal learning process" (Raappana, 1997: 125). Voller (1997) discusses three ways in which the role of the teacher has been defined in the literature on autonomous language learning: the teacher as a facilitator, the teacher as a counsellor, and the teacher as a resource. In this section I add a fourth role to these three ones: the teacher as a mediator.

#### *4.7.3.1 Teacher as a facilitator*

The role of the teacher as a facilitator is the most commonly used term in the literature dealing with autonomous learning. The teacher acts as a helper whose role is to



facilitate learning to learners. According to Holec (1985), the facilitator fulfils two complementary roles. The teacher provides learners with psycho-social support and technical support. Voller (1997: 102) characterises these roles as follows:

A) Psycho-social support

- The teacher must have a capacity for motivating learners. This means encouraging commitment to the learning process, developing a positive attitude towards learning, making learners feel confident of their capacity to become better learners, and helping them overcome possible problems that may arise.
- The teacher needs to be able to raise learners' awareness of the utility of, or necessity for, independent as well as cooperative learning.

B) Technical support

- The teacher helps learners plan and carry out their independent language learning by helping them select learning materials, choose learning strategies, and find their own learning style.
- The teacher develops learners' skills for autonomous learning. This includes identifying their learning needs, establishing their learning objectives, monitoring their learning procedures, evaluating their learning outcomes, and assessing their progression in the TL by means of self- and peer-assessment<sup>26</sup>.

#### 4.7.3.2 *Teacher as a counsellor*

Traditionally, FLT has been characterised by the distance between the teacher and learners because of principles of status and power (Widdowson, 1991). This distance has been translated into the frequent lack of dialogue between teachers and learners. PA, however, requires teachers to be prepared to enter into a dialogue with learners in order to counsel or give them advice on how to manage their learning. In this new role, the teacher becomes a counsellor- often replaced by the term 'adviser' (Sturtridge, 1997) or 'guidance provider' (Aviram, 2000)- to whom learners turn for consultation and guidance. In language counselling or language advising, teacher and learner discuss the learner's needs and progress in the TL, and the teacher as a counsellor offers feedback, recommends materials, and helps the learner to plan his/her learning process.

#### 4.7.3.3 *Teacher as a resource*

The conception of the teacher as a transmitter of information leads us into the third way in which the role of the teacher has been characterised in autonomous language

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<sup>26</sup> In this work, 'facilitator' is understood as the teacher who facilitates learning to learners and provides them with technical support (i.e. he/she promotes LA and independent learning), whereas the term 'motivator' is used to refer to the teacher who provides psycho-social support (i.e. he/she motivates learners).

learning: the teacher as a resource or knower. Although given less prominence than the other three, the teacher appears in this role as an expert or resource of information. Nevertheless, Voller (1997: 105) warns about the difference between “the passive provision of information and the active dissemination of it”. When providing learners with new information, teachers must avoid falling in a teacher-centred approach to learning. This means standing in front of the class and seeing learners as containers to be filled with information. Instead, learners should play an active role in the classroom, interacting with the teacher and constructing their own knowledge by means of capacities for criticism, rational argument, and independent thought.

#### 4.7.3.4 Teacher as a mediator

The role of the language teacher as a mediator is “to help learners to find ways of moving into their next level of understanding of the language” (Williams and Burden, 1997: 66). In the classroom the teacher makes appropriate stimuli available for learners and helps them select and organise these stimuli in the ways that are more suitable to promote their learning and thought processes.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Conceptualisation of the role of the teacher</b>
1. Significance	The teacher (T) makes learners perceive how the learning task is of value to them personally, and in a broader cultural context
2. Purpose beyond the there and now	T makes learners aware of how the learning experience will have wider relevance to them beyond the classroom
3. Shared intention	In presenting a task, T must have a clear intention, which is understood and reciprocated by the learners
4. A sense of competence	T helps learners experience the feeling that they are capable of coping successfully with any particular task with which they are faced
5. Control of own behaviour	T develops learners’ ability to control and regulate their own learning, thinking and actions
6. Goal-setting	T encourages learners to set realistic goals and plan ways of achieving them
7. Challenge	T helps learners develop an internal need to respond to challenges, and to search for new challenges in life
8. Awareness of change	T aids learners to acquire an understanding that human beings are constantly changing, and the ability to recognise and assess changes in themselves
9. A belief in positive outcomes	T encourages learners to believe that even when faced with an apparently intractable problem, there is always the possibility of finding a solution
10. Sharing	T promotes co-operation among learners
11. Individuality	T makes learners realise their own individuality and uniqueness
12. A sense of belonging	T arouses learners’ feeling of belonging to a community and a culture

Table 4.2. Feuerstein’s features of mediation (adapted from Williams and Burden, 1997: 69)

The Israeli psychologist Reuven Feuerstein was highly influential in developing the theory of mediated learning and defining the role of the teacher in it. He identified 12 features of mediation (see Table 4.2). The first three features are essential for all

learning situations. The other nine are relevant, but they do not always need to be present in every mediated learning experience. Mediation is particularly concerned with empowering and helping learners become autonomous. The promotion of mediated learning experiences allows learners to gradually take more control over their learning; acquire the knowledge, skills and strategies to make personal decisions and handle particular problems; and prepare for responsible citizenship.

#### **4.7.4 Constraints on pedagogy for autonomy in formal educational settings**

The literature dealing with LA has highlighted different factors or conditions which may constrain PA in FL education. The teacher's perception of learners is an important variable when trying to promote LA in the school setting. The often-cited 'unpreparedness' of learners (Voller, 1997) for self-direction is one of the major factors hindering the development of PA. In general, teachers think that their learners are not sufficiently mature to take control over their learning. Vieira and Barbosa (2009), for example, surveyed teacher and learner perceptions of learner readiness for autonomy in secondary education and concluded that learners perceive themselves as having a moderate degree of readiness to assume responsibility for their learning, whereas teachers tend to perceive learners as having a rather low degree of readiness for autonomy. As a result, teachers hold all the responsibility for learning and decision-making in the classroom. Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are also important constraints to PA. In this regard, Jiménez Raya (2017b) argues that implementing PA requires teachers to overcome their 'internal resistances' to this approach.

Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007: 20-22) make a list of potential challenges for the enactment of PA, including the dominant institutional culture, teachers' professional values, and learners' personal theories and beliefs about FLT, among others. Manzano Vázquez (2016) identifies various obstacles related to the teacher (e.g. the lack of cooperation among teachers), the context (e.g. classroom organisation), and learners (e.g. their poor commitment to education). In this sense, learners' willingness to accept autonomy and to get on with the learning process independently is considered a decisive factor in the development of LA (Vieira *et al.*, 2008). According to Coyle (2003), national curricula, examination syllabi, and textbook content are regarded as significant factors preventing learners and teachers from developing autonomy in the classroom.

She holds that these factors make the notion of LA “practically challenging” at secondary school level, “offering little to the learner in terms of negotiated learning and choice” (p. 165). In a similar vein, Raappana (1997: 132) argues that the tradition of “teaching for the examination” is hard to break in the classroom. Teachers believe that their main job is to cover the material presented in the textbook in order to prepare learners for the exam they have to take to pass the subject. Therefore, everything which goes beyond this content is seen as alien to the classroom and simply discarded. Finally, the increasing government control over teacher professional development reduces teachers’ freedom to implement PA. Vieira (2009b) has referred to the disempowering educational reforms and the lack of a collaborative culture of innovation in schools where teachers increasingly complain about the “excessive bureaucracy, endless demands and no time to reflect on teaching and learning, thus feeling unable and even unwilling to innovate under such pressure” (p. 277). Teachers try to find ways to change their practices *within* the system and not *against* it (Vieira and Barbosa, 2009), so they usually find little space for manoeuvre in the promotion of autonomy.

#### **4.8 Teacher development towards pedagogy for autonomy**

Although different experimental projects on the implementation of PA have demonstrated that fostering LA in the FL classroom is satisfactory in terms of learning gains (see section 4.5.2.4), the most common way of teaching is still “highly teacher centred” (Miliander, 2008a: 143). In other words, LA is far from being a prominent educational goal in the *practice* of FLT. The role of the teacher is perceived as central as he/she is the ultimate authority and the arbiter of all the decisions concerned with language learning. In contrast, learners have little voice in the learning process and play a passive role in the classroom, behaving like mere ‘containers’ into which knowledge is poured (Manzano Vázquez, 2015). Research has suggested that one of the main reasons for this teacher-centredness may be the lack of TEA (Benson, 2011; Jiménez Raya and Vieira, 2008; Manzano Vázquez, 2016).

Teacher education (both pre-service and in-service) should be understood as vital for the enactment of LA in teaching practice. We cannot expect teachers to promote LA in their classroom if they have not been previously trained to do so. The development of autonomous learning implies a change in the traditional role of the teacher, who

becomes a facilitator rather than a transmitter of knowledge. Furthermore, the teacher is called upon to create a new relationship with learners, built on pillars such as mutual trust, dialogue, negotiation, and collective decision-making. Nonetheless, after so many years of developing a teacher-centred approach as teachers as well as experiencing it as learners through the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975), it is not easy for prospective and practising teachers to suddenly change their conceptions of teaching and their role in the classroom. For that reason, this new view of teaching requires the “training of a *new breed of teachers*” (Holec, 1997: 28, emphasis added). This means there is the urgent need to design and implement coherent teacher education strategies which support teachers in adapting their teaching practice to a more learner-centred pedagogy, placing emphasis on learning rather than teaching.

#### **4.8.1 Language teacher education initiatives for autonomy**

In what follows, I shall review<sup>27</sup> different language teacher education initiatives for LA and TA described in previous literature and highlight the assumptions and strategies they work on. Although my research is exclusively concerned with pre-service teacher education, the review I will undertake will include approaches at both pre-service and in-service level, due to the dearth of these initiatives in initial teacher education.

Within the reviewed publications, one of the first initiatives developing pre-service TEA was undertaken by Camilleri Grima (1997, 1999). Based on the assumption that “to encourage learner autonomy at classroom level, the teachers themselves must have some first-hand experience of autonomous learning” (Camilleri Grima, 1997: 88), the initiative had two aims: 1) to develop the student teachers’ autonomy as learners of teaching (or, in other words, their teacher-learner autonomy) and 2) to engage them in fostering LA in the classroom. To this end, it adopted a reflective approach whereby, by means of various workshops, group discussions and reflective tools, the student teachers were encouraged to reflect on the notion of LA and assess their own level of autonomy. In terms of teaching practice, the initiative advocated the development of action research for fieldwork on LA. During their *practicum*, the student teachers carried out a small-scale action research project intended to promote autonomous learning among learners. In a similar vein, Nissilä (1999)

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<sup>27</sup> See Jiménez Raya and Vieira (2008) for a different review of TDLA (Teacher Development for Learner Autonomy) projects conducted in different European countries.

describes an initiative focused on analysing the value of reflection as a means for encouraging a positive attitude towards LA among pre-service teachers while they develop their own autonomous professional growth. Thus, reflective tools such as a portfolio and a learning diary were used to help the trainees develop their professional identity, become aware of their attitudes towards LA, and experience autonomous learning themselves. Unlike Camilleri Grima (1997, 1999), one of the shortcomings of this initiative is that the trainees engaged in discussions of LA just at a theoretical level since there was no fieldwork on promoting autonomous learning in the classroom.

Nissilä's approach is an exception since the rest of the initiatives dealing with LA include pedagogical work on its development. Two small initiatives for LA and TA are reported by Gatt (1999) and Galiniené (1999). Gatt presents the DIVA<sup>28</sup> initiative whose main goal was to raise teachers' awareness of the need to foster autonomous learning. To break with teacher-centred classes, the teachers had to choose one part of the official syllabus and exploit it autonomously (i.e. in terms of LA) with their learners, promoting a pedagogy of choice, cooperation, and negotiation in the classroom. Galiniené's in-service approach was based on the organisation of various workshops where FL teachers were exposed to and experienced the notion of LA through selected readings, group discussion, the assumption of greater responsibility for their learning, and individual reflection on their own autonomy. Moreover, the initiative included a practical component, encouraging the teachers to involve their learners in autonomous learning through the implementation of experimental projects at classroom level. Little, Ridley, and Ushioda (2002) adopted a similar approach, although their focus was just on LA. They first organised a series of seminars and workshops conducted by leading experts on the subject, which led the teachers to engage in discussion and reflection on theoretical issues related to LA and their implications for pedagogical practice. To translate the theory into practice, the teachers implemented classroom projects covering different areas of pedagogical experimentation towards LA (e.g. promoting learner reflection, giving learners choice, and encouraging self-assessment).

The University of Minho in Portugal has become one of the driving forces in TEA thanks to the work undertaken by Vieira and her colleagues, focused on enhancing

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<sup>28</sup> DIVA: D (Democracy), I (Individuality), V (*Vie*, French word for life), and A (Auto-sufficiency).

reflective teacher development through systematic inquiry into the promotion of autonomy in school settings:

- Pre-service TEA: Moreira (2007, 2009), Vieira *et al.* (2008), and Vieira and Moreira (2008)
- In-service TEA: Vieira (2007b, 2007c, 2010)

In these initiatives, teacher education is experience-based, involving both prospective and experienced teachers in the design, implementation and evaluation of supervised, small-scale action research projects which operationalise the concept of PA in the FL classroom. These projects are documented either in reflective portfolios and journals (Moreira, 2009; Vieira, 2007b, 2007c; Vieira and Moreira, 2008; Vieira *et al.*, 2008) or in narratives of experience like cases (Vieira, 2010), which are being introduced in more recent developments of the in-service initiative. Teachers engage in *case analysis* (i.e. they discuss and analyse teaching cases written by other FL teachers working on LA) and *case construction* (i.e. teachers themselves write their own teaching cases based on the autonomy-oriented experiences designed and implemented during the course). By means of the action research projects and the cases, the participants have the opportunity to gain TA and explore LA. A similar case-based approach is adopted in the pre-service initiative developed by Jiménez Raya (2009, 2011b, 2013, 2017a), in which the present research was conducted. The use of cases (both case analysis and case construction) is combined with the use of reflective tasks (e.g. learning portfolios) to empower the student teachers to take a more pro-active role in their professional development, make them revise their belief systems, and encourage them to reflect on and implement PA in FLT. This initiative will be further discussed in section 5.4.

Action research is an important training strategy in other initiatives for TEA. Breen *et al.* (1990) describe the development of an in-service initiative whose initial aim was to introduce the teachers to CLT but it ended up instilling a concern for LA into the participants. As the authors explain, the little initial effect of the initiative on the teachers' teaching practice made this evolve from an original transmissive view of teacher education to a more constructivist paradigm:

- 1) training as *transmission* (the content of the course and the decisions made were controlled by the trainers),
- 2) training as *problem-solving* (the content was concerned with the pedagogical problems experienced by the teachers in their classroom) and, finally,
- 3) training as *classroom decision-making and investigation*.

This third phase stressed the conception of the teacher as a researcher, based on a cyclic process from training input (through the teachers' implementation of small-scale investigations in the classroom) to subsequent feedback and, later, more training input in response to classroom experiences. At this point the aim of the initiative was to promote TA, encouraging the participants' control over their own professional activity, reflection on their teaching experience, and self-directed professional development. However, as noted above, the initiative developed the teachers' concern for learner involvement in the learning process, fostering the construction of a more democratic culture in the classroom. Of special interest is also the initiative by Kohonen (2003). Developing LA and TA through an experiential, reflective learning framework was the point of departure for the initiative. Its strength lied in enhancing the participating teachers' professional growth and autonomy by fostering "a collegial school culture whereby teachers work together with the students (and the school's stakeholders) in order to develop the school as a collaborative learning community" (p. 147). Thus, the teachers developed their site-based curricula through collegial collaboration as an action research process. During the initiative, the teachers also kept a personal diary to keep track of any change in their thoughts.

Mello, Dutra, and Jorge (2008) investigated the pertinence of collaborative action research within an in-service initiative. In this case, their work was focused just on TA. Action research projects were undertaken by FL teachers in collaboration with university teachers as a practical tool to inquire into and find alternative practices to classroom problems as well as enhancing teachers' professional development and autonomy. This initiative is not the only one aimed at promoting just TA. As noted in previous initiatives, portfolios have become an effective tool for promoting self-directed professional development in TEA. Miliander (2000, 2008b) in Sweden and Yildirim (2013) in Turkey have successfully implemented the use of portfolios as a teacher development strategy to encourage their student teachers experience an autonomous way of learning. In Miliander's initiative, for instance, the participants wrote their own portfolio which they used to reflect on their learning experiences, analyse the activities promoted in their teaching practice, and compare ways of working with other trainees. The author argues that maintaining a portfolio of their professional learning provided an avenue for the trainees to take a hold of their learning process, become aware of themselves as teachers and learners, and reflect on their professional development. In a



similar fashion, Martins (2009) explored the potential value of portfolios in pedagogical supervision towards autonomy. They were conceived of as a tool for the student teachers to record and reflect on their learning journeys during the *practicum*, enabling them to inquire into their teaching practices and develop self-regulation and self-direction in their training. Cakir and Balçikanlı (2012), on the other hand, promoted the use of the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages. This is a document which encourages prospective teachers to reflect on the didactic knowledge and skills necessary for language teaching, helps them assess their didactic competences, and enables them to monitor their progress and record their teaching experiences during the course of their training.

In line with this reflective approach, the initiative INVITIS<sup>29</sup> (Trebbi, 2008a, 2008b) made a great contribution to the field by introducing the use of ICT in TEA. Its aim was to explore the potential of new technology to support trainees' metacognition applied to their own learning processes. Thus, the initiative was based on combining more traditional strategies (lectures and seminars) with the provision of digital learning tools and environments (digital portfolios, logs, and forums) where the student teachers could share and reflect on their own learning and teaching experiences with LA, both individually and collectively. Within this experience-based knowledge building framework, the premise was that "written communication in virtual reality might support reflectivity and metacognitive awareness and thereby contribute to the student teachers' autonomy as learners" (Trebbi, 2008a: 234).

Suso López and Fernández's (2008) teaching methodology course focused on promoting TA by means of self-directed and cooperative learning among prospective teachers of French as a FL. The student teachers carried out a series of sub-tasks aiming at the completion of a major task: the design of their own syllabus for the teaching of French. In doing so, the aim was to develop their ability to exercise their independent judgement to teach what and how they think best in the future. Moreover, they actively engaged in individual and collaborative work whereby they had to reflect on the teaching-learning process, take the initiative in developing their knowledge, and assume responsibility for their training as future teachers.

Finally, another strategy for TEA consists in promoting peer-teaching situations. In the pre-service work carried out by Smith and his colleagues in the UK (Brown,

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<sup>29</sup> Norwegian acronym for Innovation with ICT in Initial Language Teacher Education.

Smith, and Ushioda, 2007; Smith, 2006; Smith *et al.*, 2003; Smith and Erdoğan, 2008; Ushioda *et al.*, 2011), the major aim of the initiative is to promote teacher-learner autonomy. The student teachers are engaged in a process of reflective learning and practice through ‘simulated’ experiences of action research based on lessons which are taught to their peers and later evaluated by means of peer- and self-assessment. These peer-teaching situations aim to foster the trainees’ capacities for ongoing, critical reflection on their teaching practice. However, one of the shortcomings of this initiative, as acknowledged by Smith (2006: 2), is that these teaching experiences are far from engaging the trainees in “a real [classroom] teaching situation”. In Japan, Endo (2011) adopted a similar approach in a FL methodology course built on reflection and pedagogical inquiry as means for providing the student teachers with the opportunity to analyse their teaching practice and develop a greater awareness of their professional development. The initiative was divided into three phases: 1) each trainee was given a lesson plan for the teaching of English; 2) the lesson was taught to their peers, who played the role of learners and evaluated their ‘teacher’; and 3) the lesson was further videotaped for the trainee’s self-assessment. As it happens with the previous initiative, these lessons were also far from being conducted in authentic classroom situations.

On the whole, these initiatives have produced very positive outcomes. First, pre-service and in-service teachers became aware of the notion of LA and of its significance in FLT. When finishing the initiative, many participants expressed their willingness to cultivate the idea of autonomous learning in their future teaching (Nissilä, 1999; Trebbi, 2008a, 2008b). Some initiatives also report having helped trainees experience a change in their traditional conceptions of teaching in favour of a more learner-centred pedagogy: “teachers had the opportunity to challenge, reconstruct and validate their personal theories and practices [...] they acknowledge to have become more learner/learning oriented” (Vieira, 2007b: 161-162) or “they also expressed a will to change their view of teaching and learning, claiming that traditional approaches are no longer an alternative” (Trebbi, 2008b: 44). The introduction of fieldwork on LA has resulted in substantial benefits. The pre-service teachers in Camilleri Grima (1997, 1999), Vieira and Moreira (2008), and Vieira *et al.* (2008) acknowledged the value of action research for allowing them the opportunity to better understand PA and how it can be implemented. Apart from Breen *et al.* (1990), Galiniené (1999), Vieira (2007b) and Little *et al.* (2002) observed that their in-service teachers voiced a deeper concern

for their learners' progress and need for autonomy and developed a greater sensitivity to their individual learning needs and interests. The teachers in Kohonen's (2003) initiative, for instance, felt that they had gained more belief in the significance of their work and that they could actually make a difference in their learners' lives.

These initiatives have also enabled (student) teachers to gain autonomy. In this regard, portfolios have been of great value, helping trainees take control over their professional development (Yildirim, 2013) and assess their teaching practice and skills (Cakir and Balçikanli, 2012). The work undertaken by Smith and his colleagues (Brown *et al.*, 2007; Smith and Erdoğan, 2008; Ushioda *et al.*, 2011) has shown evidence of growth in teacher-learner autonomy among the participants, who developed the capacity to teach reflectively, were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and were more willing to engage in self-directed professional activity. Galiniené (1999) reports that during their training the teachers became aware of their own autonomy, whereas Trebbi (2008a) observed greater involvement in decision-making. Other outcomes have revealed that trainees became more willing to take the initiative in their learning-to-teach process (Camilleri Grima, 1997), developed greater awareness of their teaching and learning (Little *et al.*, 2002; Martins, 2009), and were more able to face external constraints and find alternative solutions (Vieira, 2007b). Furthermore, (prospective) teachers adopted a critical view of FL education, gained more confidence to implement innovative teaching practices, and felt more prepared to regulate their teaching systematically (Gatt, 1999; Mello *et al.*, 2008; Vieira and Moreira, 2008).

Nonetheless, these initiatives have also encountered several obstacles. Among these difficulties is the resistance some teachers still offer to accept the fact that PA is effective. Vieira *et al.* (2008), for instance, have observed that beginning teachers begin with a pro-active attitude towards the development of LA, but they are rapidly socialised into reproducing the dominant values and practices of the schooling culture. Little *et al.* (2002: 69-70) point to the difficulty of "asking [teachers] to re-assess teaching methods which they had relied on in the past and with which they generally felt comfortable". Smith *et al.* (2003: 13) explain that becoming critical, reflective and autonomous is not easy for student teachers: "the shift from dependence to autonomy, from academic to reflective work, and from consumption to production of knowledge. For some students this shift may have been perceived as too abrupt and stressful".

From this review, the following conclusions about TEA can be drawn. Although there is a great diversity of practices and strategies, a common thread runs through these initiatives: reflective, inquiry-oriented teacher education is regarded as the most powerful approach to the promotion of TA. The vast majority of the initiatives involve an important reflective component, emphasising the role of teachers as reflective practitioners and pedagogical inquirers. To this end, they promote the use of tools for reflection on the teaching-learning process (e.g. journals, portfolios, logs, and cases). The initiatives are further underpinned by a constructivist paradigm of education, conceiving of participants as producers of knowledge. They are based on the premise that professional knowledge is to be subjectively constructed by the (student) teacher by means of critical reflection and inquiry into his/her own classroom practice. In addition, they place a high value on personal theory building, self-regulation, self-direction and cooperation as basic conditions for teacher professional development.

I concur with Smith and Erdoğan (2008: 86) when they point out that “attempting to convince teachers of the value of learner autonomy in the abstract can be argued to be insufficient”. For that reason, most of the initiatives on LA encourage teachers and teachers-to-be to put principles of PA into practice. TEA must allow (student) teachers to actually experience ways of promoting autonomous learning at classroom level. One promising training strategy in these initiatives is the development of action research or classroom-based experiments in which trainee teachers have the opportunity to explore the space of possibility between dependence and autonomy in FL education. In other words, they inquire into what they can do to shorten “the distance between reality (what *is*) and our ideal (what *should be*), by extending the limits of freedom and exploring new territories (what *can be*)” regarding the promotion of LA (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007: 55, original italics).

In summary, we can conclude that critical reflection and pedagogical inquiry into the development of PA appear to be particularly powerful means for enticing prospective and practising teachers into developing TA and LA in FL education.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has emphasised that the notion of autonomy has become a valid construct for both teachers (i.e. TA) and learners (i.e. LA) in FL education. In particular, it has

discussed its legitimacy as an educational goal and has demonstrated the possibility of moving towards this goal in practice through the implementation of PA. The chapter has further reviewed different teacher education initiatives for LA and TA which have been described in previous literature. This review has reached the conclusion that these initiatives take a variety of forms, practices and strategies but the vast majority draws on the notions of reflection, constructivism, and experiential learning.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 have provided the theoretical grounding of this thesis. The following chapter gives a detailed account of the methodology which has been employed over the course of the present research.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 reports on the research methodology of the present study. It begins by discussing the theoretical framework in which the study was set (section 5.2). Next, the chapter identifies the main research objectives pursued and the different research questions to which the study aimed at giving an answer (section 5.3). Section 5.4 provides information about the participants who took part in the research and the specific context where it was conducted, whereas section 5.5 details the research instruments employed and the data collection procedures adopted over the course of the research. The chapter also discusses the techniques used for data analysis (section 5.6). Finally, it concludes by pointing out the quality and potential limitations of the study conducted (section 5.7).

#### **5.2 Theoretical framework**

The present research is based on the premise that sociocultural theory (Smagorinsky, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1991; Wertsch, del Rio, and Alvarez, 1995) can provide the theoretical framework for the study of teacher cognition about FL teaching and learning within TEA. The work of sociocultural theory aims at explaining how human mental functioning is related to a particular cultural, institutional, and historical context. One of the basic tenets of the sociocultural perspective has been to stress the ‘situatedness’ of knowledge. From the point of view of sociocultural learning, all knowledge is conceived of as being situated in and growing from the particular milieu where it is directly applied (Wertsch, 1991). The individual constructs knowledge by

means of interaction with the social context where he/she is. In the case of teacher education, the suggestion is that teacher learning should be situated within contexts of teaching and learning such as the classroom and teacher learning communities, so that teachers can learn from their own experience and teaching practice and in close collaboration with other colleagues.

Another fundamental claim of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated. Vygotsky (1978, 1986), an early precursor of the theory, emphasised in his work that both higher mental functioning and human action are mediated by the use of artefacts or ‘tools’, either symbolic or cultural tools. On the one hand, he advocated that these tools play a significant role in humans’ understanding of the world and of themselves. They give rise to previously unknown ways of conceptualising phenomena in the world, and purposeful, tool-mediated activity enables personal and psychological development. On the other hand, Vygotsky argued that these tools also have the power to mediate in how humans behave and act directly on the physical world.

According to Smagorinsky (1995), the use of tools such as language, texts, and experiences facilitates the process of meaning construction. They provide the opportunity to generate new understandings and images about the subject under study. Hence, these understandings and images may become tools for new thinking, new learning and, ultimately, new practice. As far as modern language education is concerned, it is possible to see sociocultural tools as effective means for knowledge construction and belief revision. These tools can be used by language teachers as aids in thinking about teaching and reflecting critically upon their own practice. In this way, they can generate new understandings, beliefs and images about the purpose of education, the teaching-learning process, and teacher and learner roles in the classroom.

Wertsch *et al.* (1995), for example, argue that the tools used by individuals (e.g. teachers) to mediate new understandings of a particular domain may empower to take new action. Drawing on this assertion and the ideas previously mentioned, I made use of the theoretical framework provided by sociocultural theory to examine a group of student teachers’ professional development towards autonomy as an educational goal in FL teaching and learning. The sociocultural perspective enabled me to study and analyse how certain tools for reflection and pedagogical inquiry in initial teacher education (e.g. questionnaires, learning portfolios, and cases) helped the student



teachers reshape their educational beliefs, gain an understanding of PA, and develop the professional competences necessary to promote this approach.

### 5.3 Research objectives and research questions

The main objective of the research was to evaluate the impact that a pre-service teacher education initiative which works towards the development of PA in FL education had on a group of student teachers. To this end, the following goals were pursued:

- To analyse how a pre-service language teacher education initiative can serve as a tool for mediating student teachers' cognition about FLT and, more specifically, about PA in FLT;
- To evaluate the effects of a pre-service language teacher education initiative on student teachers' dimensions of professional competence towards TA/LA (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) in FLT; and
- To draw pedagogical implications for further pre-service language TEA.

Based on the objectives formulated above, the study aimed to give an answer to the following research questions:

- I. What changes in the student teachers' beliefs about FL teaching and learning (with a particular emphasis on PA) does the present pre-service language teacher education initiative enable?
- II. What dimensions of professional competence towards teacher and learner autonomy (*ibid.*) do the student teachers develop?
- III. Does the initial teacher education initiative studied facilitate the development of the pre-service language teachers' cognition and professional competence towards teacher and learner autonomy?
- IV. What pedagogical implications can be drawn from this research for further work on pre-service language TEA?

### 5.4 Participants and research context

The sample<sup>30</sup> for the research consisted of a group of 24 student teachers (21 females and 3 males) who were enrolled on a one-year postgraduate teacher education programme (*Máster Universitario de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato*,

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<sup>30</sup> The information provided here about the participants was obtained by means of the Background Questionnaire (see section 5.5.1).

*Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de Idiomas*<sup>31</sup>) at the University of Granada, through which these students earned the master's degree which is required to work as a FL teacher in compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education (age 12-18) in Spain. Although the vast majority of the students were Spanish (22 students), there were also one Canadian student (Alicia<sup>32</sup>) and one Irish student (Guillermo). The range of age in which the participants were comprised went from 22 to 33 years, being the overall mean age of the sample 25 years (M=25.29).

Two different groups can be distinguished within the sample if we look at the degree with which these students entered the pre-service teacher education programme. While 16 student teachers held a degree in English Philology, eight students had a degree in Translation and Interpreting: English (4 students), French (2 students), German (1 student), and Arabic (1 student). This fact had clear implications for the area of teacher cognition since the students with a degree in English Philology acquire knowledge about FLT methods during their studies. In contrast, the students who are specialised in translation and interpreting lack this type of knowledge as their degree does not focus on covering the basics of FLT.

The participants had three major reasons for enrolling on the pre-service teacher education programme. First, they thought that they needed to receive specific training in teaching and to learn more about the basics of FL teaching and learning. As Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 show, most of the student teachers were motivated to become a FL teacher, although they were not very confident about their readiness to be one. Second, they considered that the programme would provide them with the opportunity to find a better job. The most common reason, however, was that they needed to obtain the master's degree in order to sit *oposiciones*<sup>33</sup> and work as a FL teacher in the Spanish educational system. From all the participants, only one student (Alicia) had previously been enrolled on a teacher education programme: a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) Course.

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<sup>31</sup> Master's Degree in Compulsory and Post-compulsory Secondary Education, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching.

<sup>32</sup> The names used throughout this work are the pseudonyms provided by the participants in the Background Questionnaire.

<sup>33</sup> *Oposiciones* are public examinations held to fill vacancies in the Spanish public sector (e.g. education).

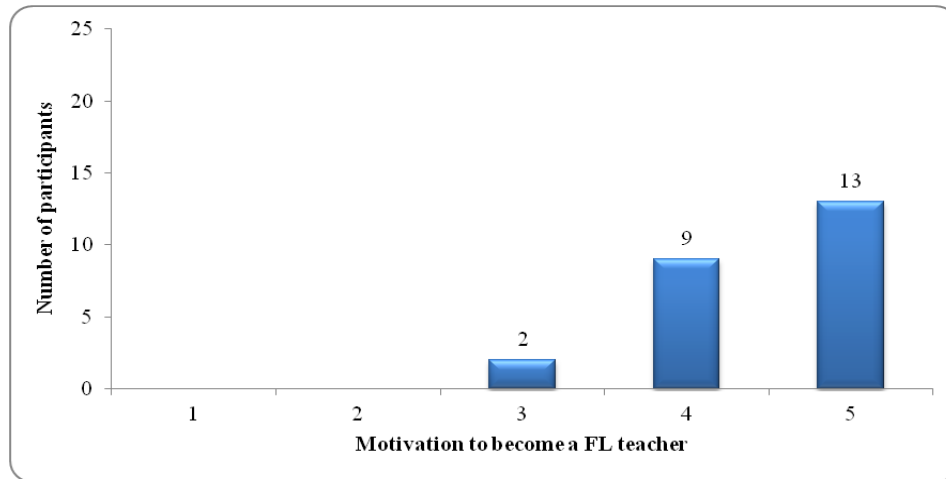


Figure 5.1. The participants' motivation to become a FL teacher (from 1 'low' motivation to 5 'high' motivation)

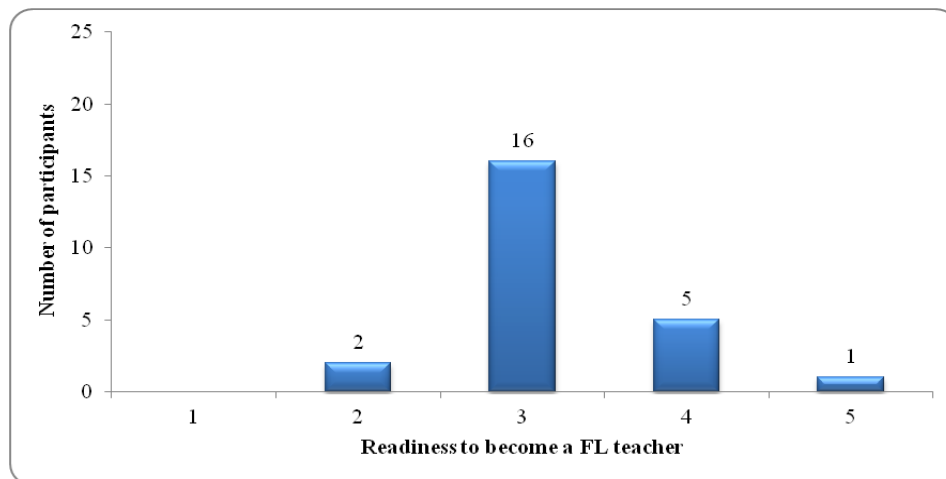


Figure 5.2. The participants' readiness to become a FL teacher (from 1 'very poor' to 5 'very good')

Regarding their experience as teachers, 21 students reported having had some kind of previous teaching experience. This experience was largely based either on teaching primary and secondary school students in private classes which were aimed at supporting the learning of English and preparing students for exams (i.e. school exams and Cambridge English exams) or on working in a language academy. These teaching contexts differ considerably from an authentic class in secondary education. In fact, only two students within the sample had had previous teaching experience in secondary education by working as language assistants.

As mentioned above, the research context was a one-year postgraduate teacher education programme which is taught at the University of Granada. The aim of the programme is to train and qualify prospective teachers for compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education, vocational training, and FLT. Thus, the programme

encompasses a number of modules<sup>34</sup> covering, for example, educational psychology, sociology, educational research and innovation, and teaching methodology, which are followed by a *practicum* of six weeks either in a secondary school or in a language school. The *practicum* combines student teacher observation of experienced teachers with classroom instruction in which the student teachers themselves become responsible for teaching several lessons. The school supervisor decides the number of lessons which the student teachers are in charge of. The *practicum* can be completed in two different turns (February-March and April-May). Each student is assigned to one turn and one secondary/language school. After completing the modules and the *practicum*, the student teachers finish and present their Master's dissertation (in June or September), which usually consists of either the design of a unit of work for the teaching of English as a FL or a small-scale research project on a topic of their choice.

From the modules included in the programme, the data for the research were collected in the module *Aprendizaje y Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera* (Learning and Teaching of English as a FL) which is taught by Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya, supervisor of this doctoral thesis. Table 5.1 summarises the main objectives of the module.

Objectives
❖ To formulate a theory of FLL in formal learning environments
❖ To describe the cognitive processes of L2 acquisition
❖ To understand individual differences as a key factor in the process of L2 acquisition
❖ To study the main variables which constitute the classroom context and to foster the need to know them
❖ To understand the current methodological approaches to the teaching of English as a FL
❖ To understand and reflect on the teaching of language skills
❖ To study the origins of diversity in the classroom and be aware of different methodological options
❖ To develop a critical approach to the most relevant bibliography in the field

Table 5.1. Objectives of the module *Aprendizaje y Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera*

The module is organised around classes of two hours and a half which are held three times per week over a total of 10 weeks (from the third week of December<sup>35</sup> to the first week of March), and it covers the following topics: 1) theories and models of L2 acquisition; 2) current methodological approaches to the teaching of English as a FL; 3) the teaching of language skills, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in FLT; 4) evaluation of the teaching/learning of English as a FL; 5) analysis and design of units of

<sup>34</sup> The modules in the programme begin in October and finish in May.

<sup>35</sup> Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya begins his teaching in the module after Christmas holidays (i.e. the second week of January, which will be considered the 'beginning' of the module).

work and classroom activities; and, the most important topic, 6) the development of LA in FLT. Topics 2-5 in the module are directly related to the latter.

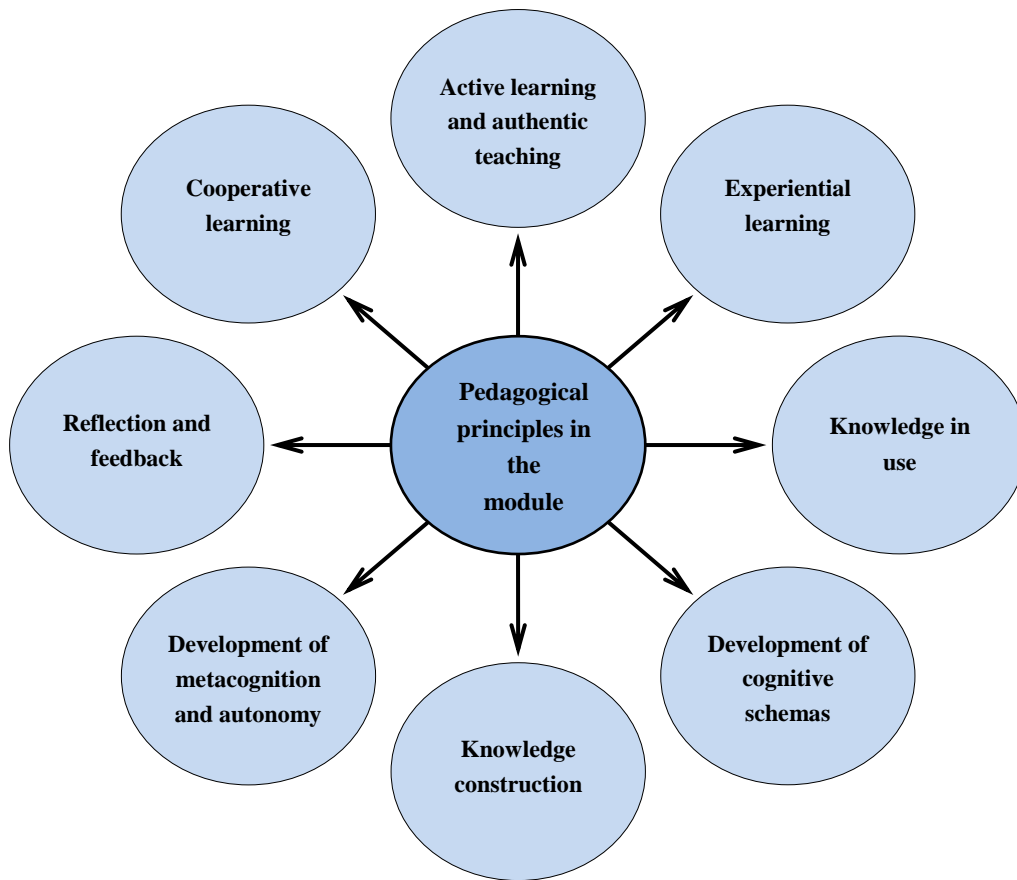


Figure 5.3. Pedagogical principles guiding Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya's approach to pre-service language TEA (Jiménez Raya, 2013: 103)

The activities promoted by Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya are based on the principles described in Figure 5.3. The module is grounded in a constructivist view of teacher education which draws upon *critical reflection* (Valli, 1997; van Manen, 1977), pedagogical inquiry, *pedagogy of experience* (Vieira, 2010), and the notion of autonomy. It combines the explanation of theory with the use of cases (both case analysis and case construction), reflective tasks, the construction of a learning portfolio, and practical exercises<sup>36</sup> which aim to help the student teachers reflect critically on FLT, articulate and recast their personal beliefs, apply theoretical knowledge to practice, inquire into their own experience and, finally, construct meaning independently. This process enables them to develop a *vision of teaching* (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2005) while they relate the new knowledge they are gaining to their previous

<sup>36</sup> How these tools are used during the module is discussed in more detail in section 5.5.

knowledge. They also have the opportunity to think, and begin to act, like a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2008), thus developing the pedagogical reasoning skills necessary for teaching. Furthermore, interaction is promoted as a catalyst for active and cooperative learning. The student teachers play an active role in the classroom by discussing and sharing their ideas with their teacher educator and the rest of the class. In this way, they are not only responsible for their own learning, but the responsibility for the learning process is shared among all the participants. A feeling of joint control and personal involvement is fostered.

## **5.5 Research instruments and data collection procedures**

In this section of the research methodology, I shall proceed to report on the various instruments which were used for collecting the data in the research and I shall explain when and how they were used. The instruments employed were:

- Background Questionnaire
- Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”
- Ideal English lesson plans
- Learning portfolios
- Cases
- Revision of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”
- Final Questionnaire
- Interview

Before beginning the process of data collection, the student teachers were carefully explained the aim of the research and what it entailed in order to obtain their informed consent to take part in it. This was done both verbally and with a short description included at the start of the first questionnaire administered (see Appendix 1). They were reassured that they were completely free to participate and that there would be no repercussions for them if they did not wish to take part. All the student teachers agreed to get involved in the study.

### **5.5.1 Background Questionnaire**

At the beginning of the module (i.e. the second week of January), a ‘Background Questionnaire’ (see Appendix 1) was administered to the student teachers in order to be

completed at home. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: a) Personal information, b) Teaching experience, and c) *Máster Universitario de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de Idiomas*. The first section collected data about personal information (e.g. name, sex, age, nationality, university degree, and previous engagement with any teacher education programme). Here the participants were required to provide a pseudonym to preserve their anonymity in the report of the data. Moreover, they were reassured that the information provided was strictly confidential (i.e. only I would have access to the raw data). The next section included two questions which gathered information about any previous teaching experience the participants had had before entering the programme.

The third section of the questionnaire inquired about the student teachers' reasons for enrolling on the teacher education programme and their expectations for the particular module in which the data were collected. Next, it explored the participants' perception of their readiness and motivation for becoming a FL teacher. On the whole, this first questionnaire served to provide an overall picture of the participants in terms of initial characteristics of the group, academic background, and main motivations for the module and the programme.

### 5.5.2 Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

At the same time the participants filled in the Background Questionnaire, they had to complete a second questionnaire entitled “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...” (see Appendix 2), which was one of the reflective tasks assigned by Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya<sup>37</sup>. This activity aimed to help the student teachers bring their implicit beliefs and assumptions to a conscious level so as to articulate and examine them, thereby leading them to a stage of ‘awareness’ (see section 3.4.5). Unlike the Background Questionnaire, this questionnaire was specifically focused on language teaching and learning, paying special attention to the present situation of FLT in Spain. It included several open questions which questioned the participants about: a) their major reason(s) for becoming a teacher of English; b) what type of teacher they wanted to be; c) what aspects of FLT in Spain they supported and rejected; d) what knowledge

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<sup>37</sup> This questionnaire is an adaptation of the Portuguese version designed by Prof. Flávia Vieira (University of Minho, Portugal) since a collaborative network has been built up with Prof. Vieira since 2012, including teaching coordination and exchange of experiences.

and competences need to be acquired by FL learners; e) their personal feelings about becoming a FL teacher; f) the main obstacles, dilemmas, or obstacles they perceived in FLT; and e) what professional knowledge and qualities FL teachers need to have. By means of this second questionnaire, I could get access to the student teachers' initial beliefs about basic questions concerning the teaching and learning of a FL, for example, teacher and learner knowledge in FL education, the student teachers' concerns about becoming a FL teacher, their perceived obstacles in FLT, and their self-image as a FL teacher. At the end of the module, the participants had to revise their answers to this questionnaire (see section 5.5.6).

### **5.5.3 Ideal English lesson plans**

For the second class of the module, the student teachers had to plan and write their own ideal English lesson plan as a compulsory assignment. They were entirely free to choose the topic of the lesson, the teaching methodology, and the learning objectives. Some examples of the student teachers' ideal English lesson plans were discussed in the classroom.

For the next class, the students had to read the chapter "Visions of the classroom" by Tudor (2001: 104-129) and write a commentary on the lesson they had planned regarding what vision(s) of the classroom it reflected. In his chapter, Tudor identifies four visions of the language classroom: 1) the classroom as a controlled learning environment; 2) the communicative classroom; 3) the classroom as a school of autonomy; and 4) the classroom as socialisation. The participants' commentaries on their lesson plans were discussed in the classroom and the vision of the classroom as a school of autonomy was explained. Finally, for the fifth lesson of the module, the student teachers were asked to think about what changes (if any) they would like to introduce into their ideal English lesson plans in order to make them more learner-centred and they wrote down these changes in a new version of their ideal lesson. To help them in this task, the students could use the chapter by Tudor they had just read (focusing on the section which deals with the classroom as a school of autonomy) and the set of questions formulated by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007: 54) for the dimension of professional competence towards TA/LA 'centring teaching on learning'. This activity allowed the student teachers to go through the aforementioned stages of 'confrontation' and 'transformation' in the process of belief change (see section 3.4.5). They confronted



the possible inadequacy of their beliefs about FLT for the development of LA in the classroom and adapted them to the implementation of PA. Concerning the present research, the ideal English lesson plans served as a vehicle to dig into the student teachers' beliefs about FLT at the beginning of the module and their most common vision of the language classroom. They were intended to analyse how the participants conceived of teacher and learner roles and what initial conception of the teaching-learning process in FL education they had. Moreover, the lesson plans provided the opportunity to explore whether the student teachers began to develop any dimension of professional competence towards autonomy (especially concerning the aforementioned dimension of 'centring teaching on learning').

#### **5.5.4 Learning portfolios**

Different types of portfolios have been identified in the teacher education literature (e.g. assessment portfolios, employment portfolios, product portfolios, etc.). In this case, a learning portfolio<sup>38</sup> was integrated into the module. As noted by Zeichner and Wray (2001: 615), learning portfolios are often used throughout the duration of a pre-service teacher education programme "to engage student teachers in inquiry about their teaching and to document growth in teaching over time". Wolf and Dietz (1998) maintain that the learning portfolio provides teachers with the opportunity to explore, extend, showcase, and reflect upon their own learning. A number of studies have suggested important reasons for supporting the use of this type of portfolios in initial teacher education (e.g. Farr Darling, 2001; Lyons, 1998; Mansvelder-Longayroux, Beijaard, and Verloop, 2007; Wray, 2007). They have concluded that maintaining a portfolio of their professional learning provides an avenue for student teachers to reflect on and document their professional development; to gain insight into their thinking; to challenge the assumptions and beliefs which guide their conceptions of teaching; to reveal who they are as emerging teachers; and to (re)construct their personal educational philosophy. The portfolio process requires student teachers to think more deeply about their knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding teaching. In short, the learning portfolio has as its ultimate aim the advancement of teacher learning and growth.

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<sup>38</sup> The learning portfolio is also called "professional development" or "process" portfolio (Wolf and Dietz, 1998).

During the module, the student teachers had to write their own learning portfolio. They were made aware of the fact that this portfolio was not meant to be a summary of what they did in the classroom, but an instrument to reflect on their learning process in thoughtful ways and to connect ideas, experiences, and new understandings about language teaching and learning. In brief, it was expected to be a *critical* learning portfolio. Although every portfolio is unique, the students were suggested a set of categories which they could use as guidance on how to create their learning portfolio:

1. An introduction.
2. A learning plan. In this section the students state their initial learning goals for the module, identify the means to reach them, and determine the measures to assess whether they have reached them at the end of the module. Since these goals may not remain static throughout the module, the students can keep track of any change and report them in the final draft of their learning plan in order to show their progress.
3. Sample work. The students keep a record of the different activities (e.g. questionnaires, ideal English lesson plan, cases for discussion) which are performed during the module. They have to be incorporated as an integral component of the learning portfolio.
4. Journal entries. The students include a daily/weekly record of their experience in the module. The emphasis in this section is on how they connect this experience with the learning plan which they formulated at the beginning of the module.
5. Critical reflections. This section includes the students' thoughtful reflections upon their learning experiences in the module. Throughout the lessons, for instance, Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya suggests ideas, concepts and questions the students can discuss in their learning portfolio.
6. Coursework connections. The students can relate what they are learning in the module to other modules of the pre-service teacher education programme.
7. A conclusion. The students bring the learning portfolio together and reflect on how the module experience will influence their future teaching.

The learning portfolio was an effective tool for promoting reflective writing as understood by Imhof and Picard (2009: 149): “reflective writing is considered as a critical step which creates the content space in which the construction and transformation of knowledge is assumed to take place”. The use of the portfolio in the module was designed to assist the student teachers to self-regulate their own development, to articulate their developing vision of teaching, and to reflect on their

personal beliefs about FLT (with a particular emphasis on PA). Moreover, the portfolio served as one of the final evaluation instruments and was handed in after finishing the module.

### 5.5.5 Cases

The case method has a long tradition in the teaching of law, medicine, and psychology, and it is beginning to enjoy increasing popularity in teacher education because of its great potential for teacher development. A case has been defined as “the re-collected, re-told, re-experienced and re-flected version of a direct experience [about teaching]” (Shulman, 1996: 208). Cases constitute first or third-person accounts of specific episodes of teaching practice which can fulfil different purposes. For some teacher educators, the most effective use of cases is to establish practical demonstrations of theoretical principles (Merseth, 1996). Others use them to educate teachers in skills of critical analysis, problem-solving, and decision-making (Harrington, 1999). They can also be used to describe classroom dilemmas, problems, or obstacles which are intended to raise questions about critical issues in teaching (Jiménez Raya and Vieira, 2015). In short, cases explore the uncertainty and complexity of teaching, linking the abstract nature of theoretical principles and teaching standards to classroom practice. They foster pedagogical inquiry and experiential learning.

The adoption of the case method is being increasingly advocated in TEA over the last years (see Jiménez Raya, 2009, 2011b, 2017a; Jiménez Raya and Vieira, 2015; Manzano Vázquez, 2014; and Vieira, 2009a, 2010). As noted in section 4.8.1, two main actions can be distinguished in the use of cases in TEA: *case analysis* (or *case discussion*) and *case construction* (or *case writing*). In this case, the module integrated both types of actions, so the student teachers not only appreciated what other FL teachers do to promote PA, but also experienced it themselves. Case analysis was conducted in the classroom and guided by Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya. The student teachers were provided with different cases over the course of the module, analysing and discussing in more detail two cases in which LA was promoted: Elise’s and Antonieta’s case<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Although both cases report the approach to the development of LA in FLT adopted by Elise and Antonieta, they have been written by Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya (University of Granada) and Prof. Flávia Vieira (University of Minho, Portugal) respectively.

Case Writer		Theme	
Prof. Manuel Jiménez Raya		Encouraging motivation to learn: An approach focussed on self-regulation	
Teacher	Country	School level/Age group	Target language
Elise Fayard	Spain	Secondary education (age 12-16)	French
Episode 1	Episode 2	Episode 3	
<i>Understanding the background</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Setting the scene: Reflecting on professional identity and context</li> <li>▪ Learner autonomy, motivation and self-regulation of learning</li> </ul>	<i>Looking at practice</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Towards autonomy through self-regulation in the learning of French as a FL</li> </ul>	<i>Exploring possibilities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How can I encourage greater levels of self-regulation in my lessons?</li> <li>▪ What have I learned?</li> </ul>	
Pedagogical principles			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Responsibility, choice and flexible control</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> <li>• Integration and explicitness</li> </ul>	

Table 5.2. Case structure about Elise's approach (Jiménez Raya, 2011c)<sup>40</sup>

The case reporting on the approach by Elise, a secondary school teacher in Spain, explores the development of LA in the teaching of French as a FL: “Encouraging motivation to learn: An approach focused on self-regulation” (see Table 5.2). The case is divided into three episodes: 1) Understanding the background, 2) Looking at practice, and 3) Exploring possibilities. The first episode develops the topic of the case and describes the context where the teacher works. The second episode focuses on the conceptual development of the topic, explaining in detail the practices which were developed by the teacher to implement the principles of PA (i.e. learning to learn, intrinsic motivation, reflective inquiry, etc.). The last episode provides the case reader with suggestions for pedagogical inquiry into the topic and the teacher's overall self-evaluation of her professional development. The episodes further include case materials from Elise's experience (e.g. teacher/learner reflections, teaching/learning tasks...), explanatory text related to research on PA, and reflection-oriented tasks for teachers (or case readers) to reflect on their own experience and look into themselves as language teachers<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Reproduced with permission.<sup>41</sup> See Jiménez Raya (2011b) for a more detailed description of the case.

The case reporting on the approach by Antonieta, a secondary school teacher in Portugal, is similar in structure to the previous case. Here Antonieta explores the use of portfolios as learning tools in the teaching of English as a FL in order to work on principles of PA such as learning to learn, self-regulation, learner differentiation, and reflective inquiry<sup>42</sup>. Being provided with cases describing authentic classroom practices for PA, the student teachers had the opportunity to examine and discuss concrete models of alternative teaching practice which were not based on the traditional way of teaching, thus showing them that another kind of teaching is possible: one in which teachers delegate responsibility and decisions to learners. Furthermore, they could go through personal dissatisfaction with their more traditional beliefs about teaching, leading them to a stage of ‘confrontation’ (see section 3.4.5) where they could question and confront those beliefs which were completely inimical to the development of LA in the classroom.

Concerning case construction, one of the assignments encouraged the student teachers to promote autonomy during their *practicum* and report their experience through the composition of their own case. They had to plan, implement, evaluate, and narrate a small-scale pedagogical project on the enactment of PA in the FL classroom. The student teachers could choose the topic they wanted to work on (e.g. “Learning through learning stations”) and what pedagogical principles by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) they would focus on in order to foster autonomous learning. This assignment could be done individually or in pairs and served as one of the final evaluation instruments. It must be noted, however, that one of the problems with this activity was that the extent to which the student teachers could work on autonomy (for example, in terms of number of classes and kind of learning activities) was in some cases subject to their school supervisors’ approval<sup>43</sup> and how much freedom and time they gave to the student teachers.

For the present research, only the cases written by the student teachers were analysed and reported. These cases provided an excellent tool to inquire into the participants’ new professional skills and how they began to apply the ‘conceptual and practical tools’ (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2005) which are specific to the practice of PA to the FL classroom. More specifically, they were intended to explore

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<sup>42</sup> See Vieira (2011) for more details.

<sup>43</sup> The student teachers are evaluated by their school supervisor, who provides 60% of their final grade for the *practicum*. The 40% of the grade is assigned by their master’s thesis supervisor.

how the student teachers enacted the four dimensions of professional competence towards TA and LA which have been identified by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007): 1) developing a critical view of (language) education, 2) managing local constraints so as to open up spaces for manoeuvre, 3) centring teaching on learning, and 4) interacting with others in the professional community.

### **5.5.6 Revision of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”**

At the end of the module (i.e. the first week of March), the student teachers had to complete two questionnaires at home. One of them was a revision of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”, described in section 5.5.2. On this occasion, the students were asked to look at their answers to the questionnaire they had filled in at the beginning of the module and to consider whether there was anything they wanted to change in, or add to, those answers (see Appendix 3). They wrote these changes and extra comments in this new questionnaire. The aim of revising the previous questionnaire was to make the student teachers reflect on and become aware of any possible change in their initial beliefs about the teaching and learning of a FL and articulate these changes in the new questionnaire. Thus, their answers to both questionnaires could be compared at the end of the module.

### **5.5.7 Final Questionnaire**

The second questionnaire which was administered to the student teachers at the end of the module was called “Final Questionnaire” (see Appendix 4). It combined different question/answer types (Gillham, 2000): selected responses (i.e. selecting yes/no), scaled responses (i.e. five-point, Likert-type rating scales, for example, from 1 ‘not really convinced’ to 5 ‘very convinced’ or from 1 ‘not really sure’ to 5 ‘quite sure’), and open questions. With this last questionnaire, issues which were largely focused on the notion of LA and PA in FLT could be further explored at the end of the module. In this sense, the participants were asked about their familiarity with the notion of LA before beginning the module; the benefits they saw in implementing PA in language teaching; their degree of conviction about the need to foster LA as an educational goal; their general perception of their willingness, ability and opportunity to implement PA in their future teaching; and the type of obstacles or challenges which may impede its

enactment. The questionnaire further included a question about the student teachers' self-perception of change in their initial beliefs about FL teaching and learning.

### 5.5.8 Interview

After completing the different modules in the teacher education programme and the *practicum*, an email was sent to the student teachers inviting them to be interviewed for the research. In this email they were carefully explained the aim of the interview. Since they were very busy at this stage of the programme (writing both their *practicum* portfolio and their master's thesis), only eight student teachers agreed to have the interview (33.3% of the sample). The interviews were carried out in May and June. Each participant was interviewed individually and face to face in my office at the University of Granada. For this purpose, an open-ended interview (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007) was conducted in which the exact wording and sequence of questions were determined in advance, so that all the interviewees were asked the same basic questions in the same order and the reliability of the interview could be guaranteed. When necessary, probes were included in the interview to ask respondents to extend, add to, provide detail for, or clarify their response. If any question was not understood or replied as it was intended, it was reworded and asked again.

The interview (see Appendix 5) consisted of different questions which would be answered from the perspective and experience provided by the module and the *practicum*. These questions dealt with the student teachers' ideal vision of the teaching of English as a FL; their perceived challenges in FLT (both inside and outside the classroom); their personal experience in promoting LA during their *practicum*; and their general perception of their willingness, ability and opportunity to implement PA in their future teaching practice. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, thus ensuring that the participants could answer the questions fluently. The interviewees were assured that the information provided in the interview was only to be used in the research and for that reason they were urged to answer the questions with total sincerity. Furthermore, these interviews were (with permission) audio-recorded and transcribed *verbatim* prior to analysis. The interviews lasted on average 30 minutes. The aim of these interviews was to afford the opportunity to get more in-depth data about some participants after the *practicum*.

## 5.6 Data analysis

The nature of the present research was eminently qualitative. The only quantitative data of the research were collected in the Final Questionnaire by means of five-point, Likert-type rating scales (see Appendix 4). While these data were entered into Excel and converted into bar charts, the qualitative data were analysed and coded manually as described below.

Each data set (i.e. questionnaires, learning portfolios, interviews, etc.) was read and analysed twice. In the first reading, an understanding of the main ideas expressed was gained and codes began to be ascribed to the data. The second reading aimed to check whether these codes needed to be reworded or combined and to add new codes if necessary. The coding process of the data in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...” was based on *a priori* and emergent codes (Bazeley, 2013). On the one hand, different codes were previously set to analyse the answers to some specific questions. These codes derived from previous literature. For example, for question 1 ‘Why do I want to become a teacher of English?’, the pre-set codes were adapted from Sinclair (2008), who has identified the ten most common motivations for becoming a teacher among prospective teachers (e.g. ‘teaching as a calling or vocation’, ‘love for teaching’, or ‘a desire to work with young students’). Another example was question 7 ‘What dilemmas, problems, obstacles affect the teaching of English in schools?’. In this case, the codes were taken from the literature about constraints on PA<sup>44</sup> reviewed in section 4.7.4 (e.g. Jiménez Raya *et al.* [2007] and Manzano Vázquez [2016]). It must be noted that in these questions codes were created for those ideas or concepts which emerged from the data and did not fit the pre-set codes. The coding process in other questions (e.g. question 3 ‘What aspects of ELT in Spain do I support? Why?’ or question 6 ‘How do I feel now about the possibility of becoming a teacher of English?’) was exclusively inductive (i.e. focusing on the emergent codes). These *a priori* and emergent codes were used to analyse the participants’ revision of this questionnaire at the end of the module. At the same time, new codes were created for those concepts or ideas which did not fit any of the pre-set codes and had not emerged in the first questionnaire on “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”.

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<sup>44</sup> Although these constraints make reference to conditions which can hinder the development of PA, they can be used to analyse potential obstacles in FLT (e.g. ‘teachers’ professional values’, ‘learners’ commitment to education and learning’, etc.).



The analysis of the data obtained in the Final Questionnaire and the interviews also combined a deductive and inductive approach. The codes derived from those set prior to data analysis (e.g. the constraints on PA identified in section 4.7.4 or the visions of the classroom discussed by Tudor [2001]) and those created from the data. Some of the emergent codes established in the analysis of the Final Questionnaire were used to analyse the transcriptions of the interviews as both research instruments shared some similar questions (see Appendices 4 and 5). Due to their wide scope, the learning portfolios were analysed inductively. Once the codes were defined, they were grouped under different categories which revealed the most common themes in the participants' portfolios. In the questionnaires and the interviews, the categories were derived from the questions. For instance, the codes created in the question 'Why do I want to become a teacher of English?' were grouped into the category 'the participants' reasons for becoming a teacher of English'.

The ideal English lesson plans were analysed according to three of the visions of the classroom identified by Tudor (2001): 'the classroom as a controlled learning environment', 'the classroom as a school of autonomy', and 'the communicative classroom'<sup>45</sup>. To do this, three grids were designed (see Appendix 6) in which the main characteristics of each vision were summarised around three categories: 1) image of the teacher role, 2) image of the learner role, and 3) image of the teaching-learning process. The analysis focused on examining which of these characteristics were present in the lesson plans. Later, the principles of PA by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) were used to analyse the English lesson plans the participants made more learner-centred. On the other hand, the analysis of the cases was guided by six parameters: 1) educational context (i.e. secondary school or language school), 2) grade/language proficiency, 3) learning activities developed, 4) principles of PA (*ibid.*) implemented, 5) obstacles encountered, and 6) outcomes of the case.

Once all the data were analysed, they were cross-checked to evaluate whether there was a change in the participants' beliefs about FL teaching and learning and what dimensions of professional competence towards TA/LA (*ibid.*) they developed throughout the research. The analysis of these professional competences was guided by the grids included in Appendix 7.

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<sup>45</sup> The vision of 'the classroom as socialisation' was excluded since, as Tudor (p. 129) points out, it is not primarily concerned with language learning.

## 5.7 Quality and limitations of the study

Qualitative research has the advantage of giving “an in-depth description and understanding of the human experience” (Lichtman, 2006: 8). One of the strengths of this study is the fact that it provides a detailed account of the situation being studied from the participants’ own perspective. In other words, the research enables the student teachers’ voice to be heard so the reader can understand their developing cognition more clearly than simply by having it obscured in numerical analysis, tables, or statistics.

The longitudinal nature of the present study has allowed me to collect data at different stages of the module (i.e. at the beginning, in the course, and at the end of it). In this way, I could analyse how the student teachers’ beliefs evolved during the study. Moreover, unlike some previous initiatives on TEA (see section 4.8.1), the participants not only engaged in discussions of LA from a theoretical point of view but they also had the opportunity to get involved in the development of PA in the FL classroom, thereby gaining valuable insights into their attitudes and concerns about its practical implementation in education. Finally, I would like to point out that the use of various instruments has provided the research with different sources for data collection and the opportunity to triangulate these data.

I am also aware that there are different limitations which could have affected the present study. One of these limitations is related to the duration of the module in which the data were collected. Referring to what teacher education programmes can do to counteract the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ and how teachers view teaching, Kennedy (1990: 4) noted that:

By the time we receive our bachelor’s degree, we have observed teachers and participated in their work for up to 3060 days. In contrast, teacher preparation programs usually require (about) 75 days of classroom experience. What could possibly happen during these 75 days to significantly alter the practices learned during the preceding 3060 days?

As mentioned earlier, the module under study lasts ten weeks, which may not have been enough time to successfully engage the student teachers in learning the major pedagogical principles supporting the development of PA and how to promote them in the classroom or to completely change their deeply ingrained beliefs and views about what FL teaching and learning entail.

In qualitative research, there are different threats to internal validity and one of them falls under the heading of *reactivity effect*. Reactivity refers to situations where individuals behave or perform differently when they know that they are being studied or that their behaviour is subjected to scrutiny (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 144). This effect could have affected the student teachers who participated in the study. Both the learning portfolio (in which the student teachers included the different activities which were performed during the module, e.g. the questionnaires or their ideal English lesson plan and its subsequent revision) and the case which was written during the *practicum* experience were part of the final evaluation instruments, accounting for 70% of the final grade in the module. Knowing that these assignments were going to be read and assessed by their professor, the student teachers could have provided answers and reflections with ideas, beliefs and views which revealed what they thought their professor wanted to hear and would be pleased with, and not what they really thought and believed about FLT and the development of PA.

Another limitation of the study is concerned with the student teachers' tiredness and stress. As the module and the pre-service teacher education programme moved along, the student teachers had more assignments to complete, more exams to take, and more presentations to make. They also had to begin their *practicum* and the writing of their master's thesis. All this heavy workload could have affected the quality and depth of the student teachers' reflections and replies included in their assignments, constraining them from throwing themselves wholeheartedly into the completion of their work. In addition, as pointed out in section 2.4.2.5, we need to take into account that some student teachers often lack experience in engaging in critical reflection upon their thinking and systematic analysis of their own teaching, which may have posed a considerable challenge for them when completing their assignments.

Concerning external validity or the generalisability of the results, I am aware that the findings of this investigation cannot be extrapolated to a larger group of prospective FL teachers or to a wider teacher education context than the one directly studied. However, it is one of the aims of the study to draw pedagogical implications which can contribute to the development and implementation of pre-service teacher education initiatives for the promotion of LA and TA in FL education.



## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the present chapter is twofold. On the one hand, it presents the analysis of the results obtained in each research instrument: the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...” (section 6.2), the ideal English lesson plans (section 6.3), the learning portfolios (section 6.4), the revision of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...” (section 6.5), the Final Questionnaire (section 6.6), the cases (section 6.7), and the interview (section 6.8). These results are presented chronologically, that is, following the sequence in which those data were collected. On the other hand, the chapter concludes by discussing the findings in relation to the four research questions of the study (section 6.9).

#### 6.2 Analysis of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

This section focuses on the analysis of the data obtained in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”. It is divided into seven subsections which correspond to the eight questions included in the questionnaire (questions 3 and 4 have been united under the same heading). These subsections are: 1) the participants’ reasons for becoming a teacher of English<sup>46</sup>; 2) the participants’ personal concerns and feelings about becoming a teacher of English; 3) the participants’ self-image as a FL teacher; 4) the participants’ beliefs about the FL learner’s knowledge, skills, and competences; 5) the participants’ beliefs about the FL teacher’s professional knowledge,

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<sup>46</sup> From now on, the terms ‘teacher of English’ and ‘FL teacher’ are used interchangeably.

roles, and qualities; 6) aspects of FLT in Spain the participants supported and rejected or criticised; and 7) the participants' perceived obstacles, problems, or dilemmas in FLT in Spain.

### 6.2.1 The participants' reasons for becoming a teacher of English

Table 6.1 shows the various reasons for becoming a teacher of English which the participants originally referred to in the questionnaire. The data reveal that, at the beginning of the module, the major reason for becoming a FL teacher among the participants was their love for languages. Eleven student teachers explained that they had a great passion for languages and, more specifically, for English. Some of them further held that one of their central aims as FL teachers would be to pass this love for languages and the English language onto their own learners:

I've always loved English and would like to [transmit] it to my students<sup>47</sup> (Fenella)

Because I'm passionate about languages and I want to share it with the students (Lola)

I want to become a teacher of English because I am a lover of languages and words. I love learning new languages, knowing new cultures, and I want my students to love it as well (Mar)

The second most common reason why they opted to become teachers of English was related to the great significance that this language is taking on in our present-day society. Seven participants pointed out that nowadays learning English is "essential", "fundamental", and "really important". They regarded it as the main language for communication around the world and a basic tool for life:

I want to become a teacher of English because English nowadays is the main language of communication on the Internet and providing learners with this tool will allow them to get access to a great amount of information that they could not access without knowing English. (Daniel)

Because English is considered the *lingua franca* and everybody should know how to speak it. (Fenella)

Because I consider that English is a [prominent] language and it is necessary in order to work or travel abroad. (Julia)

The following reasons concurred with some of the motivations identified by Sinclair (2008). In addition to their love for languages, six participants made reference to their 'love for teaching' as one of their main reasons for becoming a FL teacher. The

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<sup>47</sup> The mistakes found in the participants' quotations were corrected, respecting the original sense of the quotation. Any modification or clarification is indicated in square brackets.

same number of participants considered ‘teaching as a calling or vocation’. Some of them claimed that they had always had a strong sense of vocation for teaching, being a career to which they wanted to devote their professional life. Other participants conceived of teaching as a social responsibility in which they could help other people and share their knowledge with them:

I have always loved to teach other people what I know, to help them to understand what they don’t understand, and to make them love what I love and they don’t, in this case English. (Blanca)

I would like to become a teacher because it has always been my vocation. I love teaching and helping others to learn new things, especially languages. (Kristel)

I like the language and I would like to share my knowledge with other people. (María)

In this sense, teaching was regarded by Anita as a way of returning the knowledge she had acquired to society and, more specifically, to learners: “because I like the language and I would like to teach everything that I have learnt [...] I would like to show my students every positive thing that I have learnt during my life”.

	Desire to make a difference in learners’ life	Desire to work with young students	Influence of significant others	Love for languages/ English	Love for teaching	Significance of English in our society	Significance of teaching in our society	Teaching as a calling or vocation	Teaching as a way of making a living
Alicia		X				X		X	
Anita				X				X	
Blanca								X	
Carla				X			X		
Clotilde				X				X	
Daniel						X			
Delfin			X						
Fátima					X				
Fenella				X		X			
Guillermo									X
Julia						X			
Kristel					X			X	
Leticia	X				X				
Lola				X					
Lorena				X		X			
Mar				X					
Marcos	X					X			
María				X		X		X	
Nancy					X				
Pilar					X				
Sabina				X					
Silvia	X				X				
Tammy	X	X		X					
Tania				X					

Table 6.1. The participants’ reasons for becoming a teacher of English in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

Closely related to the conception of teaching as a social responsibility, four participants argued that another factor which contributed to their desire to become a FL

teacher was the possibility of making a difference in learners' life. These student teachers acknowledged the important role of the teacher and his/her significant influence on learners' future well-being:

I want to become a teacher because I want to take part in students' life [...] I want to make my students feel good about themselves and help them fulfil their dreams. (Leticia)

An English teacher must prepare his/her students for real life and that is what I would like to achieve. (Marcos)

I think that teaching provides things that you cannot find in another profession. A teacher is a model and has influence on the student's life, so you can transmit many values which they can find useful in the future. (Tammy)

Silvia also made reference to the personal satisfaction she feels in teaching and remarked that in her teaching practice she would aim to contribute to her learners' both "personal and academic development", thus acting as a 'transformative intellectual' (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

Finally, there were reasons which were referred to just by one or two participants. One of these reasons was the 'influence of significant others' (e.g. past teachers). Only Delfin acknowledged the influence exerted by her language teachers on her decision to become a FL teacher. She considered that she had had a great experience as a learner and had learned a lot from them, so she was determined to follow their model when she could work as a teacher of English:

I think I am inspired by some of my teachers when I was young. My teachers taught me so much and made the job look so easy! I decided when I was a teenager that I wanted to be just like my teachers of English: a dedicated professional who loves children and loves helping them to learn English.

### **6.2.2 The participants' personal concerns and feelings about becoming a teacher of English**

When asked how they felt about the possibility of becoming a teacher of English, the participants expressed different types of feelings and concerns (see Table 6.2). Some student teachers felt a little bit scared. Anita and Delfin, for instance, were concerned and scared by the same reason: classroom management. They were afraid of having to cope with disruptive learners in the classroom and not being able to solve the problems or dilemmas they may pose. Silvia was feeling afraid as well, but in her case there were more reasons for the origin of this feeling. She was a bit insecure about her professional competence as a FL teacher. Her personal concerns were related with "not being



professional, not reaching [her] goals, not knowing how to react to certain situations, how to deal with or face them (also students)". Blanca highlighted the personal satisfaction teaching provides, but she was "nervous" and "not very self-confident" at this initial stage of her training because she conceived of teaching as a great responsibility and was afraid of not meeting her expectations as a teacher. Similarly, Pilar felt both respect and fear for teaching due to the "big responsibility" it entails. She was the only participant who had doubts about becoming a teacher: "I'm not sure whether I'm finally going to be a teacher. I know I like it, but it's not vocational". The concern about the teacher's responsibility was also voiced by Julia and Lorena. For both participants, teaching involves a great responsibility and pressure because of the significant influence the teacher can exert on the development of his/her learners' education and life:

Under a big responsibility and pressure now that I know that I will contribute to the education of many students. (Julia)

I think the role of the teacher is very important. I feel under a big responsibility, but I feel excited as well. A teacher has to take into account that he/[she] has a lot of influence on students' life. (Lorena)

Teaching was also regarded as a very complex job. Tania described it as a "hard job" because of the high level of specialisation it demands from the teacher, requiring him/her to have a set of social, cognitive, and teaching skills. Guillermo, Carla and Marcos used the word 'challenge' to refer to the teaching profession. Guillermo, for example, contended that the main challenge which the FL teacher faces in his/her classroom is posed by many learners' attitude and narrow conception of FLL, which leads them not to perceive the usefulness of learning English:

I feel it would be a challenge but if students see the real use English could have, they might change their attitude. As I suggested, using real life situations in the classroom might make them realise that it is not just a question of learning irregular verbs.

Marcos acknowledged the difficulty of teaching English, but considered it an interesting job in which the professional commitment made is often compensated: "It is quite an interesting job and your effort is usually paid off, but we have to take into account that teaching English is quite a difficult task". María had a similar opinion. She was aware that teaching (especially in Spain) is really difficult, but at the same time it is a very interesting profession:

I think that it is a very difficult matter nowadays in Spain, but at the same time I think that it is one of the most interesting jobs because you work with and for persons, and not with machines that do not give anything to you as human beings.

For Lola, however, the difficulty mainly lied in the atmosphere of demotivation that there is today among teachers and learners as regards the Spanish educational system: “I find it a very difficult task, especially because there is a feeling of discouragement among students and teachers towards the educational system”. In her opinion, this situation is largely responsible for learners’ lack of motivation and their growing disaffection towards education.

	Fear	Pessimistic attitude	Positive attitude	(FL) Teaching as a complex job	Teaching as a responsibility
Alicia		X			
Anita	X		X		
Blanca	X				X
Carla				X	
Clotilde		X			
Daniel		X			
Delfin	X				
Fátima		X			
Fenella					X
Guillermo				X	
Julia					X
Kristel			X	X	
Leticia			X		
Lola			X	X	
Lorena			X		X
Mar			X		
Marcos				X	
Maria			X	X	
Nancy			X		
Pilar	X				X
Sabina	X		X		
Silvia	X				
Tammy			X		
Tania			X	X	

Table 6.2. The participants’ personal concerns and feelings about becoming a teacher of English in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

Some student teachers were in a mood of pessimism about their future teaching career. This pessimistic attitude was caused by three different reasons: 1) the existence of *oposiciones*, 2) their doubts about the possibility of finding a job due to the economic and political situation of the country, and 3) the difficulties faced when working in the Spanish educational system.

I know that I can become an English teacher but perhaps not where I want to, under the conditions that I would like. I can always teach English in an academy. *Oposiciones* depress me. I don’t understand them and I never will. (Alicia)

It is really hard to find a good job due to the economic crisis so the only thing you can do now is to be one of the best and you will be able to teach English some day. (Clotilde)

Nowadays, it seems harder and harder, not only regarding the opportunities for teaching, but because of the working conditions and the structure of the educational system. (Daniel)

Nowadays, it is quite difficult due to political aspects. (Fátima)

Other participants, in contrast, showed a more positive attitude towards the idea of becoming a teacher. Some of them were looking forward to it because being a teacher had always been their vocation and their dream:

I feel thrilled with the idea of becoming a teacher because it is an experience which I have wanted to live since I was a child. (Anita)

I can't wait to work as a teacher because it is what I have always wanted to do and also because after spending most of my life studying, I want to have a full-time job and begin a new stage in my life. (Kristel)

I always dreamt of being a teacher. Now I feel the same. (Tammy)

There were also participants who could not conceal their happiness and enthusiasm:

I am feeling so happy considering the possibility that I could transmit knowledge of what I know or what I have learned to others. (Leticia)

On the other hand, I feel excited about it and hope that I will be able to make my students (at least some of them) feel as passionate about the English language as I am. (Lola)

I feel quite happy because it is what I want to do and I know I will do my best to become a very good teacher who will fight for the success of her learners. (Nancy)

### **6.2.3 The participants' self-image as a foreign language teacher**

The participants' responses to the question "what kind of teacher do I want to be?" were classified into two main sub-categories: 1) the student teachers' beliefs about their role as a FL teacher and 2) the professional and personal qualities they wanted to have as FL teachers (see Table 6.3). Different student teachers wanted to become a 'facilitator' (Farrell, 2006; Saban *et al.*, 2007; Voller, 1997), for example, by helping them resolve their doubts and problems, being sensitive to their learning needs, or innovating classroom practices:

I want to help my students in every aspect of their lives [...] And I would like them to feel comfortable about asking for my help whenever they have any doubt or any other problem. (Kristel)

[A] teacher who helps her students when they need it; a teacher who meets her students' needs. (Leticia)

I would like to be the teacher who helps students to develop their skills in the language using alternative techniques or methods different from the typical book. (Tania)

	Role as a FL teacher					Professional and personal qualities as a FL teacher						
	Agent of educational change	Democratic leader	Educator	Facilitator	Motivator	Close to learners	Funny	Innovative and creative	Motivated and professional	Sensitive to learners' needs	Serious	Understanding
Alicia					X	X	X					
Anita			X	X		X						
Blanca						X						
Carla							X		X		X	
Clotilde						X		X				
Daniel												
Delfin												
Fátima	X											
Fenella					X							
Guillermo				X				X				
Julia								X				
Kristel				X	X				X			
Leñicia				X	X		X			X		
Lola						X			X			X
Lorena					X	X						
Mar									X			
Marcos	X	X		X								
María				X								
Nancy							X				X	
Pilar			X									
Sabina				X								
Silvia	X				X			X	X			X
Tammy					X							
Tania				X				X				

Table 6.3. The participants' self-image as a FL teacher in the Questionnaire "Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain..."

Anita pointed out that her objective would be to be a good teacher, that is, someone who “provides materials to improve students’ autonomy in order to get a good learning”. Autonomy and independent learning were also the objectives pursued by both Sabina, who wanted “to be a guide for [her] students to learn by themselves”, and Marcos who considered that the teacher must help learners carry out their independent language learning and provide them with the strategies to facilitate this learning. Moreover, he saw himself as a ‘democratic leader’ (Saban *et al.*, 2007). He explained that the teacher is the group leader in the classroom, but he/she should allow learners to have a voice in the learning process: “I would like to be a democratic teacher. In my opinion, the teacher must be a group leader, but it is important that students feel that their decisions and preferences are taken into account”. María and Guillermo specifically referred to their role as facilitators of opportunities for communication. They wanted to design dynamic and interactive lessons based on real-life situations in which learners could interact and use the TL.

Seven student teachers aspired to become ‘motivators’ (Farrell, 2006) in their classrooms. Their aim would be to motivate learners by fostering a positive attitude towards the learning process and providing them with meaningful learning.

Furthermore, they wanted to promote in learners a desire to learn the TL and make them perceive how FLL can be of value to them in, and beyond, the classroom<sup>48</sup>:

I want them to love English and I want them to understand how many opportunities knowing English will give them [...] I want them to want to learn English because I have motivated them. (Alicia)

I would like to teach my students the joy of learning and to show them how important it is to learn different languages for their future. (Kristel)

I want students to be interested in my subject. I want the subject to be useful. (Lorena)

These roles (as facilitator and motivator), however, will be hardly reflected in the participants' ideal English lesson plans (see section 6.3.1).

Three student teachers made reference to their desire to become 'agents of educational change' (Saban *et al.*, 2007). Marcos, for instance, stated his intention to become a reflective teacher who would aim "to change reality". Fátima wanted to remove the traditional approach to teaching which in her opinion is failing: "above all, I want to break with methods which have failed so far, that is, the traditional teaching in which the teacher is seen as an authority". To bring about educational change, Silvia considered that it is important to avoid 'fossilisation' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) and be active in taking the course of action necessary to change the pedagogical *status quo*:

I want to be a teacher that does not "accommodate" to her job, but tries to do something to change how things are done currently in the educational system. I want to contribute to making my students critical and reflective. (Silvia)

Two student teachers claimed that they wanted to be educators, transmitting social and moral values to learners:

A teacher who instructs students, [who] does not teach them only aspects related to the language [...] I would like to show students how they must behave in terms of social and moral values. (Anita)

I want to be a teacher who is not only able to teach but also to *educate*. (Pilar, emphasis added)

Concerning their personal and professional qualities for teaching, some student teachers wanted to 'build up a good relationship with learners' (Calderhead and Robson, 1991; Johnston, 1992), being "friendly", "kind", and "appreciated" by them. Alicia and Blanca argued that this relationship would be based on respect and trust, although being close to learners would not entail becoming their friend:

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<sup>48</sup> This idea would also make the student teachers be seen as 'mediators' (Williams and Burden, 1997).

I also want them to see me as someone they can talk to. I want to gain their respect by, of course, respecting them. (Alicia)

I don't want to say that I would like to be a friend of my students, because I think some kind of distance is always necessary, each part must know what their role is. However, I would like to be a very close person, somebody who they respect, but also someone to trust and with whom they feel comfortable. (Blanca)

Silvia and Lola wanted to be understanding and empathise with their learners. In contrast, participants like Tammy did not want to establish any close relationship with learners, but to remain neutral: "I don't want to be a friend, but I don't want to be an enemy. I would like to be exactly where I have to be".

Being funny was also important for student teachers like Leticia: "I would like to be a teacher with sense of humour, explaining the contents in a funny way to motivate my students". Other participants, however, wanted to be funny but adopting a serious, responsible attitude to their work:

I would like to be funny to learners but also serious. I mean I would like learners to learn in a funny way, but taking the lessons seriously [...] Definitely, I do not want to be the typical "serious", boring teacher who does not realise that she/he is in front of children. (Nancy)

Another essential quality for some student teachers in the sample was their motivation and professionalism as prospective teachers. On the one hand, Carla, Kristel and Mar expressed their desire to be motivated and committed to their job in the future. Lola wanted to be "professional" and able to carry out her obligations as a FL teacher competently, whereas Silvia would like to be a dedicated teacher who is concerned about all aspects of the teaching-learning process, including "learners". Other student teachers wanted to become innovative and creative teachers:

I want to give them input, but not the input that I received when I was in the school. I would like to be creative to give them impressive input that they like. Therefore, they could learn it easily or, at least, they would be more motivated to learn it. (Clotilde)

Modern. Without too much focus on textbooks. Textbooks could be used as a guide. (Guillermo)

I want to be an innovative teacher that makes teaching interactive and entertaining for students, not only using the textbook, but designing my own programme. (Julia)

It should be noted that two student teachers were not able to define their self-image as a FL teacher. Daniel knew what kind of teacher he wanted to be, but added that his professional self would be subject to the learners in his classroom: "I have a clear idea about the kind of teacher I want to be. However, learners also have an

influence on the way you could or could no teach”. Delfin explained that she would build her image as a FL teacher by drawing on her own personal experience as a learner:

All of us have been school students, and we have all been exposed to the skills, eccentricities, and failures of many teachers, so a good starting point that helps to decide what kind of teacher I want to be is to look back [on] my own experiences as a learner.

#### 6.2.4 The participants’ beliefs about the foreign language learner’s knowledge, skills, and competences

As shown in Table 6.4, two sub-categories were originally distinguished for the analysis of the student teachers’ beliefs about what should constitute the FL learner’s<sup>49</sup> knowledge, skills, and competences: 1) aspects of FLL (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, language skills, etc.) and 2) the acquisition of the so-called ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competences’ (e.g. autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, personal initiative, etc.). It must be noted that many participants’ answers were very succinct, listing rather than explaining the aspects or competences which need to be developed by FL learners.

	Aspects of FLL							21 <sup>st</sup> century skills and competences	
	Grammar and/or vocabulary	Intercultural competence	Listening	Pronunciation	Reading	Speaking	Writing	Critical thinking	Independent learning
Alicia	X		X		X	X	X		
Amita	X								
Blanca	X					X			
Carla	X					X			
Clotilde	X					X			
Daniel	X	X				X			
Delfin			X			X			
Fátima						X			
Fenella						X			
Guillermo		X							
Julia						X			
Kristel	X					X	X		
Leñicia			X		X	X			
Lola	X				X	X	X		
Lorena	X		X		X	X	X		
Mar		X							
Marcos			X		X	X	X		
María			X		X	X	X		
Nancy			X		X	X	X		
Pilar						X			
Sabina	X			X		X			
Silvia						X		X	X
Tammy			X			X			
Tania	X		X			X			

Table 6.4. The participants’ beliefs about the FL learner’s knowledge, skills, and competences in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

<sup>49</sup> From now on, ‘FL learner’ is understood as the learner of English as a FL.

Regarding the first sub-category, the vast majority of the student teachers (22 participants) concurred that the most relevant aspect for FL learners is the development of speaking. In this sense, some participants highlighted several reasons for promoting this language skill in the classroom. The most obvious one made reference to the fact that English is a language and should be learned in order to be spoken: “given this is a language, and languages serve to communicate, probably one of the most important things to promote is learners’ communicative skill” (Pilar). Tammy, who claimed to be an active supporter of communication in FLT, argued that its promotion should have a particular purpose: “I strongly believe in communication and for me it’s important to be at least able to speak fluently and understand the language after ten years of study”. Clotilde, in contrast, regarded the development of speaking not only as a way to make learners become aware of the usefulness of learning English, but also as a means to encourage and support the learning of grammar in FLL:

I think one of the most important aspects for students to learn is communication. Moreover, I think it is what the students need because if they could speak English fluently, they would realise how important English is. Otherwise, they will not be *motivated to learn grammar* if they don’t practise it and they don’t interact with each other. (emphasis added)

Despite its importance, it was acknowledged that speaking tends to be the Cinderella skill in FLT: “I think the most important aspect when learning a second language is the one which is usually forgotten: the oral practice and participation, the real use of the language on the part of the students” (Blanca). The participants also made reference to the rest of language skills, but they did it with less emphasis (listening [9 participants], writing and reading [7 participants]) and more irregularly, that is, underlining learners’ need to develop either all language skills or some of them. Nancy and Lorena, for example, noted that the four language skills should be equally treated in the classroom.

In addition to language skills, 11 participants identified grammar and vocabulary as two important aspects for FL learners to learn. In this respect, six student teachers referred to both aspects; four students, just to grammar; and one student, only to vocabulary. Although it was not specified how important grammar and vocabulary should be in FLL, some student teachers were of the opinion that the learning of grammar should be integrated into the use of language skills:

They [i.e. learners] should learn grammar as they do, but they must learn how to use it in everyday life by writing and speaking. (Kristel)



I think it is important to learn English so that we can communicate both orally and in a written way. For that reason, they [i.e. learners] need a solid grammar and vocabulary training, but in an intensive practice of speaking and listening. (Tania)

Finally, three student teachers held that FL learners need to develop intercultural competence. They were aware that culture and language are intertwined or, in other words, we cannot understand the TL without understanding the culture where this language is spoken. For this particular reason, FL learners should learn about “the cultural values” (Mar) and “the cultural aspects and cultural differences which are associated to the language” (Daniel) they are learning.

To conclude, it is interesting to point out that in the questionnaire the student teachers thought exclusively of aspects related to FLL and did not mention any 21<sup>st</sup> century skill and competence. The only exception was Silvia who added critical thinking and independent learning as two important competences learners should develop in their education.

### **6.2.5 The participants’ beliefs about the foreign language teacher’s professional knowledge, roles, and qualities**

Eleven participants identified GPK (Shulman, 1986, 1987) as an important knowledge base for FL teachers (see Table 6.5). First, some of these student teachers (e.g. Anita, Blanca, Carla, and Delfin) pointed out that teachers must have general knowledge about teaching, including knowledge about various teaching and assessment methods, classroom techniques, teaching materials, and ICT for pedagogical use. Concerning this last point, María explained that the aim of this knowledge must be to make the lesson more appealing to learners (“at the same time, he[/she] has to be interested in the new methods and technologies to teach the language in an ‘attractive’ way”), whereas for Fátima FL teachers should know how to make use of new technologies to innovate their teaching practices.

On the other hand, it was noted that FL teachers need knowledge about learning and how to enhance it in the FL classroom. According to Silvia, they should know “the learning processes involved” in FLL so as to provide more meaningful learning and guarantee the successful acquisition of the TL. Carla, Guillermo and Kristel, for instance, considered that teachers need to know how to create a positive learning environment where learners can feel comfortable and motivated to work, express their

doubts, and participate more actively. Moreover, teachers should know how to prevent discipline problems by means of effective classroom management: “a teacher needs to know the problems that students can cause nowadays and how to deal with it” (Daniel).

	Professional knowledge					Professional and personal qualities					Role of the FL teacher		
	CK	GPK	PCK	SMK	Knowledge of learners	Innovative	Motivated	Patient	Sensitive to learners' differences/needs	Understanding	Educator	Facilitator	Motivator
Alicia				X			X	X		X			
Anita		X		X	X				X				
Blanca		X		X									
Carla		X	X		X				X				X
Clotilde					X					X			
Daniel	X	X											
Delfin		X	X	X									
Fátima		X	X			X				X			
Fenella						X						X	X
Guillermo		X								X			X
Julia				X				X	X				
Kristel		X		X						X			
Leticia									X	X			X
Lola				X						X			X
Lorena								X	X				X
Mar							X						
Marcos				X					X	X			
María		X		X									
Nancy				X			X		X				
Pilar				X				X		X			
Sabina							X	X					
Silvia	X	X			X				X				
Tammy											X		
Tania		X											

Table 6.5. The participants' beliefs about the FL teacher's professional knowledge, qualities, and role in the Questionnaire "Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain..."

Some participants added that teachers should be able to provide for learner differentiation in their teaching. They were aware that it is necessary to be *sensitive* to and cater for the diversity which exists in the FL classroom:

[The teacher should be able] to pay attention to diversity and students with special needs. (Julia)

[The teacher should be able] to pay attention to the specific needs of the students, to understand their individual differences... (Lorena)

He/she should have a positive attitude and bear in mind that despite sharing the same age, each student is completely different to the other. (Nancy)

To this end, teachers need to have knowledge about their learners' needs, interests, and previous knowledge in order to adapt their teaching approach to the learners:

Teachers need to know the stage or level of knowledge of their students to adapt their work to their students' stage. (Anita)

[The teacher] needs to know the interests of the students. (Carla)

They should teach according to their needs. (Leticia)

They need to know the students, their individual needs [...] They should never forget they are children/teenagers and act according to their capacities and needs. (Silvia)

The assumption is that the knowledge which teachers gain about their learners will facilitate their task in the classroom: “a teacher who knows his/her students will be able to do his/her work much better” (Clotilde). For Marcos, this task consists in guiding learners in the learning process: “he/she has to take into account that each student has a different way (and rate) to learn and that we have to lead them in this process”.

According to 11 student teachers, another main area of knowledge for FL teachers should be SMK (Shulman, 1986, 1987). These participants contended that FL teachers must have knowledge of the subject they are going to teach, in this case, the English language and those aspects related to the language (e.g. language skills). Apart from having a vast knowledge of their subject, it was pointed out that teachers should have a high level of proficiency in the TL. This point makes reference to one of the aspects in FLT that many participants rejected or criticised: teachers’ use of Spanish to teach English (see section 6.2.6). Some student teachers considered that it is not enough for teachers to know the language, but they also need to speak it fluently. Otherwise, there is no point in encouraging learners to speak in English if teachers cannot do so:

The teacher needs to *know* and *speak* English. (Alicia, emphasis added)

The teacher needs obviously the knowledge of the subject, but not only that. In the case of English, the teacher must also have (and this is as important as the knowledge of the subject) a good skill in speaking English, fluently and accurately. It makes no sense to have a teacher whose aim is to make his/her students master English and who cannot speak English appropriately. (Blanca)

The teacher also needs to speak in English during the classes because if you don’t do it, the students are not going to do it either. (Kristel)

Three participants made reference to FL teachers’ need for PCK (*ibid.*) or, in other words, knowledge of how to teach contents related to the TL. Carla explained that teachers should know how to “transmit contents” to learners and be balanced when teaching meaning and form. For Fátima, grammar was the main content area which the FL teacher has to focus on and he/she should know how to teach it inductively. The third student teacher (Delfin) highlighted one essential component of PCK: curricular knowledge. She held that FL teachers need “knowledge of the curricular arrangements and materials that organise the content” of the subject. Daniel and Silvia, on the other hand, considered that teachers should also have CK (Clark and Lampert, 1986;

Grossman, 1990), including knowledge about the educational system and the particular context in which they teach.

Some student teachers referred to the role of the FL teacher in the classroom. Thus, in six student teachers' responses, the FL teacher was described as a 'motivator' (Farrell, 2006) who should be able to motivate his/her learners to learn, for example:

I think it is also very important that he[/she] motivates and amuses his[/her] students during the lesson, which would make students be more motivated and pay more attention to it. This would undoubtedly affect in a positive way their learning process. (Lola)

Guillermo conceived the teacher as a "role model", "facilitator of knowledge", and "leader", aspect in which he concurred with Alicia. For Tammy, the FL teacher should also be an educator, preparing learners for real life: "he/she needs to know that what he/she does apart from teaching a language is educating children that will become adults and will apply what they learnt". Fenella, in contrast, regarded the teacher as a 'facilitator' (Farrell, 2006; Saban *et al.*, 2007; Voller, 1997) who must provide learners with opportunities for language use.

Finally, the participants identified a number of professional and personal qualities that FL teachers should have. Apart from being sensitive to learners' differences and needs, nine student teachers considered that teachers should be *understanding* and feel empathy for their learners. They have to be aware that "teaching doesn't consist only in giving assignments, but also in understanding students" (Marcos). Teachers should care about learners as humans with feelings, worries, and problems:

It is also important to learn about the learner's problems related to his/her family, society, or whatever. The teacher must worry about the learner as a human being rather than being only teaching as an authority. (Fátima)

He/she has to be aware of the problems of their age in general and the personal difficulties, in learning and in personal life, each student is undergoing. (Kristel)

According to Guillermo, although teachers can establish a closer relationship with their learners, they must eventually remember what their role in the classroom is: "relate to them, come down to their level but not forgetting that he[/she] is the teacher and they are the students". Teachers should also be *patient* with their learners and, regarding their teaching practice, they should be *innovative*. In this respect, it was pointed out that teachers should forget about the textbook and be able to design their own teaching materials. For four student teachers, the teacher should be enthusiastic and have a positive attitude as well as being professionally engaged and *motivated*. Other important

qualities which FL teachers should have were: to be *cooperative* (Clotilde), *entertaining* (Sabina), *reliable* and *talkative* (Lola), and *strong* and *rational* (Alicia).

### 6.2.6 Aspects of foreign language teaching in Spain the participants supported and rejected or criticised

The questionnaire also explored the various aspects of FLT in Spain that the student teachers supported and rejected or criticised at the beginning of the module. As can be seen in Table 6.6, the aspect of FLT which initially drew most support from the student teachers was grammar. Its teaching in the FL classroom was positively valued by six participants. On the one hand, these students considered grammar a useful aspect in FLL:

[I support] the teaching of grammar because when you acquire a high level of English, I mean, when you are able to communicate with others, you use it properly. (Silvia)

In my opinion, it's not bad to have notions of certain [grammar] rules. In the long run, it's useful. (Tammy)

Tania, for instance, supported grammar despite being aware that its teaching often hinders the development of other aspects related to language learning:

According to my experience, I remember just a good part of ELT<sup>50</sup> in Spain, that is, the focus on grammar, so in the end we had a good level of writing, although the other aspects of the language were not developed.

In a similar way, Fenella held that FLT in Spain is remarkable regarding theory (i.e. the teaching of grammar), but very poor in terms of practice (i.e. listening and speaking). On the other hand, some of these student teachers supported the fact that learners are able to acquire a vast knowledge of grammar during their learning. According to Daniel, grammar instruction is done successfully in Spain. As a result, FL learners attain a good level of grammar, concluding that “they have a higher level than natives” (Tammy) or that “the level of grammar that foreign language learners in Spain achieve is better than in other countries” (Lola).

Second, four student teachers approved the early introduction of FLT in the Spanish school curriculum. They pointed out that this early introduction brings learners into contact with the TL at an early age and therefore facilitates their language learning process. Four other student teachers supported the implementation of bilingual

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<sup>50</sup> English Language Teaching.

education programmes in the Spanish school system. Blanca, for example, believed that the development of bilingual education still needs to be improved, but considered that “it is a good starting point” for enhancing FL education. For these participants, the most positive aspect of bilingual education was the subsequent increase in the number of hours of exposure to the TL that bilingual learners have.

	Early introduction of FLT in the school curriculum	Grammar	Implementation of bilingual education	Language instruction	Learner-centred education	Native language assistants	Practical approach to FLT	Teachers	Use of ICT	No positive aspect
Alicia			X							
Anita										X
Blanca			X							
Carla	X									
Clotilde			X			X				
Daniel		X								
Delfin							X			
Fátima				X						
Fenella		X								
Guillermo									X	
Julia					X					
Kristel	X									
Leticia								X		
Lola		X								
Lorena	X				X					
Mar								X		
Marcos									X	
María									X	
Nancy							X			
Pilar	X		X							
Sabina										X
Silvia		X								
Tammy		X								
Tania		X								

Table 6.6. Aspects of FLT in Spain the participants supported in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

Three student teachers regarded the increasing use of ICT in FLT as a very positive aspect since it can improve learners’ language learning and motivation. In this sense, María suggested that FLL should be more practical and the use of new technologies can be highly beneficial for learners as regards the development of language skills:

I support the use of audiovisual methods for teaching the language because I consider that the learning of languages should be practical, and the use of these kinds of methods is very useful to achieve and improve some of the language skills.

For Guillermo, the introduction of new technologies in FL education can have a motivating effect on learners. They can help to make both the class and the learning process more exciting for pupils:

The use of '*aulas digitales*' in some schools (interactive whiteboards, etc.) makes the class more exciting for kids/teenagers. This is important as the English teaching classroom must be an exciting, relaxing place as speaking English can be uncomfortable for some people. It helps 'lighten the mood'.

It is interesting to note that only two student teachers from the sample referred to teachers as a positive aspect of FLT in Spain. While Mar praised those FL teachers who "are hard-working and take risks in their job", Leticia claimed that despite the pessimistic views surrounding Spanish education, there are secondary school teachers who teach well ("not all the teachers do their work wrong in secondary schools. Many of them are really good teachers"). Two other student teachers commented on the prominent role that the learner is assuming in education. Lorena remarked that educational policy in Spain is now more learner-centred: "the student is the centre of education in our legislation". Julia supported the fact that the teaching practice in many school settings is increasingly placing more emphasis on learners and learning: "now learners have more priority in the classroom". Another positive aspect of FL education in Spain, according to Clotilde, is the assignment of native language assistants to the schools, whereas Fátima considered that "ELT is well adapted to learners". Nancy and Delfin advocated those teachers who adopt a practical approach to FLT, encouraging learners to practise what they learn. Finally, there were also two student teachers (Anita and Sabina) who were not able to identify any aspect that they supported.

The aspects of FLT in Spain that the participants rejected or criticised are summarised in Table 6.7. If we compare this table with Table 6.6, we can observe that the aspects they supported were clearly outnumbered by the aspects they rejected. In this respect, a closer look at Table 6.7 reveals that there were two aspects which stood out as attracting more criticism from the student teachers: 1) the poor work on language skills and 2) the great emphasis on grammar instruction. Most of the participants (19 student teachers) concurred that the aspect of FLT they most rejected was the poor work on language skills. They mainly criticised the lack of attention which is paid to the development of listening and, above all, speaking in the FL classroom. Regarding these language skills, the student teachers agreed that it is speaking which is frequently overlooked in classroom practice. Participants like Alicia, Carla and Guillermo criticised the lack of real-life situations which require learners to use the TL in the classroom and advocated the need to provide them with more opportunities to receive input and produce output. In addition, several student teachers contended that one of the

major consequences of this lack of attention paid to speaking is many learners' inability to communicate through the TL outside the classroom:

*ELT in Spain is focused mainly on grammar*, ignoring the communicative side of the language. In my opinion, if learners are not able to use the language, the teaching is pointless. The weakest point of ELT in Spain is the lack of communicative competence. (Daniel, emphasis added)

I would give more priority to speaking because in that issue Spain has not developed a good plan/system to follow and learners find that in the practice they do not know how to speak. (Julia)

I think that *the system focuses basically on grammar*, and speaking and listening are crucial for communication. We start studying English since we are very young, but we don't achieve the level we should have in order to communicate with a native speaker in his[her] country. (Tammy, emphasis added)

	Emphasis on grammar instruction	Implementation of bilingual education	Poor work on language skills	Teacher-centred education	Teachers	Textbook	Use of Spanish to teach the FL
Alicia	X		X				X
Anita			X				X
Blanca			X				
Carla			X				X
Clotilde		X					
Daniel	X		X				
Delfin	X						X
Fátima	X		X				
Fenella	X		X				
Guillermo	X		X				
Julia			X			X	
Kristel	X		X				
Leticia	X		X				
Lola							X
Lorena			X				
Mar					X		
Marcos	X		X		X		
Maria				X		X	
Nancy			X				
Pilar	X		X				
Sabina	X		X				
Silvia	X		X				
Tammy	X		X		X		
Tania			X				X

Table 6.7. Aspects of FLT in Spain the participants rejected/criticised in the Questionnaire "Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain..."

As noted in the above quotations, the main reason for this poor development of listening and speaking is, according to the student teachers, the great emphasis teachers place on grammar instruction. Thirteen participants considered that FL classes are too theoretical and include too much work on grammar rules. Consequently, "students have a wrong image of what the English language is" (Fenella), being regarded as another subject of the school curriculum and not as a useful communicative tool. Some student



teachers stressed the need for a shift of emphasis from the textbook and the teaching of grammar to the promotion of contents and activities related to speaking and listening:

[R]eal situations and real English instead of too much grammar [...] I consider that there should be more activities about listening and oral discussions or presentations. (Fátima)

The focus should shift from just textbooks to using listening and speaking materials. (Guillermo)

I think that not all the contents should be focused on grammar, but also on listening and speaking since they could help students to learn English faster and better. (Lorena)

It [i.e. English] is taught as another subject, not as a tool for communication. They [i.e. teachers] do not highlight the importance of communicating. They teach too much grammar, but never focus on speaking, which is what you need more when facing reality [...] There is the need to create situations to stimulate the use of English. (Silvia)

Blanca, in contrast, argued that it is necessary to promote a process of language immersion in the FL classroom:

I think a very early teaching of English is necessary, perhaps even earlier than it starts in Spain. However, I think the main problem in Spain is not the age of onset but, when English teaching actually starts, it is not a complete real English class. Children need a much more intense immersion in the language to obtain the results that are intended.

In this sense, six student teachers disliked the fact that teachers usually teach English by means of Spanish. Lola, for instance, regarded it as one of the reasons why learners do not gain a high level of competence in the TL: “most of my teachers used to teach the lessons in L1. I think this is a big mistake since almost everyone in Spain acquires a very poor competence in speaking because of this”. For this reason, these students advocated that English needs to become the medium as well as the object of instruction.

Three student teachers criticised FL teachers. Two of these criticisms were levelled against the knowledge that FL teachers have for the teaching task. Tammy held that many of these teachers lack GPK (Shulman, 1986, 1987) regarding learners and “second language acquisition, its stages, its processes, etc.”. Marcos also referred to teachers’ lack of GPK, but in this case to their lack of knowledge about effective strategies to motivate learners. Mar’s criticism, however, centred on one specific type of FL teacher. She had previously praised those teachers who are hard-working and take risks. Here she explained that she disliked those teachers “who do not promote funny activities and do not advise their learners on how to improve their learning”. In the student teachers’ responses, there were two references to the textbook. While Julia rejected the “imposition of textbooks” in FLT, María criticised the continued use of the textbook in the classroom, which in her opinion prevents teachers from developing

more creative and innovative lessons. She was also the only participant who specifically rejected a teacher-centred approach or, as she described it, “the kind of learning in which the *teacher has the role of major authority and students obey*” (emphasis added). To conclude, one student teacher (Clotilde) questioned the effective implementation of bilingual education programmes in Spain, pointing out that many schools which claim to be bilingual “are not actually providing bilingual education”.

### 6.2.7 The participants’ perceived obstacles, problems, or dilemmas in foreign language teaching in Spain

The participants’ perceived obstacles, problems, or dilemmas in FLT in Spain were classified into three main sub-categories: learner-related, teacher-related, and contextual. As shown in Table 6.8, the great majority of the obstacles identified were contextual (23 references). Learner-related obstacles had 21 references, whereas 11 references were made to teacher-related obstacles. It will become evident below that these sub-categories are interdependent, showing how some themes and obstacles relate to one another.

	Learner-related			Teacher-related			Contextual			
	Language proficiency	Personal theories and beliefs	Poor commitment to education and learning	Inability to foster motivation	Professional values and qualification	Teaching practices	Dominant community expectations	Dominant institutional culture and demands	Dominant political values	Dominant traditions, frameworks, and guidelines in FLT
Alicia	X							X		
Amita	X		X							
Blanca						X				X
Carla	X		X				X			
Clotilde	X					X		X		X
Daniel								X		
Delfin	X		X					X		
Fátima									X	X
Fenella						X				X
Guillermo	X		X		X	X				X
Julia		X								
Kristel					X	X		X		X
Leticia								X		X
Lola			X		X			X		
Lorena			X							
Mar			X					X		
Marcos			X	X				X		
Maria			X							
Nancy			X		X					
Pilar			X					X		
Sabina			X					X		
Silvia			X					X		
Tammy			X		X			X		
Tania								X		

Table 6.8. The participants’ perceived obstacles, problems, or dilemmas in FLT in Spain in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

Fourteen student teachers referred to ‘learners’ poor commitment to education and learning’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016) as the most common learner-related obstacle. They pointed out that many learners lack motivation to learn, they feel a deep disaffection towards school, and they show little interest in FLL. Three possible reasons for this problem were identified in the student teachers’ responses. The first reason pointed to teachers, becoming a teacher-related obstacle as well (i.e. teachers’ inability to foster motivation and their poor ‘professional values’ [Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007]). In this respect, Marcos considered that teachers are partly responsible for learners’ lack of motivation: “in schools, teachers usually have to deal with low levels of motivation. That is why teaching English becomes a really difficult task. Students are not the only ones to blame for this, but also teachers”. He argued that many teachers do not know how to motivate their learners. Nancy also attributed this lack of motivation to teachers, but in this case to their own lack of commitment to both teaching and learners (“I think it is a combination of poorly motivated learners who don’t usually pay attention to anything as well as the typical lazy teacher who does not show interest in his/her students”). Lola, on the other hand, contended that the Spanish educational system, which she defined as completely “impersonal”, is to blame for learners’ growing disaffection towards education: “first, the educational system in Spain. Second, the students, who are discouraged mostly by this impersonal system that doesn’t pay attention to their personal needs and aims”. Concerning FLL, María held that the lack of interest shown by learners is a direct consequence of their difficulty in acquiring the TL.

According to six student teachers, another learner-related obstacle is learners’ language proficiency. While two of these student teachers (Alicia and Guillermo) concurred in seeing the differences in language level present in the classroom as a teaching dilemma in FLT, the four other participants complained about learners’ low level of proficiency in English and their poor communicative competence. For Clotilde, this poor competence is attributable to a contextual obstacle in FLT: the high number of students per class. She contended that this situation prevents learners from developing their speaking skills: “it is due to the educational system because there are too many students per class so they cannot practise the oral language competence”. The last learner-related obstacle mentioned by the participants made reference to ‘learners’ personal theories’ and beliefs (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016).

One student teacher remarked that many learners in Spain tend to have a negative attitude towards the TL, perceiving it as something which is going to be of limited value to them: “students feel that the language you are teaching them is not useful” (Julia).

Five student teachers identified ‘teachers’ professional values’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) and qualification as the main teacher-related obstacle. They agreed that nowadays many FL teachers are professionally demotivated and disengaged from the teaching-learning process. They lack commitment to their teaching practice:

One of the most important problems is teachers’ lack of motivation. I think that most of the teachers in Spain are working as teachers because they know it is a safe job, but they don’t enjoy teaching and they are not committed at all. (Kristel)

Many teachers in secondary schools are not motivated either. They have their job and there is no implication. (Tammy)

As mentioned earlier, some student teachers associated learners’ lack of motivation with their teachers’ lack of commitment and interest, either as something which teachers unwittingly transmit to their own learners (“this lack of motivation is reflected on the students” [Kristel]) or as two things which go hand in hand (“teachers’ and students’ lack of motivation” [Guillermo]). Apart from their lack of motivation, Guillermo also added that many FL teachers do not hold the right professional qualification for teaching and have no ample knowledge of the TL.

The contextual obstacles identified concurred with those referred to by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (*ibid.*). The most predominant one for 14 student teachers was related to the ‘dominant institutional culture and demands’, including the lack of resources, the teacher-pupil ratio per class, and the educational system itself. First, there was a common perception among some of the participants that many Spanish schools do not have enough tools and resources to improve FLT:

Another problem is the lack of audiovisual material which might facilitate the practice of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing to the student. (Leticia)

Few schools are provided with new technologies which can offer a wide range of possibilities to teach English through audiovisual material. (Tania)

Daniel, for instance, considered that with the resources they have at their disposal teachers are unable to cope with learners’ needs and problems in our present-day society. For Mar, the major problem is that teachers lack not only the resources, but also the time to be creative and innovative in their classrooms, thereby affecting the quality of their teaching practice.

Other student teachers in this group criticised the teacher-pupil ratio per class. In their opinion, there are too many learners in the FL classroom, which has three major consequences for the teaching-learning process: 1) it makes teaching more complex and “much more difficult” (Tammy), 2) it hinders the teacher from “knowing the students better” (Pilar) and, as noted above, 3) it hampers learners from developing their speaking skills. In this respect, it was underlined that there should be smaller groups of learners so as to facilitate interaction and communication in the FL classroom. Third, apart from Lola, three other student teachers regarded the educational system on which FLT operates as an obstacle for the proper development of FL education, stressing the need for LA and TA in the classroom. Mar complained about teachers’ and learners’ lack of control over the teaching-learning process, pointing out that while teachers are obliged to follow the curriculum to the letter (having little space for creativity and innovation as she previously noted), learners have to pursue learning goals established and controlled by others. In a similar fashion, Marcos and Silvia emphasised that the educational system constrains FL teachers from improving their teaching practice by granting them little autonomy and curtailing their freedom:

The educational system doesn’t facilitate that teachers go one step further and try to find new ways to teach effectively. (Marcos)

The educational system and institutions (schools) themselves affect the teaching of English with norms and obstacles that do not facilitate teaching. (Silvia)

The second most common contextual obstacle referred to the ‘dominant traditions, frameworks, and guidelines in FLT’. Seven participants expressed their disagreement with the way English is taught in the FL classroom. As it happened with the aspects of FLT in Spain they rejected, these student teachers highlighted the lack of emphasis on a communicative approach to FLT, especially regarding the promotion of listening and speaking. Their argument was that teachers promote an image of English as another school subject and not as a tool for communicating in and outside the classroom:

[T]he lack of tradition of a teaching approach based on the real use of English (from both parts: the teachers and the students) [...] It is not a complete real English class. (Blanca)

Little development of the fundamental skills: speaking and listening. Teachers make English a school subject and don’t give the right perspective of what a foreign language is. (Fenella)

Second, participants like Clotilde and Guillermo emphasised that FLT in Spain follows a very traditional approach in which there is too much emphasis on tests, vocabulary and, above all, grammar. In fact, Clotilde claimed that “the [implemented] curriculum is

basically focused on grammar”. For Leticia, this focus is also enhanced by the textbooks employed inasmuch as they promote the learning of grammar and vocabulary rather than speaking and listening. Furthermore, it was noted that the quality of FLT is impaired by the fact that English lessons are often taught in Spanish (Kristel). As becomes evident, this obstacle is not only contextual in nature, but it can also be regarded as a teacher-related obstacle (i.e. teachers’ teaching practices in FLT [focusing on grammar, neglecting communication in the TL, and using Spanish to teach the TL]).

Finally, there were two contextual obstacles which were mentioned just by one student teacher each. Fátima made reference to the ‘dominant political values’ permeating teaching in Spain and the instability caused by the fact that every time a new political party comes to power, it passes its own education act. Carla, on the other hand, alluded to the ‘dominant community expectations’ as regards the importance of language learning. She explained that in Spain FLL has been traditionally attached little value “until the economic crisis”.

### **6.3 Analysis of the ideal English lesson plans**

In this section, I proceed to report the analysis of the data obtained from the participants’ ideal English lesson plans. This report is divided into three subsections: 1) analysis of the participants’ ideal English lesson plans, 2) the participants’ analysis of their ideal English lesson plans, and 3) analysis of the participants’ learner-centred English lesson plans.

#### **6.3.1 Analysis of the participants’ ideal English lesson plans**

As we can observe in Table 6.9, the participants’ ideal English lesson plans were mainly aimed at working on speaking (20 participants), followed by grammar (14 participants); vocabulary (11 participants); listening (10 participants); and reading, writing, and pronunciation (2 participants each). Twelve participants indicated the grade in which they would teach their lessons, which went from grade 7 to grade 12.

	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Alicia</b>	10 (age 15-16)	-Listening (gap-fill activity) [15-20 min.] -Speaking (information-gap task) [10-15 min.] -Vocabulary (matching words with pictures + memory questions) [25 min.]
<b>Anita</b>		-Listening (listening comprehension activity) [15 min.] -Reading (seeking information on the Internet) [15 min.] + Vocabulary [3-5 min.] -Speaking (role-play) [5-7 min.] -Writing (informal email) [20 min.]
<b>Blanca</b>		-Grammar (comparative structure) -Speaking (creating dialogues aimed at practising grammar)
<b>Carla</b>		-Speaking (asking for and giving directions)
<b>Clotilde</b>	11 (age 16-17)	-Listening and pronunciation (British vs. American pronunciation) [25 min.] -Speaking (debate) [25 min.] -Writing (writing an essay about one classmate's opinion) [10 min.]
<b>Daniel</b>	10 (age 15-16)	-Grammar (reported speech) -Speaking (conversation + learners turn their classmates' speech into reported speech)
<b>Delfin</b>		-Grammar (degrees of adjectives and irregular adjectives)
<b>Fátima</b>	7 (age 12-13)	-Grammar (past simple) [40 min.] -Speaking (questions and answers aimed at practising grammar) [15 min.]
<b>Fenella</b>	8 (age 13-14)	-Grammar (present simple) [15 min.] and vocabulary (review of vocabulary + matching definitions and pictures with words) [20 min.] -Listening (gap-fill activity) [10 min.] -Speaking (asking for and giving directions) [10 min.]
<b>Guillermo</b>		-Speaking
<b>Julia</b>		-Grammar and vocabulary -Pronunciation -Speaking (debate)
<b>Kristel</b>		-Grammar (present perfect) and vocabulary (textbook activities) -Listening -Speaking (questions asked by the teacher)
<b>Leticia</b>		-Speaking (initial conversation between the teacher and learners + oral presentation)
<b>Lola</b>	8 (age 13-14)	-Grammar (modal verbs) and vocabulary (learning new vocabulary) [15 min.] -Listening (documentary) [10 min.] -Speaking (initial conversation between the teacher and learners + debate) [15 + 20 min.]
<b>Lorena</b>		-Grammar (present simple) [30 min.] -Vocabulary and speaking (games + debate) [30 min.]
<b>Mar</b>		-Grammar (used to/ be used to)
<b>Marcos</b>		-Summary of the previous class and checking homework [15 min.] -Grammar (present simple) and vocabulary [20 min.] -Lesson plan A: Vocabulary brainstorming and listening [25 min.] -Lesson plan B: Reading and speaking (role-play) [25 min.]
<b>María</b>	8 (age 13-14)	-Grammar (degrees of adjectives) [20 min.] -Listening (note-taking) [10 min.] -Speaking (describing pictures to practise grammar + correction) [15 + 15 min.]
<b>Nancy</b>	7 (age 12-13)	-Vocabulary (games)
<b>Pilar</b>	10 (age 15-16)	-Speaking (rehearsal + presentation of dialogues provided by the teacher) [10 + 20-25 min.] -Vocabulary (crosswords) [15 min.]
<b>Sabina</b>		-Grammar (conditional sentences: 2 <sup>nd</sup> conditional)
<b>Silvia</b>	9 (age 14-15)	-Vocabulary and speaking (whole-class activity aimed at practising there is/there are + text for working on prepositions + information-gap task)
<b>Tammy</b>	12 (age 17-18)	-Grammar (conditional sentences) -Listening (song) -Speaking (debate)
<b>Tania</b>	11 (age 16-17)	-Listening (listening comprehension activity) [40 min.] -Speaking (giving advice; discussion) [20 min.]

Table 6.9. Grade and content of the participants' ideal English lesson plans

Chapter 6. Results and discussion

Classroom as a controlled learning environment	Alicia	Anita	Blanca	Carla	Clotilde	Daniel	Defin	Fátima	Fenella	Guillermo	Julia	Kristel	Leticia	Lola	Lorena	Mar	Marcos	María	Nancy	Pilar	Sabina	Silvia	Tammy	Tania
<b>Image of teacher role</b>																								
Transmitter of knowledge						X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X						X	
Authority	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Image of learner role</b>																								
Passive consumer of knowledge						X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X						X	
Passive participant in FLL	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Image of the teaching-learning process</b>																								
Transmission of knowledge						X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X						X	
Learner dependence upon the teacher	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Close control by the teacher of the TL	X				X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unified model of learning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 6.10. Analysis of the participants' ideal English lesson plans according to the vision of the classroom as a controlled learning environment

Classroom as a school of autonomy	Alicia	Anita	Blanca	Carla	Clotilde	Daniel	Defin	Fátima	Fenella	Guillermo	Julia	Kristel	Leticia	Lola	Lorena	Mar	Marcos	María	Nancy	Pilar	Sabina	Silvia	Tammy	Tania
<b>Image of teacher role</b>																								
Facilitator																								
Counsellor																								
Resource			X			X					X											X		
Mediator		X	X	X									X										X	
<b>Image of learner role</b>																								
Critical consumer and creative producer of knowledge		X	X			X					X											X		
Active agent and co-author of FLL		X																						
<b>Image of the teaching-learning process</b>																								
Responsibility, choice, and flexible control		X																						
Learning to learn and self-regulation																								
Cognitive autonomy support		X																						
Integration and explicitness																								
Intrinsic motivation		X																						
Learner differentiation										X														
Action-orientedness	X	X		X	X				X									X					X	
Conversational interaction		X	X	X	X	X			X		X			X	X		X				X	X	X	X
Reflective inquiry																								

Table 6.11. Analysis of the participants' ideal English lesson plans according to the vision of the classroom as a school of autonomy



Communicative classroom	Alicia	Anita	Blanca	Carla	Clotilde	Daniel	Defin	Fátima	Fen ella	Gaillermo	Julia	Kristel	Leticia	Lola	Loresna	Mar	Marcos	María	Nancy	Pilar	Sabina	Sibvia	Tammy	Tania
<b>Image of teacher role</b>																								
Facilitator of opportunities for communication	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X
<b>Image of learner role</b>																								
User of the TL for communication	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X
<b>Image of the teaching-learning process</b>																								
Communicative language use as a means of learning	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X
Preparation for real-life communication/situations	X	X		X	X				X	X	X			X	X		X					X	X	X
Pair/Group work for communicative purposes	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X				X		X		X	X				X		

Table 6.12. Analysis of the participants' ideal English lesson plans according to the vision of the communicative classroom

As noted in section 5.6, the ideal English lesson plans were analysed according to three of the visions of the classroom identified by Tudor (2001): 'the classroom as a controlled learning environment' (see Table 6.10), 'the classroom as a school of autonomy' (see Table 6.11), and 'the communicative classroom' (see Table 6.12). It must be noted that the major difficulty faced during this analysis was the insufficient information supplied by some participants about the specific activities they would carry out in the classroom. In other words, they pointed out the type of activity but without giving more details about it (e.g. "we would do a listening activity and I would ask those who didn't have the chance to talk during the first activity some questions in order to see if they have understood it" [Kristel]). Except for a few cases, most of the participants adopted an eclectic approach in their lessons, reflecting more than one vision of the classroom.

In their ideal English lesson plans, 10 student teachers reflected an image of themselves as *transmitters of knowledge* (see Table 6.10). This knowledge would be largely based on information about English grammar. In this case, the role of the teacher would be to explain one particular aspect of grammar (e.g. present simple, conditional

sentences, or modal verbs) to the learners, who would act as *passive consumers of this knowledge*. There would be no participation or involvement on the part of the learners in the explanation provided by the teacher:

The teacher explains the grammatical point to be covered during that lesson (according to the teacher's plan) [...] The teacher explains the present simple. (Marcos)

I would explain any grammar issue like the present perfect; after the explanation we would see some examples and do some exercises. (Kristel)

First: teaching of grammar (present simple, for instance)- 30 minutes. Teaching the grammar of the corresponding unit, doing some oral and written exercises *while I am teaching it and giving a lot of examples to the students*. (Lorena, emphasis added)

The last excerpt, for example, illustrates that interaction would be 'transmission-oriented' (van Lier, 1996), that is, the delivery of information would be in a one-way, monologic format (from the teacher to the learners). Mar and Delfin would devote the whole lesson to the teaching of grammar: used to/be used to and the degrees of the adjective in English respectively. They would first present the grammar rule explicitly and then incorporate different activities to practise it. As we can observe below, these activities would be completely focused on form, leaving no room for communication in the TL:

**2) The students will complete some sentences in order to know if they have understood the input (15 minutes):**

Ann used to eat meat, but now she eats fish.

Tom \_\_\_\_\_ tea, but now he \_\_\_\_\_ coffee.

They \_\_\_\_\_ to playing outside now.

When I was young, I \_\_\_\_\_ to cycling to the school.

Did Ann use to eat meat? Yes she did, but now she eats fish.

\_\_\_\_\_ white bread? Yes she did, but now she eats brown bread.

\_\_\_\_\_ tinned fruit? Yes she did, but now she eats fresh fruit.

\_\_\_\_\_ tap water? Yes she did, but now she drinks bottled water.

**3) The students will have to compare present and past situations. They can bring some examples [of their own] (15 minutes):**

NAME	CHILDHOOD HABITS	PRESENT HABITS
Eric	Got up late	Gets up early
Emma	Drank milk for breakfast	Drinks milk for breakfast every day
Clara	Cycled to the school	Does a lot of exercise
Ken	Wore a school uniform	Wears very casual clothes

Why is Eric not used to getting up early? Because he used to get up late when he was a child.

Did Emma use to drink milk for breakfast when she was a child? Yes, she did.

That's why now she \_\_\_\_\_.

Is Clara used to doing a lot of exercise? Yes, she is. That's because she \_\_\_\_\_ when she was a child.

Why does Ken only wear very casual clothes? Well, I think it is because \_\_\_\_\_ when he was a child.

**4) The students will have to translate some sentences in order to know if they have understood the meaning of “used to” and “be used to”. They can do the exercise in pairs (15 minutes).**

*¿Estás acostumbrada a comer fruta todos los días?:*

*No suelo ir andando al trabajo: \_\_\_\_\_*

*¿Te solían leer tus padres cuando eras pequeño?:*

*La gente solía conocer a sus vecinos, pero ya no:*

*No estoy acostumbrado a caminar tanto: \_\_\_\_\_*

(Mar)

**1. Identify the adjectives in the following sentences.**

- Joe is a clever boy
- That watch is quite expensive
- Those flowers are beautiful
- My sister is tall and hard-working
- Your dog is dangerous

**2. Identify the adjectives in the text passage and create a list with those adjectives.**

[...]

**4. Write the correct form of the comparative of the adjective in brackets.**

1. Apples are \_\_\_\_\_ chips. (healthy)
  2. Elephants are \_\_\_\_\_ bears. (big)
  3. Gold is \_\_\_\_\_ silver. (expensive)
  4. Silver is \_\_\_\_\_ gold. (cheap)
- Etc.

**5. Irregular adjectives**

**5.1. Choose the correct answer.**

1. Do you think volleyball is \_\_\_\_\_ than tennis?
    - best
    - better
    - gooder
  2. Your football team is \_\_\_\_\_ than my football team?
    - bad
    - worse
    - best
- Etc.

**5.2 Write the correct form of the irregular adjectives.**

1. Italian food is \_\_\_\_\_ than American food. (good)
  2. Peter is \_\_\_\_\_ than Joe at History. (bad)
  3. Mercedes cars are \_\_\_\_\_ than Dacia cars. (good)
- Etc.

(Delfin)

The only activity in Delfin’s lesson which would promote a more creative use of the TL would be exercise 3: “now, write a description of a house or a flat that you

know”. As opposed to those participants who would assume a more dominant role during the explanation of grammar, there were other participants who would encourage their learners to take a more active role in their construction of grammatical knowledge, thus enacting ‘transformation-oriented interaction’ (van Lier, 1996) and ‘fostering conversational interaction’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) (see Table 6.11). Blanca and Julia, for instance, would promote their learners’ interaction and participation in the explanation:

The teacher starts the explanation of the structure. An interactive explanation in which the teacher is not the only person who speaks, but the students will also be asked and encouraged to participate. (Blanca)

I would also teach grammar and vocabulary which are essential. However, I would not do it in the traditional way (that is, the teacher speaks and the students listen without interacting and giving their opinions), but in a more practical and participative way. (Julia)

Daniel and Sabina would teach grammar inductively, encouraging the learners to infer the grammar rule on their own:

-Links with subtitled videos of the same action in both direct and indirect speech with different verb tenses.

-Ask questions about what they have watched to deduce the grammatical rule. (Daniel)

I would try to explain the formation of the structure of the second conditional in English in an inductive way. For this purpose, I would write several second conditional sentences on the blackboard and push the students to infer the tenses used and the function of the second conditional in English. (Sabina)

In these four cases, the teacher could be argued to be a ‘*resource*’ (Voller, 1997) who would avoid the passive provision of information so as to emphasise the active dissemination of it, whereas the learners could act as more *critical consumers and creative producers of knowledge*.

The teacher was regarded as an *authority* (see Table 6.10) in all the ideal English lesson plans except for Guillermo’s. This means that he/she would shoulder full responsibility for the teaching-learning process. The teacher would set the learning objectives for the lesson and how they would be realised through specific activities, for example, “the choice of these activities/exercises would depend on the skill the teacher wants to focus on during that specific lesson” (Marcos). The teacher would also be completely responsible for determining the learning content. At the beginning of her lesson, Blanca made it clear that it would be her who would decide the content for that particular lesson and for the subsequent ones:

During the first minutes of the lesson the teacher greets the students and asks them how they are and how their lessons are going. Next, the teacher explains what the content of today's lesson will be and approximately [of] all the lessons during the week.

Pilar would do the same but at the end of the lesson: “the teacher will present the next topic they will have to deal with, and the exercises [done during the lesson] will be corrected the following day”. The teacher's power over the learning content was also evident in those lesson plans which included work on vocabulary. In this sense, the vocabulary which the learners would learn would be chosen by the teacher as it could be observed in the lesson plans by Marcos (“the teacher writes and pronounces the words that *he wants the students to learn*” [emphasis added]), Nancy (“I show my students the vocabulary we are going to use in the games, which is the same they should have studied at home *as I remarked*” [emphasis added]), and Lola (“here is where the teacher can provide some vocabulary input which is useful to talk about the chosen topic. I think a good idea would be to distribute a list of useful words to the students”).

Both the learning materials and the activities would be selected by the teacher, for example:

One describes a magazine picture I've given him/[her] [...] Give them a handout with sports vocabulary. (Alicia)

I give them a paper with some irregular verbs [...] (Fátima)

[T]he teacher gives them a short text with a description of a place [...] [T]he teacher gives him/her a photograph (from a magazine, an [advertisement], for instance). (Silvia)

After, I would give them some exercises to complete and then I would correct them orally. (Tammy)

Thus, he/she could determine the pace of learning (i.e. what is done and when it is done):

To begin with the class, as the teacher, I would write a summary on the blackboard for the learners so that they follow the order of the tasks. (Fátima)

I would start the class by asking some of the children about anything in order to make them talk. Then, I would do some vocabulary activities and afterwards I would [give] an explanation about any grammar aspect that is new [to] them. Finally, I would do a listening activity. (Kristel)

At the beginning of the lesson, I would make my students think about countries where they would love to travel to and talk about it out loud [...] Next, we would work on grammar, modal verbs for example, and make some exercises about them to fix the knowledge the students have just acquired [...] Then, I would make them watch a short video that deals with the topic selected [...] Finally, I would promote a debate. (Lola)

The teacher would provide his/her own resources (made by him/her) and would select and look for additional resources [...] Students would have to do one/several activities/exercises provided by the teacher [...] If there is not enough time to cover grammar and vocabulary during the lesson, the teacher could deal with only one of them;

and exactly the same in the case of the activities/exercises (the teacher could decide to do one activity/exercise instead of two). (Marcos)

Furthermore, the teacher would control the way in which the learners would engage in the activities, that is, whether they would have to work individually, in pairs, or in groups.

One of the most significant features of the teaching-learning process in these authority-based lesson plans would be *learner dependence upon the teacher*. In this respect, the learners were depicted as *passive participants* who would work on the TL according to the teacher's instructions and learning plan (e.g. "each group prepares and presents their topic orally to the rest of the class. I am free to decide how long and what aspects they should include" [Leticia]). They would have little voice in the learning process and very few opportunities to show personal initiative. Two clear examples of the promotion of learner dependence upon the teacher were found in the ideal lesson plans by Fátima and Tammy. On the one hand, Fátima decided that her lesson in grade 8 (age 13-14) would be devoted to the study of the past simple. As part of her explanation of this verb tense, she underlined that she "would explain the best way to learn the irregular verbs". Thus, instead of encouraging the learners to find their individual learning strategy, it would be the teacher who would tell them how to learn these verbs. Tammy, on the other hand, would begin her lesson with a song:

At the beginning, I would play a song that was all the rage that season. I would tell the students to listen to the song and read the lyrics at the same time. After that, I would explain, in English, the most important expressions and vocabulary.

As we can see, the teacher would highlight the most important words and expressions from the song rather than letting the learners identify the vocabulary which is relevant, useful, or new to them on their own. In short, these situations would not contribute to LA as they would make the learners be more dependent on their teacher, waiting for her to tell them either what they have to learn or how. It was also observed that in all the ideal lesson plans (except for Guillermo's) the teacher would impose a *unified model of learning* in which all the learners would work on the same kind of activities and materials while they pursue the same learning objectives.

By choosing the learning materials (e.g. texts, lists of vocabulary, and listening materials) and the activities (e.g. grammar exercises and textbook activities), the teacher could control the samples of the TL to which the learners would be exposed. In some

cases, he/she could also control the TL which the learners would produce. Pilar, for instance, would be fully responsible for all the decisions concerned with learning in her lesson plan. Her influence on the lesson would be so powerful that she would even control what her learners in grade 10 (age 15-16) would say when they had to speak: “students will be given a series of dialogues accompanied with visual aids that they will have to prepare in pairs and then they will have to play them in front of their classmates”. Thus, the learners would rehearse and perform dialogues *provided by the teacher* in which they would have no opportunity to express their personal meanings.

Another example of the close control exerted by the teacher over the TL was observed in Nancy’s ideal English lesson plan. In this case, she would control and determine what her learners would say in each of the games designed to work on vocabulary:

The first game is called “backward word” in which *I have to dictate to the class* one of the reviewed words letter by letter and from the back to the front:

E.g. K-N-I-P (Pink)

The first one to shout it wins and I write down his/her name for a later *reward* [...] After ten minutes, we move on to the second game called “chain game”. In this one, *I should start with* simple sentences such as ‘I have a pencil and I like purple’. Then, students have to go on with the sentence but making it more complex [...] We will play the last game called “eliminary chain”. First of all, this game consists [in] making a circle with all the students in the class. Then, we start for example with the days of the week. *I am the first one shouting* Monday! The next one should shout Tuesday! The next one, Wednesday! And so on... That one who is wrong will be out of the circle until we finish the round. We repeat the game but this time with the months and, then, with cardinal and ordinal numbers. (emphasis added)

As we can observe in the quotation, the games would be initiated by the teacher and followed by the learners’ answer. Moreover, the lesson would be characterised by its lack of opportunities for genuine communication among the learners and its emphasis on extrinsic motivation as it would resemble a competition in which the best learner would receive a “reward” for his/her performance:

That student who has not been eliminated in any round or at least in four of them will give me his/her name and I will write it down for a future reward which I have to think about. It could be a positive mark or something material.

On other occasions, the teacher would exercise his/her power over classroom interactions. Kristel regarded the classroom as a place where “all the students would have the opportunity to express themselves orally”, but the interaction would take place when the teacher decides and involving those learners the teacher chooses:

I would start the class by asking some of the children to talk about something they enjoy doing or what they have done during the weekend [...] At the end of the class, we would do a listening activity and I would ask those who didn't have the chance to talk during the first activity some questions in order to see if they have understood it.

The major consequence of the strict control exercised by the teacher over the teaching-learning process would be the lack of opportunities to promote LA (see Table 6.11). The principles of PA formulated by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) would be hardly implemented in the FL classroom. Only a few examples of their promotion could be observed in the lesson plans. The most common pedagogical principle in the participants' ideal English lesson plans would be *fostering conversational interaction*. As we will see below, some participants would promote conversational interaction by means of debates, discussions, and tasks in which the learners would have control over the discourse they produce, that is, they would control what they say and how they say it. These activities and tasks would also prepare them for communicative situations which they might encounter at some future stage in their lives (e.g. holding a debate).

Several student teachers would act as *mediators* (Williams and Burden, 1997) by promoting cooperation among the learners. One of them was Anita. Although the development of her lesson would be teacher-controlled (i.e. the teacher would decide what is done and when it is done), the learners would assume *responsibility* for the learning process<sup>51</sup> and would be *critical consumers of knowledge*. Rather than simply being provided with it, they would be *active agents* in seeking the information necessary to work on the topic chosen for the lesson: "Reading: In groups of three or four, students have to look for specific information on the Internet about the place [to which] they have chosen to go for their summer holidays". Thus, they would need to go through the information and decide which one would be more relevant to them. This information would be essential for the completion of the subsequent activities included in the lesson (i.e. two tasks focused on writing and speaking). The aim of this activity would be to encourage the learners to work independently and create *opportunities for cognitive autonomy support* by enabling them to generate their own solution paths (Stefanou *et al.*, 2004). For example, if they found any new word, they would have to guess its meaning on their own: "if they don't know the meaning [of vocabulary], they have to guess it through context or helping each other. The last resource is to ask the teacher". Anita, Alicia, Carla, Clotilde, Fenella, Marcos and Silvia would *encourage*

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<sup>51</sup> Encouraging responsibility would develop the learners' *intrinsic motivation*.



*action-orientedness* by means of the accomplishment of language learning tasks (e.g. creating a role-play and writing an informal email).

Guillermo's ideal lesson plan was different from other student teachers' in the sense that he did not develop how he would teach one particular English lesson, but he explained his ideal vision of FLT. This vision reflected a *learner-centred* approach. He pointed out that the classroom must be regarded as "a place for learning and not for being dictated". He further acknowledged that each learner is unique and that in the classroom *learner differentiation* must be catered for:

The ideal classroom must accept that all students have different needs, levels of language, so that is a situation which must be addressed. Teachers should try to understand that each student is an individual with different needs and should be treated as so.

His vision was also very communicative, advocating *communicative language use as a means of learning*: "language learning must be interactive as the language is a means of communication". To this end, "real-life situations and examples must be utilised in the classroom to prepare students for the English speaking world".

Apart from Guillermo's, there were different ideal English lesson plans in which the lesson would also enact, to a greater or lesser extent, a communicative vision of the classroom (see Table 6.12). The teacher would act as a *facilitator of opportunities for communication*, whereas the learners would be *users of the TL for communication*. Seven participants, for example, would provide their learners with the opportunity to communicate in the TL by means of a debate, conversation, or discussion in which they could engage in meaningful interactions among themselves and with the teacher:

Exercise 3 (25 minutes). Group debate. Do you think the winners deserved the Oscars? [What] were your predictions about it? Have you watched these movies? (Clotilde)

Final activity with conversation and then students paraphrase classmates' speech into reported speech (Daniel)

I would [promote] some classes of debates (of course depending on the level of the students the debates would include easier or more difficult issues). In a more advanced level I would create a European Union commission and give a task to each student. Each student would represent a president from a country and therefore they would have to debate some issues and give the best solution from their points of view. (Julia)

At the beginning of the lesson, I would make my students think about countries where they would love to travel to and talk about it out loud (around 15') [...] Finally, I would promote a debate titled "tourists vs. travellers", in which the students would have the opportunity to put into practice everything they have learned during today's lesson (around 20'). (Lola)

## Chapter 6. Results and discussion

To finish, I would divide the class into two groups. I'd sit both in front of each other and start a debate with a trendy topic for them. Everything should be said in English. If necessary, I would ask them questions in order to make all of them talk. (Tammy)

Speaking (20 minutes approximately)

1. (5 min.) Subject: healthy lifestyle. Thinking about some healthy lifestyle advice they would give.
2. (3 min.) Students are given a list of tips and key words they can use when speaking.
3. (12 min.) Discussion: each student expresses his/her ideas and the teacher promotes interaction. (Tania)

In this case, the TL would be regarded as a means of communication and self-expression whereby the learners could express their own personal meanings (i.e. their ideas, opinions, arguments, etc.). Some of these student teachers included communicative activities and tasks which would not be exclusively aimed at working on speaking:

Listening (40 minutes approximately)

1. (5-8 min.) Initial conversation between the teacher and the students about doping.
2. (1:30 min.) Listening. Students pay attention and try to get a general idea.
3. (1-3 min.) Discussion about the general idea (what students have understood).
4. (1 min.) Students read the comprehension questions.
5. (1:30 min.) Some listening. Students take notes about main ideas and other details.
6. (10 min.) Time to answer the question exercises.
7. (10-15 min.) Time to check answers. (Tania)

Exercise 4 (10 minutes). [After the group discussion,] [w]rite a short essay about one of your classmates' opinion about the Oscars. (Clotilde)

Anita and Marcos, who designed two lesson plans (A and B), would also promote communicative language use by means of activities and tasks focused on various language skills. Anita's lesson plan would integrate the four language skills. After the reading activity in which the learners would have to look for specific information on the Internet, they would complete two tasks (focused on writing and speaking) and would do a listening activity:

Writing: Every student has to write an informal e-mail to one friend, talking about his/her holidays in the place chosen, using the information gathered in the previous activity.

Speaking: In pairs, students have to "represent" a meeting with a friend and they have to [hold] a conversation about their respective holidays.

Listening: The teacher provides their students with some listening related to real situations, such as an announcement over an intercom [at] an airport and provides a comprehension activity about that listening.

After the explanation of grammar, Marcos would work on vocabulary related to food and would engage the learners in answering different questions about this topic:

The teacher asks questions related to the vocabulary that has been dealt with [...] Possible questions:

- What is your favourite food?
- How do you cook it?
- Do you prefer fried or baked food? (Other possibilities: roast, boiled...)
- Do you think that people in other countries eat the same as we eat in Spain?

Depending on the lesson plan, he would promote different communicative activities dealing with various language skills (including a speaking task):

#### Lesson plan A

Listening activity: listening comprehension on food. Students listen and answer a questionnaire. After that, the possible answers will be discussed with the teacher and compared with the rest of the group.

[...]

#### Lesson plan B

Reading comprehension activity: students have to read a text about/related to food and answer a questionnaire. After that, the possible answers will be discussed with the teacher and compared with the rest of the group.

Role-play activity: Two students talk about food preferences and note down the food preferences of his/her partner.

Other student teachers who would promote *pair and group work for communicative purposes* would be Alicia and Silvia. They would engage the learners in a one-way gap task in which one learner describes a picture and the other learner(s) must draw it:

Spend 10-15 minutes doing a speaking activity in pairs. The speaking activity is centred on something the students learnt in the previous class. The students form pairs. Each pair sits back to back. One describes a magazine picture I've given him/[her] and the other draws it, asking questions for more details. This activity reinforces the vocabulary they've learnt and makes them use it in context. They also have to practise question formation. They switch roles. The 2<sup>nd</sup> one describes while the 1<sup>st</sup> one draws. (Alicia)

One person of each group separates from the rest and goes to one side of the classroom, the teacher gives him/her a photograph (from a magazine, an [advertisement], for instance). Another person of each group stays with him/her without seeing the picture. The rest of the group goes to the other side of the classroom. The first member describes what he/she sees on the picture to the second, and the latter to the group, that has to draw it. They can ask as many questions as they want (or they consider necessary to complete a coherent drawing). (Silvia)

For Alicia, this information-gap task would be the only communicative activity in her lesson. Silvia, in contrast, would include another opportunity for interaction among the learners:

In small groups, the teacher gives them a short text with a description of a place (without saying the place) and including prepositions of place (whose meaning can be easily guessed). The group has to discuss and guess what place it is. Then, one person of each group writes down on the blackboard one preposition and draws the meaning the group has decided for it (we repeat it with all the prepositions of place).

Both Fenella and Carla would prepare their learners for language use in a specific *real-life situation*. They would work on the language function ‘asking for and giving directions’, although they would differ in the amount of time they would devote to this function. On the one hand, Fenella contended that the major aim of her ideal English lesson plan was to make FLT more communicative:

This lesson presents activities to work on grammar and it includes the practise of the language. I don’t want my students to see the English language as a subject but as a tool for communication [...] My intention with this lesson is to give students the means to be able to express [themselves] and interact with each other.

Nevertheless, the only activity in her lesson which would promote communication among the learners would be the last activity (in this case a task):

To finish, I’d give learners a communicative task: A map of London. By using the target language, students have to develop their communicative skills and exchange information [while] working in pairs. For example, one student is in ‘X’ place of London and they have to get to Westminster Abbey. They have to ask for and give instructions and also the way to arrive there, if by bus, bike, underground...

The problem was that this task would occupy only the last 10 minutes of the lesson. Unlike Fenella, Carla would devote the whole lesson to the function ‘asking for and giving directions’. She stated that her lesson would aim “to make students produce their own speech and make them interact” and added that they could perceive how the learning task would be of value to them beyond the classroom: “the reason that leads us to choose this particular topic is that students are able to recognise its immediate application”. Thus, the lesson would begin with the introduction of relevant vocabulary and expressions and would move on to the learners’ practice of the language function by means of “real maps of Anglophone cities”:

The students are put in pairs and a map is handed out to each pair. The task they have to complete is to write a dialogue with the help of the vocabulary and the structures that have been previously taught. Afterwards, some pairs are asked to present their dialogue in front of the class.

The last task for enhancing the knowledge acquired during the lesson is to ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the class and ask him/her to go into the Internet and into Google maps. There he/she has to look for a map of London and the teacher decides a starting point, for example, Trafalgar Square. Now, the student in front of the class has to say a place where he/she wants to go and asks somebody of the class for the instructions. This activity can be repeated for a few minutes choosing different students.

Blanca, Fátima and María included ‘quasi-communicative’ activities in which the learners would interact under more controlled conditions. The basic aim of these activities would be to practise the grammar rule explained during the lesson. As shown in the following quotations, the learners would be forced to use a particular verb tense (i.e. the past simple) or grammatical structure (i.e. the comparative one) in their speech:

They will talk to each other in groups with the aim of supporting what they have learnt [...] They will carry out a dynamic activity in groups. They will have to invent dialogs *including the structure they have learnt*. They will have to play it in front of the class. (Blanca, emphasis added)

I propose a short dialogue between learners. One of them would ask something that classmate did the previous day and the other has to answer *employing the tense studied* [i.e. past simple] and one irregular verb (15 minutes). (Fátima, emphasis added)

*In order to practise the explanation given by the teacher* [i.e. the degrees of the adjective], students will work in pairs. They will have to speak with their partner about the different pictures that the teacher will give to each pair, comparing the different characters which appear in the picture (15 minutes). (María, emphasis added)

### 6.3.2 The participants’ analysis of their ideal English lesson plans

As shown in Table 6.13, the student teachers identified two main visions of the classroom in their ideal English lesson plans: ‘the classroom as a controlled learning environment’ and ‘the communicative classroom’ (Tudor, 2001). On the one hand, 19 participants considered that their ideal English lesson plans were permeated by a vision of the classroom as a controlled learning environment; in fact, for five student teachers, this vision was the only one they could identify in their lesson plan. These participants were aware that everything which took place in the classroom was organised and controlled by the teacher. He/she was the ultimate authority and the arbiter of all the decisions concerned with learning (e.g. setting the learning objectives, selecting materials/activities, or determining the learning method):

My ideal lesson seems to be quite controlled as well since students work on the language according to my designed plan. It is highly controlled since *I do not give them freedom* to choose the topic they are going to talk about. (Clotilde, emphasis added)

The learning plan will be realised by means of clearly structured teaching materials and learning activities [...] *The teacher is the person who is more directly responsible for the realisation of the plan.* (Delfin, emphasis added)

I realised that my vision of the classroom is a controlled learning environment where students should work on the language according to my plan and under my supervision and guidance. (Mar)

Activities and exercises are always done under the supervision of the teacher and *the materials are also prepared and selected by the teacher. Nothing is arbitrary, but controlled* [...] Things are planned so the teacher knows what s/he has to do at all times so that *her/his students achieve the objectives s/he has set for that particular class.* (Marcos, emphasis added)

The classroom is “a place where students work on the language according to a carefully designed learning programme under the supervision and guidance of a trained teacher”. I have previously designed a plan and I have structured the methodology and activities which will be carried out in a specific period of time (1 hour). *Everything is controlled by the teacher,* despite the existence of some activities in which the students have to discuss the topic of the class with other students. (María, emphasis added)

My lesson plan is related to a controlled learning environment since the teacher is the centre of the classroom. He[/she] has a clear plan of what has to be done and *he[/she] is the one who runs everything.* (Tammy, emphasis added)

	Classroom as a controlled learning environment	Classroom as a school of autonomy	Classroom as socialisation	Communicative classroom
Alicia	X			X
Anita	X			
Blanca	X			
Carla	X			X
Clotilde	X			X
Daniel				X
Delfin	X			
Fátima	X			X
Fenella	X			X
Guillermo				X
Julia	X			X
Kristel	X			X
Leticia				X
Lola	X		X	X
Lorena	X	X		X
Mar	X			
Marcos	X			X
María	X			
Nancy			X	X
Pilar	X			X
Sabina		X		X
Silvia	X			X
Tammy	X		X	X
Tania	X			X

Table 6.13. The participants’ vision of the classroom in their ideal English lesson plans

Anita, for instance, contended that in her lesson plan the responsibility for the teaching-learning process was primarily shouldered by the teacher:

My ideal class is mainly *a class controlled by the teacher* [...] The activities proposed are explicitly formulated, [which] provides the students [with] non-autonomous learning, but

they only have to *follow the instructions of the teacher*. Furthermore, the teacher plans the organisation of groups of work and the activities, providing a structured plan of these activities according to the relevance and time duration. [In] this way, *the teacher is controlling classroom learning constantly*. (emphasis added)

She argued that the structure of her lesson did not facilitate the development of LA: “there is no negotiation of contents and goals with the learners, but the teacher imposes the activities and the learners assume them”. Thus, she defined her classroom as a small but rigidly hierarchical society “where the teacher is [at] a higher level and the learners have to follow the teacher’s instructions”. Other participants who acknowledged that LA was not a prominent educational goal in their lesson plan were Mar and Silvia:

I think I should have worked on students’ autonomy too; students should be able to play an active role in their language learning. The active engagement of learners’ human potential can enrich the learning process itself. As a future teacher, I should promote autonomy and empowerment. (Mar)

My class does not promote learner autonomy. It may make learners aware of their learning potential through communication (which is a first step towards autonomy) but it does not make students be aware of their learning processes, they do not make real decisions and evaluations about the content or organisation of the learning programme. (Silvia)

Different student teachers pointed out that their lesson plans were rooted in a more traditional vision of FL education due to the influence of their previous language learning experience:

We, as learners of teachers, tend to (re)produce an ideal class according to our past experience as learners. Thus, some years ago, most of the teachers worked in a more technical way with students and it belonged to a controlled learning. (Anita)

We as learners are influenced by our own previous experience in the classroom. The controlled method is the predominant one, so it is difficult that some of its features are not present in our lessons. (Fenella)

I always thought that the classroom should be a controlled learning environment, where students should work on the language according to my plan and under my supervision [...] It corresponds to my experience of learning English. (Mar)

Carla also became aware that when designing her ideal lesson plan, she drew on her own learning experience: “when I planned my ideal lesson, I unconsciously built on my own school experience, but I wasn’t able to get a step further”. The development of autonomy was not present in her lesson plan since it had not been present in her previous language learning experience either:

I didn’t even consider the fact of giving my learners autonomy. Perhaps I should have thought about the possibility of negotiating previously with my students [...] But, on the contrary, when I designed the lesson I just assumed what they would have to learn.

Then, she acknowledged that with her ideal English lesson plan she was maintaining, rather than changing, the pedagogical *status quo*:

So I would say that once more and as many teachers before me, I have fallen into the trap and have not thought of doing things in another way according to the values and needs of our current society. I just have repeated the procedures my teachers adopted when I was a secondary [school] student without even being able to imagine other ways of teaching.

There were student teachers who held that the vision of the classroom as a controlled learning environment can have various strengths: “I think that this vision is attractive in a number of ways: objectives are set, materials are prepared, and learners are trained” (Mar). Guillermo underlined that this vision has the advantage that several aspects of the teaching-learning process can be previously arranged, although it sometimes fails to cater for all learners’ needs: “a controlled learning environment is good in terms of preparing materials and [setting] goals but sometimes the materials are not always geared or aimed at those students with a poor level of the language”. He further harboured some doubts about LA: “autonomy is good as it helps students develop their own independent language skills but I do feel that this method may not be successful as some students may take advantage of the situation”. The aspect Tania liked most from the vision of the classroom as a controlled learning environment was its emphasis on a carefully designed learning plan. She rejected its reproduction of the traditional classroom and its authority-based culture:

I would like to highlight a positive aspect of the controlled vision because it gives importance to organization, and everybody and every system requires order and coherence. However, this vision seems to me like belonging to *traditional teaching methods* [...] and with a component which is a little bit *authoritarian*. (emphasis added)

Nevertheless, she stressed teachers’ need to keep control over some of the objectives and contents in the learning process:

From my point of view, it is highly recommended to maintain certain control by establishing a minimum of main objectives, contents and competences to be taught during a course, to avoid improvising situations which can [lead to] a lack of confidence in the teacher and a disorganised atmosphere which will undoubtedly affect the students. For that reason, in my lesson plan, I have detailed every step we are going to [take] during the practice.

For Julia, planning and structuring the learning process was also fundamental:

From the controlled approach I would have a lesson planned with a clear methodology. [From] my point of view, every class must have a structured plan. However, I would be flexible and would adapt myself to the students if required.



Thus, she began to think about how she could make her teaching more learner-centred in the future (e.g. encouraging choice and giving learners a voice):

Instead of establishing a book to read, I would let them choose some issues or novels that appeal to them. In listening classes I would choose some activities of filling gaps about some of the songs of the moment, I would also ask [them] about their preferences and we could translate some songs, which would integrate several skills.

She was willing to foster autonomy but with some restrictions: “in writing I would let them choose one of the topics that they liked in order to contribute to this autonomy. However, these topics would have to be [related to] the units explained by the teacher throughout the course”. She thought, for example, that the teacher should have sole responsibility for evaluation: “talking about evaluation, I would try to involve students in this decision, but [from] my point of view I think that this decision concerns the teacher”.

Nineteen participants also considered that their lesson plans had some characteristics of the communicative classroom as their aim was to promote communicative situations in which learners were encouraged to use the TL and, therefore, they could improve their communicative skills. There were, however, student teachers who were not entirely satisfied with their promotion of communication. One of them was Fenella who argued that in most part of her lesson plan the TL was represented as an object to be analysed and studied rather than as a tool for communicating. She pointed out that only the last activity of the lesson aimed to motivate learners to learn English by seeing the classroom as a place for communication: “the map exercise is similar to this view in that it prepares students for language use outside the classroom. It reinforces the link between classroom learning and the situations in which students would be expected to use the language”. She concluded her analysis by underlining the need to change her lesson plan so as to make it more communicative and less traditional. Silvia, for example, observed that her lesson plan did not enable learners to express their own personal meanings:

My class has characteristics of a communicative classroom [...] Methodology is intended to be a “communicative methodology”, with activities focused on communicative purposes. However, language perhaps is not really used as a tool for self-expression [...] It does not give students the opportunity to express their concerns and feelings.

From her activities, she was deeply dissatisfied with the first one, aimed at practising ‘there is’ and ‘there are’ by means of questions the learners would have to answer either affirmatively or negatively: “this activity is not based on real life, since it consists [in]

repeating questions without any authentic purpose; it is not meaningful for students, it doesn't foster interaction, and it doesn't involve any challenge". Pilar considered that her lesson plan could be a mixture of the classroom as a controlled learning environment and the communicative classroom. Nevertheless, she was aware that the lesson did not contribute to learners' preparation for real-life communication and that their speech was teacher-controlled since, as noted in section 6.3.1, the dialogues were provided by the teacher:

I planned a class thinking about the vocabulary they may need and practising it with a given text, but not really giving them the chance of generating the text or of using real free communication since *they were guided by the written role-play*. Maybe after reading this [i.e. the chapter by Tudor] I realise *this type of class is not a preparation for real-life situations*. (emphasis added)

This shortcoming was also observed by Blanca and María. Blanca, for instance, explained that her major aim when designing her ideal lesson plan was to develop a class in which communicative language use was emphasised: "my intention was to promote an environment of communication in which all the students would feel free to make any contribution, comment, or [ask any] question". However, she became aware that she implemented only one activity to work on communication and that this activity did not represent a real-life situation: "the dialogs are not representations of real situations in life in which students could actually put them into practice as it would happen in a communicative classroom". Moreover, the structure of the lesson did not allow learners too much freedom as everything was under her control:

They are free for that [i.e. making any contribution, etc.], but the lesson as such is not completely free [...] The teacher has the control of what is happening and it is he or she who decides when the students can play a more active role. Even when the learners have free time to speak with their classmates and to invent their own conversations, this happens when the teacher wants and about what the teacher wants.

After reflecting on her ideal English lesson plan, she realised that her class was "more similar to a *controlled learning classroom* than to [a] communicative classroom or a classroom of autonomy" (emphasis added).

To conclude, it must be noted that the visions of 'the classroom as socialisation' and 'the classroom as a school of autonomy' (Tudor, 2001) were the least common ones among the participants. While three participants stated that their ideal lesson plans were also representative of the vision of the classroom as socialisation, only two student

teachers regarded part of their lessons as an example of the classroom as a school of autonomy:

The students are active agents and the lesson leads to the students' critical view and to their autonomy defending their position and their opinion in the debate. (Lorena)

The students play an active role and are co-authors of their learning of the formation of the second conditional. The activity proposed in the first part of the lesson is meant to develop independent learning skills, such as the capacity for observation and deduction which are really useful to learn a language. (Sabina)

### 6.3.3 Analysis of the participants' learner-centred English lesson plans

As pointed out in section 5.6, the principles of PA formulated by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) were used to analyse the changes the participants would introduce into their ideal English lesson plans so as to make them more learner-centred. Most of these changes were related to the pedagogical principle 'encouraging responsibility, choice, and flexible control' (see Table 6.14)<sup>52</sup>. The student teachers would try to make the learners play a more active role in the classroom and be more involved in the management of their own learning. On the one hand, the learners would become responsible for certain tasks which were previously carried out by the teacher, for example, creating their lists of vocabulary, writing their own role-play situations, or correcting their classmates' mistakes:

The students are those who develop a common list of vocabulary with the help of the teacher when needed, instead of being the latter the one who provides the former with a list of words related to the topic. (Lola)

They will have to create role-play situations [...] They have around 15 minutes to read and prepare their intervention. They are free to choose the role and create their dialogues [...] Students will begin their interventions and their classmates are free to [ask] questions or check the grammar or the wrong use of the words [...] They will exchange their written exercises and they will be corrected by their classmates. (Pilar)

In some lesson plans, the learners would shoulder even greater responsibility, being in charge of the explanation of the content and, in some cases, of the design of the materials and the activities to practise this content. Tammy, for instance, would encourage her learners to be responsible for explaining the conditional sentences to their classmates so the teacher would no longer be a transmitter of knowledge but a guide or 'resource' (Voller, 1997): "the class is divided into four groups. Each one has to explain one type of conditional. They can ask me if they can't find the answer to certain

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<sup>52</sup> It must be noted that in some lesson plans the principles of PA would be marginally implemented.

questions”. Unlike Tammy, Marcos would maintain his role as a transmitter of knowledge, but his learners would be responsible for resolving their classmates’ doubts about grammar:

The teacher explains the grammatical point to be covered during that lesson and students are shown a video in which this grammatical point is present. Students ask their doubts. The teacher does not resolve them, but s/he asks the students to raise their hands if they have understood the grammatical point. The teacher will select one of those students so s/he resolves the doubts arisen, explaining the grammatical point or the aspects which have not been understood by the whole class.

	Alicia	Anita	Blanca	Carla	Clotilde	Daniel	Delfin	Fátima	Fenella	Guillermo	Julia	Kristel	Leticia	Lola	Lorena	Mar	Marcos	María	Nancy	Pilar	Sabina	Silvia	Tammy	Tania
Responsibility, choice, and flexible control	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Learning to learn and self-regulation								X							X	X					X		X	
Cognitive autonomy support																								
Integration and explicitness																							X	
Intrinsic motivation	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Learner differentiation	X													X			X							
Action-orientedness									X								X			X				X
Conversational interaction		X		X	X	X			X		X	X		X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
Reflective inquiry				X				X							X	X					X		X	X

Table 6.14. Principles of PA (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) in the participants’ learner-centred English lesson plans

In Tania’s lesson, the learners would assume responsibility for deciding what lexical field they would like to focus on concerning vocabulary and for selecting and preparing the learning materials for the lesson:

1. Students get into groups of 4.
2. Each group chooses a topic for their vocabulary. The teacher should give some ideas according to their level and their interests: sport and health, free time, music, daily routine, economics... (Fostering the negotiation of ideas and decisions).
3. Each group works by looking for texts to create a corpus about the subject and obtaining a list of vocabulary which they will share with the rest of the class (Encouraging cooperation and team work).
4. For example, today is the turn for sport and health, so that group has to share their list of texts and vocabulary (a minimum of 15-20 words) with the rest of the class.

The learning activities, however, would be determined by the teacher:

5. Each group reads the texts for 10-15 minutes using the lists of vocabulary.

6. When finishing, the teacher will check if everything is understood by asking them to write down several sentences including this vocabulary (10 minutes). They can also be asked to write a short story that later they will tell their peers (15 minutes).

The learners would regain a prominent role in the classroom by engaging in a discussion whose question is phrased by the learners themselves:

7. The group in charge of this vocabulary will suggest a question to reflect in pairs for 5 minutes. Everybody has to make notes and then participates in the discussion. For example: “Do you think that sport is important for your health? Why?”  
8. Discussion (10-15 minutes).

In this second lesson plan, Carla had a new objective: “to make my lesson more autonomous by giving the students more responsibilities, in order to increase their motivation and active participation in the learning process”. First, she would involve the learners in negotiating various aspects of the learning process, “so that they feel active agents”. She considered that negotiation is “the only way that the teacher and the learners have the feeling that they have the control over the situation”. Second, the learners would get into groups and would take full responsibility for teaching one of the topics chosen to their classmates:

The task of the students is to build up their own lists of vocabulary and to prepare their own class with the rest of the students. That means that they have to propose activities and try to explain to their classmates the new contents.

Next, it would be the learners who would evaluate the lesson taught: “their classmates have to evaluate the presentation of the [group] and the efficiency of the activities to acquire the new contents”. Finally, to work on learning strategies, Carla would suggest holding group discussions in which the learners could talk about and share their strategies with their classmates.

As we have seen above, the promotion of negotiation, the provision of choice and the inclusion of (self-/)peer-assessment would be three important courses of action for the development of LA in the participants’ new English lesson plans. Several student teachers would negotiate some aspects of the learning process with their learners or would provide them with the opportunity to make choices about it:

The first change I would introduce in my lesson plan would be the negotiation of ideas and decisions with and among learners. I would start to do it by giving them the opportunity to choose an international event in which we could hear British and American accents. (Clotilde)

Instead of giving the topic, I would try some negotiation with the learners to choose the content. (Daniel)

I will give them the chance of choosing the kind of exercise they would like to do to improve their grammatical skills [...] I will give them the chance of choosing what they want to listen to, the song they would like, etc. in order to motivate them. (Fenella)

Students could choose the games they like, ideas... and share them with the class. It is basically about involving them in the choice of the activities. (Julia)

Reading and writing about the topic would be the homework. The former could be done by reading a text chosen by the student that deals with the topic. (Lola)

I will let them choose what they prefer to learn today from a list of contents. (Mar)

The teacher negotiates with the students the words they want to learn. S/he proposes some words, but lets students choose at least half of the words. (Marcos)

I could make my lesson more learner-centred by asking the students more frequently about ideas for language learning. What would they like to learn? In what way would they choose to learn? What do they expect to learn? [...] I would ask them to bring me ideas for planning more games, or bring the planning itself and [explain] it to the class, the ones they like [most], and that way letting them choose how to practise the language. I would not like to impose everything but involve them in the choice of daily activities. (Nancy)

Tell me a topic [for the debate], something that you would like to talk about as if you were in the break. (Tammy)

Silvia's new lesson plan would be grounded in negotiation with the learners. She would develop a learning environment where responsibility for the learning process would be shared by means of collective decision-making. The learners would have a voice and would participate responsibly in the decisions affecting their learning:

I would ask my students if they believe it would be useful for them to study prepositions of place and asking questions to describe places and why. I would encourage them to express their opinions and discuss them in order to decide if we will study that aspect of the language and to try to find uses for it in real life.

If the learners were not interested in that topic, they could identify their learning needs and interests and plan learning activities with the teacher:

If they agree that it is not useful to study prepositions of place in this session, I would ask them what they think it would be more useful to study; we would discuss it to make decisions for today and next sessions and then plan together some activities/tasks.

If they agreed on studying prepositions of place, the teacher would first encourage the learners to discuss the learning materials and activities to be used in the class:

If they agree that they want to study prepositions of place in this session, I would tell them what I have thought to do (the activities I have planned) and would ask them if they believe my activities are well designed to achieve our goals, if they have any comments, any other idea or other activities to propose. Finally, we would carry out *what we have decided*: the activities I have planned with/without changes, new activities... all *depending on what they decide/ we negotiate*. (emphasis added)

“To foster their self-esteem to assume responsibility [for] the class”, Anita was also determined to include negotiation in her lesson plan, although she underlined the need to follow a pre-specified learning programme:

Another point which I should change regarding my ideal class is the possibility of negotiating with the learners some activities. I think the teacher has to follow a program designed to teach certain contents, though he/she could negotiate with learners about the topic or the kind of activities they would prefer to do. This way, learners could feel more motivated to do these activities.

In this respect, she would introduce a new activity focused on writing “a portfolio or diary where learners could express their point of view and interests. It could be a good way for the teacher to guide the activities and learning methods according to the preferences of their learning”.

Anita would not be the only participant who would use an instrument to learn about the learners’ interests. Fátima did not make any change in her original lesson plan (e.g. she would maintain the learning of grammar through explicit instruction), but she was intended to make her future lessons more learner-centred by basing them on her learners’ ideas and interests. By means of questionnaires, she would collect information about what the class should look like according to the learners or what type of vocabulary they would like to learn and she would allow them to have a voice regarding evaluation (“another useful questionnaire would be to let learners decide ways of evaluation”). A similar strategy would be used by Carla: “I am going to pass a questionnaire to know what topics or contents they consider that must be seen in our lessons”. Blanca, in contrast, would still determine the learning content for the lesson, but she would directly ask the learners about the type of learning activities they would like to be engaged in:

[T]he teacher explains what the content of today’s lesson will be and approximately [of] all the lessons during the week. The teacher asks them to think of possible activities they would like to do during those sessions (so that he/she can adapt the contents to those activities).

One aspect of the learning process which could be negotiated with the learners would be evaluation. In this respect, Julia changed her belief that this is an area of learning over which only the teacher should have control and in this second lesson plan she would engage her learners in the negotiation of the evaluation procedure:

The most important change that I would introduce implies involving students in evaluation, making them [take] part in [the] negotiation of the assessment method. I

considered previously that this issue was a task of the teacher. However, I could try to involve students more in this issue.

Other student teachers would engage their learners either in self-assessment or peer-assessment:

The evaluation should not be only a responsibility of the teacher, but learners could contribute by evaluating their classmates. (Anita)

Every student has to write a brief critical opinion about another group's presentation. They will evaluate their classmates by giving their opinion about the group[']s work. That is, if they gave clear explanations about what they talked about, if they answered the questions properly, if all the members of the group participated equally, etc. (Clotilde)

To find ways to enhance the formative role of self-evaluation, for example, negotiating the assessment, involving the students in evaluation. (Mar)

Each group will present their project, and learners will evaluate themselves. (María)

The part of evaluation could be negotiated between the teacher and the students. In fact, the teacher should encourage students to check what they have learnt by self-evaluation. (Tania)

By encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning, providing them with opportunities for choice, or giving them a voice in the negotiation of different aspects of the learning process, these student teachers would also *develop their learners' intrinsic motivation* and would *foster conversational interaction*. In this regard, negotiation would not be the only means for fostering conversational interaction since this pedagogical principle would continue to be promoted by means of debates, discussions, and tasks where the learners would have control over their speech. Concerning tasks and the promotion of *action-orientedness*, two student teachers would keep the tasks they originally included in their lesson plans while Pilar and Tania would include a task in their new lesson plan (creating a role-play and writing a story, respectively).

Another significant change towards LA would be the promotion of reflection<sup>53</sup>. In this respect, Tammy set a new objective for her lesson: "to make students learn [by] explaining to them each step and leading them to see the things necessary and useful for their learning". Before doing the various learning activities planned for the lesson, the teacher would provide the learners with the opportunity to reflect on these activities and how they would contribute to their learning. For example, before listening to a song, she would ask the learners questions such as "do you think that listening to music in English is necessary or useful? Would you like to understand what many of your favourite songs say? Don't you think that if you understand songs, you will understand people more

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<sup>53</sup> 'Promoting reflective inquiry' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007).



easily?”. The aim of these questions would be to make the learners reach the conclusion that “listening to music in English helps [learn the language]”. Then, she would follow the same procedure with grammar and the debate, trying to make them realise why they need to learn the conditionals and why it is necessary to hold the debate in English:

“Do you think that grammar is important?” “Do you find it useful?” “You are in your second year of *Bachillerato*<sup>54</sup> and you are going to be asked in *selectividad*<sup>55</sup> about conditionals” [...] “Is it important to speak and practise your second language?” “Do you think you can learn only by having three hours of English per week?” “What do you think?” “[...] We will do it [i.e. the debate] in English because it is very important to speak in a natural way about a real topic and exchange ideas with your classmates. You can learn much from each other. I’m sure you can, you will do it well”.

By articulating the usefulness underlying these activities and explaining the reason why learning a particular content and skill is important, Tammy would also be ‘providing opportunities for learning to learn’ and ‘integration and explicitness’. Reflection and learning to learn would become key aspects for Lorena, Fátima, Mar, and Sabina. Lorena would ask her learners to reflect on the importance of grammar, vocabulary, and speaking while they are responsible for determining part of the learning content (i.e. the grammar rule) and identifying their learning interests:

I would let the students choose a specific area of grammar after having asked them why it is important for them [...] I would ask the students why they think vocabulary and speaking are important in their life or why not and what topics are interesting and useful for them.

The central aim would be to make them aware of how the learning experience would have wider relevance to them beyond the classroom: “they would realise that English is useful in situations of daily life”. Fátima and Mar would encourage her learners to keep a diary or portfolio in which they could reflect on their learning process (e.g. learning difficulties, learning progress, etc.):

I would like them to keep a diary expressing if they have experienced many difficulties when speaking... and little by little they could see their progress from page 1 to the last page of the year. (Fátima)

To encourage learners to learn how to collect and analyse data on their own learning, for example, through a portfolio. (Mar)

Sabina would raise her learners’ awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in the TL by encouraging them to reflect on their progress and learning outcomes:

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<sup>54</sup> Post-compulsory secondary education (age 16-18).

<sup>55</sup> University entrance exam.

I would collect essays in which they would note both their improvements and problems [...] I will ask the learners to compare some exercise they had done in the past with another one they have done in the present and comment [on] their own improvement or the lack of it.

This would be, however, the only change she would make to her original lesson plan, thus remaining largely teacher-centred. Engaging in reflection is important not only for the learners but also for the teacher. According to Tania, reflecting on the development of the lesson and inviting the learners to express their own view about it can be an effective means for improving teaching practice:

At the end of the lesson, the teacher should reflect on whether the objectives have been fulfilled, on the students' reactions, and whether some changes are needed next time with vocabulary. Asking the students for their opinion might be a good idea too.

In this sense, Marcos would also allow the learners to have a voice concerning the teaching method employed in the classroom, whereas for Carla it would be important to inquire into how the learning process is working for the learners:

Students will be asked to complete a report on the lesson at home, in which they will have to write if they like the way in which the lesson is organised, as well as the possible changes they would make to improve it. (Marcos)

Teachers must reflect on their own practice, therefore we can pass a questionnaire to the students or make group discussions during the lesson, in order to know their opinions and collect learner data to verify that the learning process is working well. (Carla)

The learners could express their views about the teaching-learning process even if they are negative ones: "to create an environment of confidence and proximity between both parts (teacher and students) in which students feel comfortable about making any contribution or giving their opinion, even when it is negative or against the development of the lesson" (Blanca).

Three student teachers would *provide for learner differentiation* (engaging the learners in different activities at the same time), whereas Leticia would try to be sensitive to her learners' learning needs:

End of class activity. *They choose*. I tell them they can choose to work on whatever they think is necessary. They can review the vocabulary, speak in pairs, or play a game that I have prepared about sports. (Alicia, emphasis added)

I would propose different types of grammar activities, ranging from grammar rules that students elicit from texts to grammar rules in context, as well as listening to a dialogue or watching a video. For this, I would tell the students to work in groups of no more than 4 people for the grammar activities and no more than 10 people working on the listening (around 20 minutes). If possible, groups should switch activities so that everybody could benefit from all the activities offered in today's lesson. (Lola)

The teacher will provide the students with different activities/exercises to practise the skill or structure s/he wants to focus on during that specific lesson, so that they can select the one they prefer. Several topics would be available for each activity/exercise: vocabulary brainstorming activity, role-play activity, listening activity, reading comprehension activity... (Marcos)

I must be flexible to meet the learners' needs and work according to these needs. That means adapting myself to their level, age... (Leticia)

To conclude, it must be noted that, despite the changes made by the student teachers, the teacher would still play a leading role in many of these lesson plans (e.g. for Clotilde, Leticia, Lola, Marcos, María, Sabina, or Tammy) as the most important decisions about the teaching-learning process (i.e. setting the learning objectives for the lesson, determining the learning content, or choosing the learning activities) would remain under his/her control. Pilar, for instance, would provide her learners with the opportunity to select the materials and decide how they would like to work:

The teacher gives a list of materials they can choose from and they get in pairs or form groups and decide which one they want [...] A series of written exercises such as crosswords, short texts, filling gaps, etc. will be proposed and they are free to work in groups, pairs, or independently.

Nevertheless, the rest of the decisions would be taken by the teacher. As noted above, Lorena would allow her learners to determine the area of grammar they would like to focus on, but it would be the teacher who would decide they have to work on grammar, vocabulary, and speaking. Furthermore, she would choose the learning activities and would provide the learning materials. Another example would be Kristel's lesson plan. She realised that classroom interactions in her previous lesson were teacher-controlled: "after doing some reflection on how I organised my ideal English lesson I have realised that I asked the students to talk all the time, that is, they talked because I asked them to do so". Now she would encourage them to talk in pairs or groups. She would introduce other changes into her lesson, but there would still be features of a teacher-centred approach. The learners would have some choice as to the learning process, but the teacher would still have a central role to play (e.g. providing learning materials like the list of vocabulary or deciding what to do with the listening materials chosen by the learners):

Sometimes *I would choose the topic they have to develop* and other times they could choose it [...] Each group would choose a field of vocabulary and *I would try to make a list of vocabulary* related to the field they have chosen [...] I would ask them to bring songs they would like to listen to so that *we could translate them*. (emphasis added)

The only thing she would not change in her ideal English lesson plan was how she would deal with grammar: “I would not change anything regarding grammar. I think that in terms of grammar a brief instruction with some exercises afterwards is the right path to follow [in] the beginning”. Finally, Delfin’s new lesson plan would be completely teacher-centred. The teacher would continue acting as a transmitter of knowledge who would have full control over the lesson:

Individually, they will write a short text in which they will describe their ideal bedroom using adjectives in positive degree. Using different objects in the class (books, pencil-cases, schoolbags, students’ hair...) I will explain the comparative degree of adjectives. At this point, they will work in pairs comparing the ideal bedroom they have described before. After this activity, I will explain the irregular adjectives and learners will do different kinds of exercises. After finishing each activity and explanation, students will have the opportunity to ask questions to solve problems and doubts.

## **6.4 Analysis of the learning portfolios**

The analysis of the learning portfolios is divided into the following subsections: 1) the value of autonomy from the participants’ perspective, 2) the participants’ resistances and perceived obstacles to the development of autonomy, 3) PA in the participants’ future teaching practice, 4) the participants’ awareness of the need for educational change, and 5) the participants’ evaluation of the module.

### **6.4.1 The value of autonomy from the participants’ perspective**

The student teachers advocated the notion of autonomy and argued that its development in the FL classroom could bring considerable benefits. Tania, for example, held that “we need to promote learner autonomy, because in the future they [i.e. learners] will not need only concepts, but also skills and abilities that allow them to develop new tasks and adapt themselves to new situations”. Unlike other classmates (see Anita, Clotilde, and Leticia in section 6.4.2), she regarded learners’ ‘unpreparedness’ (Voller, 1997) to assume responsibility for learning not as an obstacle but as a reason for promoting LA:

From my experience when teaching, students are generally used to carrying out orders. I notice this when, for example, they are not able to organise themselves to prepare an exam or to use resources [which are] different from the teacher[’s] to finish their homework. For that reason, I consider these studies about autonomy essential when teaching so that students can gradually be owners of their learning process, which also has an influence on other aspects of their lives. Students have to be aware of their actions, the objectives they [pursue] and the way to achieve them, so they need to be more and more independent and autonomous.

For the vast majority of the student teachers, the major problem in FLT in Spain is ‘learners’ poor commitment to education’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016), namely their lack of motivation and interest. As Carla pointed out, “the school reality today is that many learners are passive, disaffected, apathetic, uninterested, absent-minded, and inattentive”. For this reason, various student teachers underlined that one of the main tasks of the teacher is to motivate his/her learners and they considered that the promotion of autonomy could help attain this goal:

Today, we have been introduced to the concept of autonomy and I believe that this can be a good way to change students’ apathetic attitudes towards learning English [...] I am totally convinced of the fact that, if we want to make the most of the capabilities of our students and motivate them, we have to give them autonomy. (Marcos)

I consider that this is a good way of motivating students and that learners could consider autonomy as a challenge; a challenge in which they have to prove what they are able to do by themselves. Maybe, they get surprised and they become aware that they know much more [than] they think. (María)

Autonomy, not just for the learners but also for teachers, can be a solution to the problems mentioned above. Regarding the learners, research proves that the more autonomy they are given, the more motivated and responsible they become. (Sabina)

Lorena attributed learners’ demotivation to their lack of influence on the teaching-learning process: “their motivation decreases and they lose their interest in the subject because they do not feel that they are important and that they have a voice in classroom’s decisions”. She emphasised that giving learners responsibility, freedom of choice, and the opportunity to take decisions would motivate them to continue learning:

We have to take into account that many learners are passive, uninterested, and apathetic in the classroom instead of being interested, attentive, and motivated, so we have to create an atmosphere where they can be motivated and interested in the subject. One of the questions that we, as teachers, can pose is “how can we engage students in learning English?”. We have to motivate students and we have to let them have freedom of choice, that is, if we give responsibility and we let our students choose what they think is important to learn, if we involve our students, then they will be autonomous and they will be more engaged in English lessons.

A similar opinion was voiced by Leticia (“I think that students will be much more motivated if they have a degree of freedom in their learning”) and Anita who argued that encouraging responsibility would help increase learners’ involvement (“to give them the opportunity to establish their own goals and, to some extent, to plan and guide their own learning could help to engage them in learning”).

Alicia explained that before the module she attached little value to autonomy. Now she considered that its development is necessary and “the essential ingredient to a

successful classroom” as by means of PA the teacher could conduct more motivating and diverse classes. It was noted in this respect that many learners’ lack of motivation is also caused by the approaches adopted in FLT which are largely based on teaching grammar rules, memorising lists of vocabulary, and completing form-focused activities. PA was thus regarded as a way to bring teaching closer to learners and make it more interesting for them. Carla, for instance, pointed out that the development of PA would allow the teacher to know his/her learners better and adapt his/her teaching practice to their interests, needs, and difficulties. Nancy and Leticia wrote that taking into account learners’ opinions and interests as well as addressing their needs would improve FLL as they would pay more attention to the learning process and would feel more fulfilled. Nancy added that PA could help bring about educational change in FLT: “frankly, I think it is a very good way of teaching and also an opportunity to change things in schools since as we already know nowadays English teachers’ methodology is not working at all”.

Apart from motivation, Leticia and Marcos underlined that the promotion of autonomy could help increase learners’ learning awareness. For Leticia, “autonomy is a good idea for teaching as students can discover their strengths and weaknesses” in the TL and “they can realise their progress and choose their own strategies to develop their learning process”. Marcos held that one reason for learners’ demotivation is the fact that they do not perceive the usefulness of learning the TL: “not many students have positive attitudes towards learning English. They feel that learning this language has nothing to do with them and do not find any reason to learn it, which results in low levels of motivation and interest”. He contended that PA could be the solution to this problem since its development “means more self-reflection and awareness-raising, and therefore a countless number of opportunities for learners to find the reasons why they are learning English and realise the importance it has in their lives”. Finally, Lola was sure that “autonomy can definitely help students to learn”. In her opinion, implementing PA could motivate them, help them develop their skills for lifelong learning, and raise their awareness of the learning process, leading them to understand the reason why what they do is of value to them:

People (let alone teenagers) do not like being told what to do, especially if they think it is for no reason. Our schools are full of teachers who tell their pupils *what* to do but fail in explaining *how* and, most importantly, *why* [...] This is, perhaps, the key for a full involvement of the students in their learning process. (original italics)

### 6.4.2 The participants' resistances and perceived obstacles to the development of autonomy

In the learning portfolios, the student teachers also voiced their doubts, concerns, and fears about the implementation of PA in FLT. Kristel found the notion of autonomy “necessary” in FLT, but she thought that it is very difficult to implement PA in the classroom. The reason is the ‘poor commitment’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016) which many learners show to education, especially their disinterest and resistance to work: “most of them will not do a single thing. They work because they know we are watching them and they have to”. In the beginning, Pilar was also doubtful about learners’ willingness to work if they are granted autonomy: “I think that most of them will tend to become lazy and autonomy may mean abandoning the subject”. In subsequent entries, she showed mixed feelings about the new concepts introduced in the module. On the one hand, she developed a positive perception of LA (“I find it interesting”) and stated that “[she] would really like to make an attempt to work this way [i.e. towards LA]”. Furthermore, she stressed the need to make teaching more learner-centred and argued for the promotion of reflection on the learning process:

Sometimes when we create a curriculum we forget that the students need to feel related to the contents. If we propose exercises whose topic is unknown or [unrelated] to their interests or ideas, students will never use the language, which is our main objective. This is why maybe it is necessary to let them propose topics that are going to be interesting for them and close to their world [...] It is important that students reflect on their own learning. Why are they studying a second language and why is this important for them and their future? I really like this idea because as a secondary school student nobody ever tried to make me aware of the importance of what I was learning, and maybe this is a good starting point to really help students.

However, when thinking of translating these ideas into practice, she could not avoid regarding PA as a ‘chaotic’ mode of teaching: “this approach still [sounds] chaotic and difficult to handle, so I guess before I can be completely convinced, I need to know more about how to work [on] it”. She was worried about losing control over the class: “I don’t know yet how to put them [i.e. the principles of PA] into practice without losing control of the students”.

Carla and Lola were convinced of the benefits of PA. Nevertheless, their doubts about this approach were related to its implementation in classroom practice (i.e. ‘the problem of enactment’ [Kennedy, 1999]). Both student teachers found it difficult to form a mental picture of what the development of PA would look like:

If I have to decide where I would like to stand, it is difficult to make a decision. On the one hand, I would like to work [on] pedagogy for autonomy, whereas on the other hand I feel insecure because I do not really know how to implement this model in the classroom. [For] now I have an idea, but not tangible examples of how pedagogy for autonomy has to be carried out. That is why, although I am aware of the benefits it has, I am still a bit sceptical. (Carla)

I have to admit that, although it sounds great, I still have to see it put into practice. It is not that I do not believe it, but it is very difficult for me to imagine this scenario when I have never experienced anything similar to this. (Lola)

Carla, for example, had this concern throughout the whole module. She did not know whether she would be able to implement PA and whether she would do it correctly. Like Pilar, she also associated this approach to FLT with a ‘chaotic’ mode of teaching:

I have my own doubts because I do not really know how to share control with my students. Furthermore, when we speak about autonomy, I cannot avoid thinking about chaos, although probably these fears come from my lack of experience. [For] now I agree with the implementation of this new approach, but I would like to get more examples of how autonomy can be fostered without losing control of the class.

Although Blanca conceived of PA as “the solution to the problems in Spanish education”, from the very beginning she thought of it as “something difficult for us to actually develop in our future lessons [...] What I think most of us are thinking is that theory is one thing and practice is a different one”. She later explained that the difficulty for them lied in their lack of practical experience in PA and the aforementioned ‘problem of enactment’ (*ibid.*):

We are somehow afraid of having to deliver a lesson following this new approach since we have no previous experience (not even as students) and we don’t know exactly how to act and the response (from students as well as from the school) [...] Sometimes where there is a will there is a way, but in this case we still don’t feel able to implement this autonomy of the learner in our teaching, mainly because we wouldn’t know how.

At the end of the module, she concluded that this concern is something they cannot help feeling:

It is normal that sometimes we feel fear [of] implement[ing] such a different way of teaching that we have never seen in person. It is especially difficult for us to think that we are ready to do it and that we will do it well.

One example was Silvia who, despite her lack of confidence, was determined to explore the implementation of PA:

I think I still have a long way to travel in order to know more and be able to implement effective pedagogy for autonomy, but I think it is necessary that I walk that path in order for my teaching practice to be successful and to contribute to educational change.



At the beginning of her portfolio, Nancy underlined that she advocated the notion of autonomy, but she had some doubts about it: “I support the idea of giving autonomy to learners, but I do not really know if it will eventually have better results than teaching in the traditional way [...] I agree on giving students some autonomy but not fully”. For this reason, she was in favour of putting into practice the notion of ‘flexible control’ (Aviram and Yonah, 2004). In her teaching, she would promote a combination of a more traditional approach and PA, thus moving from states in which the control would be exerted by the teacher (“the teacher decides what to do and how to do it”) to states in which learners would work autonomously. Her initial doubts persisted in the middle of the module. She supported the idea of fostering autonomy, but was still worried about the outcomes of PA. Nancy argued that she would explore its development and, depending on the results she obtained, she would continue implementing PA or would quit:

I really like it, but I am also afraid of the results I would obtain. I am really convinced about the idea of autonomy and I know I will put it into practice, but depending on the outcome I will go on with it or give up. I must also say that I will combine it with some grammar explanations since I also consider them quite relevant.

Nancy was not the only participant who voiced her concern about the outcomes of PA. As Anita pointed out, her initial perception of PA was not very positive. She was not convinced that this approach could be easily implemented and that learners were ready to assume responsibility for their learning:

I should admit that pedagogy for autonomy is not an effective method since it is very difficult to [accomplish] in a classroom where every student has his/her own difficulties, needs, and level. Furthermore, I think learners are not ready to work autonomously. They are used to attending “[master] classes” where the teacher explains the topic and then they do programmed activities related to this topic. It is hard to adapt the learners to a new method where they have to search for their own materials and resources and work independently. It entails a lot of responsibility and learners sometimes are not aware of the importance of this responsibility.

She explained that she had had no previous experience of autonomy either as a learner or as a teacher, which made it difficult for her to feel confident about developing PA in her future teaching: “if I have never [experienced] something similar to autonomy in class, I think it is really difficult for me to adopt this method with my future learners”. Despite this, she did not reject PA, but she needed to be sure about its positive results so as to implement it:

This does not mean that I will not try to promote autonomous learning, but I must be convinced about the efficacy and the good results that I will obtain using this process of

learning. Perhaps if I have the opportunity to observe a teacher who puts autonomy into practice and I see the usefulness and effectiveness of the method, I will feel more confident to use it in my class. I do not like taking risks, so I must be pretty sure about the efficacy of the method to use it.

At the end of the module, Anita emphasised the value of autonomy, although she still had serious doubts about the implementation of PA (especially about its outcomes):

Autonomy in the classroom could be very useful and effective as a way of learning, but students should be motivated and trained to foster it appropriately. If not, the method could [descend into] chaos and, finally, it could fail. This is the reason why I am a little bit reluctant [concerning] the method.

She concluded that she was not sure of implementing PA in her future teaching practice:

I am not sure [whether] in the future as a teacher I will develop pedagogy for autonomy. I would like to do it, but I think I need to be trained in depth, and I would like to observe a practical example of a class where the teacher uses this method, to see how it is working, and if the results will be what I want to gain at the end of the course. I am afraid of the failure of the method, so I need to be sure to foster it.

There were student teachers who changed their initial reservations for a more positive attitude towards PA as the module evolved. Clotilde's and Leticia's first impression of autonomy bore similarities to Anita's. Clotilde held that "it is a good idea", but doubted the feasibility of promoting autonomy, especially as regards learners' ability to take responsibility for their own learning:

When I first heard of autonomy, I immediately thought that it is quite difficult to achieve it. I would have said it is almost impossible. After today's class, I am not completely sure [whether] it is a good idea or not. I mean, of course it is a good idea and actually it is the "ideal" for education. What I am trying to explain is that since autonomy requires both willingness and ability to assume responsibility for learning, maybe it is too difficult to gain because students are not used to having this kind of responsibility [...] I would say that maybe you can learn more through autonomy, but I have to say that I am not completely sure about it. Honestly, I think if you give your students more autonomy, it can be a mess because not all the students are responsible enough to take this.

At this point her vision of FLT was between education as reproduction (i.e. pedagogy of dependence) and education as transformation<sup>56</sup> (i.e. PA): "I would like to be on the transformational side, but it is not easy so maybe I will stand in the middle". Like Anita, Clotilde considered that her doubts about PA arose due to her previous language learning experience in which there was no autonomy:

I said that being on the transformational side would be difficult due to my past experience as a learner. For example, it is challenging for me to think about learners as critical consumers and creative producers of knowledge since I was a passive learner because nobody encouraged me to be an active one while learning a foreign language.

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<sup>56</sup> The concepts of education as 'reproduction' and 'transformation' are taken from Vieira (1999).

The difference is that throughout her learning portfolio she did express her willingness to promote PA in her future teaching as she wanted to create a democratic atmosphere in the classroom. At first Leticia also doubted that learners could become responsible for conducting their learning on their own, but after completing the module she was convinced of the positive results of PA:

I must say that I have had some difficulties in the understanding of some concepts such as the understanding of the notion of autonomy, because I did not comprehend how students of that age could be responsible enough to carry out their learning process autonomously, choosing themselves what and how they want to learn [...] Nevertheless, after this module, I am willing to implement autonomy in my classroom because I am convinced that it is a great way to teach English.

Tammy originally harboured some doubts about autonomy: “I was a resolute believer that the more autonomous students were, the less they would do. In the beginning I was very sure [about it] although I didn’t have any evidence, it was simply my impression”. Nevertheless, her perception of LA changed during the module. She realised that its development can help promote more effective and meaningful learning, and she showed her disposition to foster autonomy in her teaching practice. In this sense, she now felt capable of discussing the teaching-learning process with learners:

Before, I used to think that if I asked learners if they found something useful, they would not respect me. Now I have changed my mind, I have been taught how to do it and I think it is a good idea.

Guillermo held that not all learners can be equally provided with autonomy and that they lack the “know-how” to be independent. He even thought that autonomy could be an obstacle for poor language learners: “for those determined students it is a good way to learn. They are keen. For those that have less level it may be more of a hindrance”. Later, he acknowledged that there had been a change in his beliefs and that, despite the constraints, autonomy should be promoted:

At this point I think I have changed some of my opinions as to what teaching involves. Autonomy should be endeavoured no matter what the circumstances are. Students should be motivated, given the freedom of choice when choosing the materials to study (of course teachers can help here and orientate wherever necessary).

Another student teacher who placed some restrictions on how much autonomy learners can have was Marcos. He was convinced of the benefits of PA, but he contended that “teenagers are not ready to assume the maximum level of autonomy” so he “would only give them some autonomy”.

### 6.4.3 Pedagogy for autonomy in the participants' future teaching practice

The student teachers recognised that developing PA in their future teaching practice would not be an easy task, but they were willing to explore its promotion. As we will see below, they would try to implement different principles of PA (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007): encouraging responsibility and choice, providing opportunities for learning to learn and self-regulation, creating opportunities for integration and explicitness, developing intrinsic motivation, providing for learner differentiation, encouraging action-orientedness, fostering conversational interaction, and promoting reflective inquiry.

Clotilde and Leticia outlined in their portfolios what their approach to PA would look like. Clotilde would *encourage responsibility and choice* among her learners (“I would give them several learning materials, methods, and strategies so [that] they could choose among them”); she would foster experimentation with learning strategies and would “encourage them to monitor their progress towards goals”, thus *providing opportunities for learning to learn and self-regulation*; she would *develop their intrinsic motivation* by means of original tasks and topics; and she would promote critical thinking and interaction. Leticia noted that her approach would focus on *encouraging responsibility, choice and self-regulation* and *fostering conversational interaction* by means of negotiation, although she placed some restrictions on this aspect:

The power in my teaching will be exerted by students and me [...] I would negotiate with learners the goals to be achieved, deadlines, grouping arrangements, and the topics they like, but I wouldn't negotiate the contents and methodology because I am the teacher and I consider that I am more conscious and objective to decide the contents they must learn and the best methodology to use. However, I have doubts [as to whether] I would negotiate evaluation.

Negotiation and conversational interaction would also be promoted by Sabina: “I will negotiate with my students some aspects of language teaching such as topics, goals, deadlines, homework, books to read, etc.”.

Most of the student teachers pointed out that nowadays FLT in Spain is largely permeated by a pedagogy of dependence in which teachers hardly promote learners' involvement and motivation, but force them to have a passive role and be under their authority. In this regard, Daniel stressed the need to change this authoritarian vision of the teacher (“we must never forget that teachers should not be dictators, they are a facilitator”), whereas trainees like Fenella advocated that learners must be actively

involved in their learning: “students need to have an active role in education to lead their own learning the way that is better for them”. To *encourage responsibility*, several student teachers (i.e. Clotilde, Julia, Lola, María, Sabina, and Silvia) would promote self-assessment. They held that by assessing their own work learners would have the opportunity to gain more independence and monitor their progress in language learning. Julia, for example, added that she did not like evaluating by means of tests and wanted to incorporate activities or projects<sup>57</sup> in which learners’ work would be evaluated by their classmates:

I have never been very fond of exams and tests, hence my evaluation plan will consist [in] a final project where students will have to demonstrate what they have learnt by integrating the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing), for instance, the elaboration of a webcomic (this integrates writing and reading) and later an oral presentation (it integrates speaking and listening for the students who are listening to the presentation) [...] In addition to what I previously said, I would give my learners a sheet for assessment and would give them the responsibility for assessing their peers.

Apart from being passive, it was noted that learners have little voice and influence on the teaching-learning process: “we are used to completely different classroom dynamics where *nobody cares about the students’ opinion*” (Lola, emphasis added). For this reason, different student teachers underlined the need to give them a voice, thus encouraging a climate of open dialogue between the teacher and learners as well as *developing their intrinsic motivation*:

I also think most of the classrooms that we can find are controlled, because the teacher controls the [class], the learning method, the evaluation... without taking into account the opinion or possibility of negotiating with learners. Thus, there is the need to ask learners about their opinion and negotiate with them some of the aspects about their learning [...] One of the changes that I would like to include is the possibility of working with my own materials and that the learners could suggest what type of materials they would like to use in class. Furthermore, the use of materials and resources could be negotiated with learners to give them more responsibility. (Anita)

Students should be given voice in all aspects of the language class. For example, teachers should listen to and take on board their opinions as students know themselves better than teachers do, i.e. they know their likes/dislikes, they know how to study (they each have their own methodology), they know where their difficulties lie. By giving voice to students we can better orientate the class and devise materials to best suit their needs [...] I would devise a syllabus aimed at the needs of the students by asking them questions, asking them what their problems/doubts are, etc. and in turn use the class to their advantage. (Guillermo)

We as teachers can help learners to become more and more autonomous by doing something as simple- and at the same time [as] uncommon in the classrooms- as talking to them: to ask them about their interests; to try to find out about their strengths and

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<sup>57</sup> *Encouraging action-orientedness.*

weaknesses and make them aware of them; to identify the behavioural, emotional, and academic problems that may arise... (Lola)

We, as teachers, should try to give voice to our students and to let them decide some aspects and topics of the subject [...] They have to realise that you care about their interests and that their opinions count for classroom's decisions. (Lorena)

It is necessary that students feel that their opinions, experiences, and interests are valued in the class [...] My ideal is that they decide all they want to do and that they completely regulate their learning [...] I can definitely make my class more learner-centred, taking their opinions into account and giving them more responsibility. (Marcos)

Clotilde, Guillermo, Julia and Leticia further suggested using different tools (i.e. questionnaires, portfolios, and interviews) to know learners' opinions about the teaching-learning process:

Another way to improve my teaching is collecting and analysing learner data. I think it is a really good idea if I have interviews with my students and I ask them if they like the way I am teaching and so on. I am sure students will like it because they will know that their opinions count for me [...] Maybe I should also give them some anonymous questionnaires so that they can feel free to respond honestly. Giving them the responsibility to decide what aspects about the classes they would change will increase their motivation because they will see I care about their interests. Moreover, it would help me to get some feedback about my teaching so I could solve problems and adjust my teaching to my students' needs. (Clotilde)

I think it is important for students to fill out a mini questionnaire before the school year begins to see what expectations they have and what problems they may encounter. Of course we can also ask them what they want to learn. (Guillermo)

I think that a portfolio is a suitable way of reflecting on many issues and showing evidence, that is, a positive and enriching way of approaching your students so that you can see their [weaknesses] and also their strengths and you as a teacher can see how to improve your methodology and also reflect upon it. It is positive to see what they think about your lesson from their perspective, and not just from the teacher's eyes. (Julia)

I am also thinking that a good method to know if my students are happy about what they are learning and the way I am conducting the learning could be, for instance, at the end of the term I could facilitate a questionnaire to students where they could analyse the course and my way of teaching. (Leticia)

Another way to give learners a voice and increase their involvement and motivation would be *encouraging choice*. In this sense, the teaching of the four language skills was regarded by various student teachers as the perfect avenue to do so. Concerning reading, trainees like Fátima, Julia, Lorena and Marcos would let their learners choose the book they would like to read. For Tania, providing them with choice could contribute to making the practice of this language skill a more motivating activity for learners:

Reading is essential to acquire a second language and maybe it is also the skill with more difficulties to promote motivation. However, we should try different strategies, e.g. asking students about their interests and plan tasks which have to do with reading about

their favourite topics. Another idea is that each student can choose what they want to read and we are fostering motivation at the same time we are working on differentiation.

Apart from choice, Sabina would give her learners full responsibility for writing the questions for the reading comprehension activity:

I will bring some books to the classroom so that the students choose one of them to read. I will try to bring titles that may be interesting for them. Once they have chosen a book, I will divide the students into groups depending on the book they have chosen. After that, I will negotiate with the learners the time they have to read the book. Once this time has finished, I will ask them to write some comprehension questions for their partners to answer orally. Each student has to ask a question to each member of the group. For each question they answer correctly, they get a point.

To work on writing and speaking, Tammy explained that:

A good idea could be to make students choose a singer, an actor, a group of music, a writer... whoever they like or an interesting topic for them, something they really like. Then, they would be asked for a composition, 2 or 3 pages, and they would have to present it to the rest of the class as a presentation.

Sabina would propose a similar task to her learners: “I also like the idea of promoting project work since it fosters motivation, autonomy, group work, etc. I would let them choose a topic to write about and make an oral presentation in class”. As far as listening is concerned, she would combine choice with the promotion of critical thinking and self-assessment:

The first step to encourage autonomy when practising listening comprehension in the classroom consists [in] giving the learners some choice about the topic and level of the audio recording. Secondly, I will introduce a debate about the topic dealt with in the listening activity, with the purpose of developing critical thinking in the students. Finally, I will introduce self-assessment by giving them a test to evaluate their improvement.

For the student teachers, FLT is not only characterised by learners’ dependence upon the teacher but also by their lack of reflection on the learning process:

In our educational system, learners are used to being told what to do, without reflecting on their learning, so the learning process becomes a mere mechanical activity where the only thing that matters is the result. (Lola)

Spanish students are used to being dependent on the teacher to learn, and they believe that they simply have to study what appears in the book, without reflecting about what they learn, why they do it, or how they do it. (Pilar)

In this respect, some participants (e.g. Guillermo, Julia, Kristel, and Sabina) maintained that reflection is crucial for learners’ learning and they expressed their willingness to encourage learners to reflect on their own learning process<sup>58</sup>, for example, by means of

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<sup>58</sup> *Promoting reflective inquiry.*

a portfolio. Alicia also wanted to promote reflection among her learners, but without turning it into a meaningless practice. That is, she warned about the danger of saturating learners with many reflective, learning-awareness exercises:

By constantly wanting students to reflect on exercises we risk taking something that could be interactive, varied, diverse, memorable, and make it theoretical [...] I think reflection is essential, but it must not overshadow the practical aspects of class and it mustn't be excessive. It must be complimentary.

To increase learning awareness, Kristel, Lola, Nancy, Sabina and Tammy highlighted the importance of explaining to learners the rationale behind each learning activity (“we have to make sure that we make our learners understand why certain tasks or activities are useful for their learning” [Lola]). They pointed out that the vast majority of FL teachers hardly make this rationale explicit to learners and, for that reason, they would like to incorporate this procedure into their teaching practice, *creating opportunities for integration and explicitness and for learning to learn*.

To promote communication in the TL as well as autonomous learning, various participants indicated their willingness to implement a task-based approach in their future teaching practice, thus *encouraging action-orientedness*. One of them was Guillermo, who highlighted the ineffectiveness of form-focused pedagogies:

I still believe that focusing on just the form may be of little educational value. Language learning does not need grammatical rules nor does it need extensive use of drilling. Students need to interact in the L2 naturally as if it were their L1. If students continue to learn languages in traditional form-focused classes, then they will not acquire the language efficiently [...] Task-based pedagogy for me is fundamental as it focuses on learning to communicate in the L2 and also avails of authentic texts. It also promotes use of the language both in and out of the classroom. The “task” part of this concept focuses on things we do naturally. It describes what people do on the street at any given time. It's authentic. When we take these “tasks” (i.e. going to the doctor's or ordering a taxi) they become an authentic source of material for the task-based lesson. Students have to think for themselves and not just repeat what other people say in a textbook [...] If given the chance I would like to implement and experiment with task-based pedagogy in my classroom due to its authenticity.

Paqui and Kristel emphasised that this approach would enable them to provide learners with opportunities for authentic language use and more learner-centred teaching, whereas Pilar and Tania held that by working on tasks learners could develop different skills and competences such as creativity, critical thinking, and autonomy. For Lorena, apart from making lessons more interactive, the task-based approach could improve FLT in Spain:



Teachers should foster communicative situations in the classroom. Lessons should be action-oriented, that is, the learner has to be the agent and the teacher has to be just a mediator in the conversation, promoting the [use] of English [among] the students. I think that interaction is an essential aspect when learning a language, it is something basic to practise with the students. For all these reasons, I consider the task-based approach as the best method to learn English [...] I would put this approach into practice because I think it is a great advance in education and it could be a very good way to improve the situation in our classrooms.

Clotilde's willingness to adopt this approach was a reaction against her previous language learning experience: "I would say it was based on traditional form-focused pedagogy. Since I really hated this kind of teaching I would like to use a task-based pedagogy when I become a teacher". She was sure that at the beginning of its implementation she would face some difficulties, but she rejected following a traditional approach: "maybe at the beginning of my teaching experience I will not know how to do it, but I know for sure what I do not have to do. I will not teach what I was taught". Marcos, in contrast, would use the task-based approach "as a reference to construct [his] own teaching theory", although he also supported a form-focused approach:

After having taken a closer look at traditional form-focused pedagogy and task-based pedagogy, I definitely prefer pedagogy based on tasks and centred on the learners. However, I agree with the form-focused pedagogy on considering that focusing on form can be useful.

Finally, there were student teachers who remarked that many FL teachers tend to impose a unified model of learning, thus neglecting learners' individual needs, abilities, and interests. To counteract this lack of *learner differentiation*, Anita, Leticia and Marcos would try to adjust their teaching practices to the existing individual differences in the FL classroom:

The first aspect to take into account is to think they are individuals and each one has his/her own level and method of learning, so I should teach in an individualised way at the same time that I teach for the whole group of the class. (Anita)

In a class with diverse students I would try to teach with different methods and strategies to promote all students' learning. (Leticia)

Differentiation is a duty for me. I think that this is the only way to be an effective teacher [...] Therefore, I would like to adapt my teaching to the needs, preferences, and interests of every student. In my ideal class, every learner would be practising the skills s/he wished (adapted to their level) using the activities and exercises s/he preferred. (Marcos)

Pilar, for instance, would encourage greater flexibility in the classroom and would adapt the curriculum to learners' individual needs. Other trainees (i.e. Carla, Julia, and María) would group learners according to their needs, difficulties, interests, and abilities. In

their portfolios, the student teachers acknowledged that providing for learner differentiation would make learning more effective and meaningful. For some of them, however, learner differentiation was one of the most difficult aspects to deal with due to the high teacher-pupil ratio per class.

#### **6.4.4 The participants' awareness of the need for educational change**

The analysis of the learning portfolios revealed the participants' growing awareness of the need for educational change. Various student teachers acknowledged that it is necessary to change the pedagogical *status quo* due to the ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted in (FL) education:

Learners, teachers and most people have a preconceived idea of education and it is really difficult to escape from our past. However, we have to do it since as we can see this type of education is not working at all. (Clotilde)

[C]hildren are just taught under the rules, direction, and control of the teacher, and are trained to pass exams without giving them reasons why they are obliged to study those things. But this educational system is not working. Hundreds of children leave school every year in our country and we continue doing [nothing] to change it. (Delfin)

The present state of FL teaching in Spain shows that we cannot accept the situation as it is. We need to change it and this can only be done by pushing reality forwards and innovating. (Marcos)

Daniel had the conviction that there is the urgent need for educational change in Spanish education: "during my degree I thought that the system was wrong. I wondered how it could be possible that the common way of teaching was the one that did not fit most of the students". He maintained that teachers must abandon more traditional approaches in which there is no creativity, critical thinking and interaction in order to adopt more learner-centred and communicative approaches.

For the student teachers, there are different reasons why many teachers maintain the pedagogical *status quo* and different requirements which need to be met to bring about educational change and promote autonomy. According to Carla, most teachers do not explore the 'space of possibility' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) due to the dominant culture of 'teaching to the test' (Raappana, 1997). They are only worried about preparing learners for the exam so that they can get good results. Daniel pointed to many teachers' unwillingness to innovate their teaching practice, whereas Tania also referred to their lack of knowledge about new teaching methods:

Many teachers [neither] have changed their syllabus for years nor have adapted it to [learner] differentiation. Indeed, they give the lesson without paying attention to students' needs. (Daniel)

Many teachers keep on using traditional methods that do not contribute at all to the students' learning, maybe because they do not know about other methods or another reason could be that they are not willing to try new techniques. (Tania)

Other student teachers remarked that it is easier for teachers to follow a traditional approach (e.g. "teaching is simple if we think about the old way of teaching, that is, teachers lecturing and students listening" [Clotilde]). For Anita, Leticia, and Tammy, for instance, this was the major reason why educational change is not effected and why the notion of autonomy is not promoted in the FL classroom:

They do not want to innovate in their classes, because it is easier to follow the textbook, to provide some extra exercises, and to follow a traditional teaching method. (Anita)

The easiest thing for a teacher is a controlled planning. For that reason, in many cases, teachers do not give autonomy to their learners. They have fallen into a routine and they have got used to this. (Leticia)

We can do things, but we say that we cannot because we are lazy and it is easier to teach as we were taught or it is easier to take the textbook than preparing students for autonomy. (Tammy)

Tammy was convinced that "every teacher can do something" to change the pedagogical *status quo* and added that the only question he/she has to ask himself/herself is "am I willing to...?". In this sense, it was noted that one of the main requirements for educational change is teachers' willingness and professional commitment: "the involvement and will of the teacher is the main condition which must be fulfilled to develop any kind of change in teaching" (Blanca).

In her learning portfolio, Lorena stressed the pressing need for teachers to innovate their teaching practice and criticised their passive attitude towards the ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted:

Teachers have to innovate in the classroom, they have to explore new paths in order to make their lessons more productive and effective [...] If we keep on making the same mistakes again and again and we observe that our way of teaching is not the best option because it does not work, we must change it instead of being passive without doing anything to improve it.

To do this, she considered that 'teachers' professional values' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) are crucial:

It has been proved that we can change things in order to achieve a better educational system but, first of all, we have to be *willing* to do it and to want to improve the situation.

*Every teacher can do something with willingness, hard work, engagement and, the most important thing, passion and motivation. (emphasis added)*

For Anita, Blanca, Kristel, and Tania, teachers' motivation and commitment is the key to the promotion of autonomy in the classroom.

Apart from being motivated and committed, Blanca, Guillermo and Marcos held that teachers must be reflective and critical of their own work so as to constantly improve and innovate their teaching practice:

Teachers sometimes make their students reflect on their learning, but they rarely reflect on their teaching or their learning. It would be helpful for them to organise their ideas and analyse how they are doing their job and how it could be improved. (Blanca)

For a teacher to improve there needs to be constant self-criticism on behalf of the teacher with a view to improving his/her classes [...] Teachers must reflect on how their classes have gone, evaluate them and then see if there is any room for improvement, find solutions to possible problems or if they are going to adopt this same strategy again. (Guillermo)

The desire to do something is due to reflection on classroom practice and the current situation. I believe that this is the starting point from which to move on to change. Only a reflective teacher will realise that things should be changed and that there are many things that we could do to change them. (Marcos)

Some participants showed a disposition to apply this critical, reflective approach to their future teaching practice in order to make it more effective and learner-centred:

How can I provide good/effective teaching? Through reflection, thinking of the ways I can achieve the students' learning and changing or improving the things I consider that will benefit them in a positive way. (Julia)

After each lesson I have to think about my methods and materials, if my lesson has been effective, if students have been motivated or bored, and how I could improve it. (Leticia)

We have to observe and reflect on our practice in order to make it more successful. We have to innovate, to research new methods and demands, and to adapt our teaching and materials to the context and to students' interests and needs. If we want to improve teaching, we must not be [resistant] to change. (Silvia)

As teachers we have to be self-critical and ask ourselves if we are [carrying out] our actions properly in the classroom. (Tania)

Lorena, in fact, had already adopted this approach in her *practicum*:

This is what is happening to me at this moment because of my teaching practice. I try to do my best every day in the classroom with my students and, at the end of the day, I reflect on what we have done in class. I always think of the students' attitude during my lesson and of their motivation and participation. In this way, I can know what things I should change in the future in order to make my lessons more interesting and productive and how I could improve my students' learning of English.

To improve FL education, several student teachers (i.e. Blanca, Clotilde, Fátima, Lorena, Marcos, Sabina, and Tania) contended that it is of the utmost importance that they continue learning throughout their teaching career (e.g. “it is a must because even if we are graduated and professional educators, we still need to develop learning skills to improve our abilities and competences” [Clotilde]). They have to keep themselves up to date with the new methods and pedagogical practices as well as informed about the latest research on education and FLT. This way, as Sabina noted, they would be able to “maintain a critical view of language education”.

#### 6.4.5 The participants’ evaluation of the module

On the whole, the participants valued the module positively in the conclusion of their portfolios. They considered that it had improved their knowledge of FLT and had contributed substantially to their training as FL teachers:

I think I now have the knowledge that I need to be a professional. I’ve learnt valuable tips [for] creating successful lessons that will be more beneficial for the students. I’ve discovered the meaning of learner differentiation, the self-determination theory, and how they come into play in the classroom. (Alicia)

I am satisfied with the contents of the lectures because I learned what I needed for my training, in fact, I have learned more than I expected [...] Learning new methods helped to open up my mind to the possibilities of teaching [...] This [module] has been really useful because in the end I learned the theory of how to teach and it gave me ideas of how to put it into practice. (Daniel)

The module has lived up to my expectations, because it has provided me with the necessary tools to become a more effective teacher. (Marcos)

I also consider that these contents have helped me to [gain] new useful knowledge to apply in the classroom. (María)

At this point of the year I have to admit that I have suffered a significant evolution in my [training] as a teacher. (Pilar)

I have to say that I have learnt more than I expected and that this [module] has made me *change in some ways my personal view of teaching*. (Sabina, emphasis added)

This [module] and the way it made me reflect on my insights into the teaching practice will have a strong influence on my future as a teacher: in my opinion, I have become much more aware of the complexity of teaching and of what it entails; I have established clearer principles to address my teaching practice and got knowledge about what to do (what to implement in my classroom practice). (Silvia)

*These new insights have opened new paths* which enrich my knowledge and training as a teacher [...] We have had the possibility of learning new informed ideas and approaches, in some cases different from our initial conceptions, and, what is even more important, we have been able to re-construct or verify our own philosophy. (Tania, emphasis added)

As pointed out in the quotations by Sabina and Tania, some student teachers also noticed that the module had had a significant impact on their vision of FLT. Anita, for instance, noted that her original vision was largely influenced by her previous language learning experience:

At the beginning of this [module], my idea of teaching English was very simple: the easiest and most effective way of teaching English was based on teaching grammar and vocabulary to do many activities related to these and to do some listening and speaking activities to improve the oral skills [...] I would like to say that most of my English teachers have used the traditional method, so my view of teaching English was that.

After finishing the module, she considered that her vision had changed, aiming at a more communicative approach to FLT and placing less emphasis on grammar:

The aim of teaching/learning English is COMMUNICATION. Teaching/learning a language does not consist in the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, sentence structures... All these are not valid if the speaker is not able to put into practice and use them appropriately in communication skills. Perhaps this is one of the problems of Spanish students of English. They are worried about the need to learn grammar and to know lots of structures, but they do not use them in a real context. (original emphasis)

In a similar vein, Fenella underlined that due to her own experience as a FL learner she had always conceived of FLT within the frame of education as ‘reproduction’ (Vieira, 1999). Nevertheless, thanks to the module, she had new ideas and strategies to change her traditional vision:

It gave me new ideas to improve my ‘traditional’ lessons. It let me know techniques to make students independent thinkers, to motivate them, to encourage them to continue studying English after the lessons and, what is more important, to learn that we have to believe in changes.

Generally speaking, their previous language learning experience exerted a great influence on how the student teachers understood FLT at the beginning of the module. Thus, Leticia acknowledged that if she had not taken this module, she would have continued teaching like her past teachers had taught her:

I also thought that when I became a teacher, I would use the teaching methods which my teachers used to teach me in high school. However, my vision of teaching has changed too. Now I think only about how I am going to promote autonomy among learners. For example, I will give learners opportunities of choice about as many aspects of the learning process as possible, for example, activities, teaching materials, strategies to be used.

If there was a concept which considerably changed the student teachers’ conception of language teaching and learning, it was autonomy (e.g. “since I first heard about pedagogy for autonomy, I must say that *my vision of the teaching-learning*

*process has been turned upside down*” [Lola, emphasis added]). Different student teachers explained that the module had helped them become familiar with this notion and, consequently, develop a new vision of FLT:

I have realised I knew nothing about autonomy and I am glad because I think I have learnt a lot. I knew there were some aspects about traditional methodology in foreign language learning that I disagreed with, but I did not know what teachers could do. I did not know how teachers could cope with problems like a large number of students per class or different levels of proficiency within the same classroom. (Clotilde)

One of the most important things I have learnt in this [module] is the concept of autonomy [...] Before starting this [module], I had never known about this kind of approach, but now that I have a clearer idea *my vision has been changing to the autonomous approach to learning*. It is more flexible and negotiable, I have realised the importance of not only creating real-life situations but of developing autonomy in the learner so that he/she can implement this knowledge in any field of his/her life. (Julia, emphasis added)

Having experienced as a student a learning process that did not give preference whatsoever to the learner’s interests, this new approach to autonomy gives me a glimmer of hope. It is possible to help students to be more autonomous and foster lifelong learning, and now I am discovering how to do it. *A new perspective of teaching has been opened up before me*, and now that I think about it, it seems weird that I had never reflected [on] it before, since it looks so plain and logic. (Lola, emphasis added)

I have learned about a concept I did not know before: autonomy. Now I know that autonomy is an essential tool for students to become responsible, independent, and motivated; and it is a very effective way to encourage lifelong learning. (Sabina)

Before this [module], I had never heard about the concept of autonomy. But I can say *it has opened new paths for me...* I think it is essential to develop students’ autonomy and self-determination in order to help them grow personally, socially, and academically. (Silvia, emphasis added)

For some of them, autonomy had become a central goal for their future teaching practice, although this would not mean rejecting the use of a traditional approach to FLT:

Before this [module] I did not know anything about pedagogy for autonomy and, after it, I think I will implement this new notion as much as possible in my future teaching. (Delfin)

I would like my work to be based on the students’ responsibility and self-determination as well as critical awareness [...] I would like to listen more to the voices of the learners as individual persons [...] But I have also learnt that one cannot always work exclusively in terms of learner autonomy. As a teacher, I will sometimes have to use traditional methods in order to provide information, explain a grammatical rule, etc. (Mar)

My objectives have changed and they have changed because *I have been shown another path* and I want to follow it because I think that as a teacher I will be ten thousand times better and that my students will learn three times more if I do it well. Now my objectives are clear: to be able to create conditions where output, input, and motivation take place; to have a clear pedagogical framework; to learn more about teaching; and to implement autonomy. I think in a way I have released myself from the textbook as the main source

of material and also from typical and traditional teaching. I know that I have a wide world to explore where many things are possible. (Tammy, emphasis added)

Tammy, in fact, explained that she had put PA into practice in her private lessons with Marina, a 16-year-old student, and that the experience had been completely satisfactory to her and the student. It must be noted, however, that accepting the ideas covered in the module was not an easy process as Lorena and Pilar remarked in their respective conclusions:

The things that I have learnt during this [module] have been useful and productive for me and I think that they will also be very helpful for my future as a teacher. I have to say that I was not very convinced of it at the beginning since I believed that all the proposals in class were very unrealistic and that they did not take into account the real situation nowadays. (Lorena)

This [i.e. the learning portfolio] is somehow the summary of a lot of work and the *inner conflict* between what I always thought I knew about teaching and the new catalogue of possibilities presented to me, which may be exciting and scary at the same time, but help me open my mind to the reality in the world of education. (Pilar, emphasis added)

Various student teachers also emphasised that the module had enabled them to better define their identity as a FL teacher:

I [would] say that my knowledge about the teaching of English has increased enormously in terms of the goals I want to establish in the future, I have developed a clear idea of the kind of teacher I want to be and the kind of teacher I do not want to be, and I have realised my weaknesses and strengths in this matter. (Julia)

Fenella and Leticia, for instance, began to see themselves as ‘agents of educational change’ (Saban *et al.*, 2007). They had become aware of the pressing need to change the pedagogical *status quo* and of the key role they can play in effecting this change:

This [module] has opened new paths in the sense that I see now clearly that many learning strategies are obsolete as they are not successful and changes are needed. It has given us ideas and let us know about the possibility of fostering autonomy in the lessons, which was completely unknown to me. This new vision opens ways to improve the teaching of learning significantly. I learnt that as society changes, education should change too. However, it seems there is no development but *we have to contribute to changing it*. (Fenella, emphasis added)

One of the most important things is that I have started to see education as something that every one of us can contribute to its development for a better change. (Leticia)

Following this line of thought, Clotilde determined what kind of teacher she would be: “I do not like traditional teachers so I would like to be innovative and if I want to be like that I should investigate my teaching and I should be informed about new approaches to language education”. Kristel had experienced a change in her self-image as a FL teacher. Now she regarded herself as being more flexible and willing to negotiate with



learners. She had gone from being a more authoritarian teacher to one who would be able to relinquish control: “I think there has been a change in my mind [...] I was a controller. Everything that happened in each activity and throughout the lesson was supervised by me. I have learnt to delegate, to let them do”.

Finally, participants like Alicia and Tania wrote that thanks to the module they could become more critical, reflective practitioners:

I have learnt to put more thought into my actions as a teacher [...] Before this [module], spontaneity usually guided my decisions rather than reflection. (Alicia)

I [have] noticed that my perceptions regarding second language teaching have positively changed. With all this work, I have developed a more critical thinking regarding education. I used to construct my ideas concerning what I believed, but now I feel that it is very important to be informed before constructing an approach or giving opinions without foundation. Therefore, I think I have become a more reflective pre-service teacher. (Tania)

In this regard, the learning portfolio proved to be of great value to the student teachers. Some of them argued that it had provided them with an avenue to reflect on FLT and their professional development as well as being autonomous:

Thanks to activities like this portfolio I have become aware of how much you can learn by reflecting on new ideas, new concepts you have learnt and the exercises you have done [...] I have found [out] my fears and weaknesses but also my strengths. But, overall, it has helped me to define the kind of teacher I want to be. (Blanca)

I have reached the conclusion that writing a portfolio has given me a great opportunity to reflect on all my experiences as a whole and has demonstrated what I have been able to achieve throughout the [module]. (Daniel)

This tool of learning has been of great help [to] me because I have realised that it has helped me to be persevering and responsible daily since by building a portfolio I have had to show creativity, imagination, ability to be critical as well as autonomy. (Leticia)

Doing the portfolio, I have reflected a great deal on teaching, which I am not used to, and thanks to that, I have realised that I am eager to start putting into practice all the new things I have learnt. (Sabina)

Marcos, for example, explained that maintaining a portfolio of his professional learning had allowed him to have much greater awareness of himself as a prospective teacher and to engage in self-directed professional development:

This portfolio has allowed me to live a real learning experience. In fact, I would like to point out that it has given me the chance to get to know myself better: my beliefs, my opinions, my interests, my concerns, or the goals that I wanted to achieve. I have also been enabled to choose the information, materials, and resources that I have considered appropriate, so I have directed my learning process. I have become aware of the importance of reflecting on one’s own learning process and practice. That is the reason why I think that the development of this portfolio has helped me become more self-aware.

In addition, this portfolio has allowed me to reflect on my priorities as a future teacher and to know what I have to do if I want to become a successful and effective teacher.

## **6.5 Analysis of the revision of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”**

This section analyses the data obtained in the participants’ revision of their original answers to the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”, paying special attention to the changes observed in these answers. The data reported below belong to 21 participants from the sample since three student teachers’ revisions of their initial questionnaire were not included in their learning portfolio and they were not provided afterwards by these students (Julia, Silvia, and Sabina). Like section 6.2, this section is divided into seven subsections.

### **6.5.1 The participants’ reasons for becoming a teacher of English**

Table 6.15 shows the student teachers’ reasons for becoming a teacher of English at the beginning and at the end of the module. On this occasion, only six student teachers referred to their love for languages as one of their major reasons for becoming a FL teacher. Some of them further acknowledged the significance of English in our present-day society and pointed out that their aim would be to make learners aware that the TL is a communicative tool and that its learning can be of great value to them in the future:

I want my students to know that the language is a useful tool for communication and not a school subject. (Fenella)

Because I am passionate about languages, but also because I want to have the opportunity to pass on this passion to other people and make them understand how important languages are, especially English, in our daily lives and for our students’ future in the job market. (Lola)

Now I know that English is a very useful tool for communication and I want my students to be aware of it. (Mar)

Four student teachers from the sample continued regarding ‘teaching as a calling or vocation’ (Sinclair, 2008). In this sense, Clotilde stressed the need to change learners’ view of FLL and wanted to be the teacher who engages them in a new approach to language learning:

I would like to be a teacher of English because I would like to help students to learn English. I think most students need a different view of what learning a language is and I think I could help them to explore this new approach.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire <sup>59</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-Desire to work with young students -Significance of English in our society -Teaching as a calling or vocation	= <sup>60</sup> Desire to work with young students +Love for teaching
<b>Anita</b>	-Love for languages/English -Teaching as a calling or vocation	=Teaching as a calling or vocation +Desire to make a difference in learners' life
<b>Blanca</b>	-Teaching as a calling or vocation	+Significance of English in our society
<b>Carla</b>	-Love for languages/English -Significance of teaching in our society	+Teaching as a calling or vocation
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Love for languages/English -Teaching as a calling or vocation	=Teaching as a calling or vocation
<b>Daniel</b>	-Significance of English in our society	+Desire to make a difference in society
<b>Delfin</b>	-Influence of significant others	Same answer
<b>Fátima</b>	-Love for teaching	+Desire to promote LA
<b>Fenella</b>	-Love for languages/English -Significance of English in our society	=Love for languages/English =Significance of English in our society +Significance of teaching in our society
<b>Guillermo</b>	-Teaching as a way of making a living	+Teaching as a calling or vocation
<b>Kristel</b>	-Love for teaching -Teaching as a calling or vocation	Same answer
<b>Leticia</b>	-Desire to make a difference in learners' life -Love for teaching	+Desire to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i>
<b>Lola</b>	-Love for languages/English	=Love for languages/English +Significance of English in our society
<b>Lorena</b>	-Love for languages/English -Significance of English in our society	Same answer +Desire to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i> +Teaching as a calling or vocation
<b>Mar</b>	-Love for languages/English	=Love for languages/English +Significance of English in our society
<b>Marcos</b>	-Desire to make a difference in learners' life -Significance of English in our society	Same answer +Desire to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i>
<b>María</b>	-Love for languages/English -Significance of English in our society -Teaching as a calling or vocation	=Teaching as a calling or vocation +Love for teaching
<b>Nancy</b>	-Love for teaching	=Love for teaching
<b>Pilar</b>	-Love for teaching	+Teaching is not a vocation
<b>Tammy</b>	-Desire to make a difference in learners' life -Desire to work with young students -Love for languages/English	Same answer
<b>Tania</b>	-Love for languages/English	=Love for languages/English +Desire to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i> +Teaching as a calling or vocation

Table 6.15. The participants' reasons for becoming a teacher of English in both questionnaires

Anita, on the other hand, realised the significant influence that the teacher can exert on learners' life and argued that being a teacher is more than teaching them a subject. It entails helping and preparing learners for the future and, in doing so, she would strive for their personal and academic development, thus becoming a 'transformative intellectual' (Kumaravadivelu, 2012):

<sup>59</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Questionnaire: Questionnaire "Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...". 2<sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire: Revision of the Questionnaire "Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...".

<sup>60</sup> '=' means that the idea was repeated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> questionnaire while '+' shows that the idea was new.

I think it is a good way to help young people to build their own path. To be a teacher is more than teaching a subject. As a teacher, I will help students, I will provide them with some effective strategies to increase their learning, to grow up not only in a pedagogical way, but also to follow their path and become people with a good future. (Anita)

Other student teachers (Carla, Guillermo, Lorena, and Tania) began to see teaching as a calling at the end of the module. They concurred that they wanted to become teachers so as to share their knowledge with others (e.g. learners). Carla, for instance, conceived of teaching as a social responsibility in which she could return her language knowledge to society and could contribute to the objective of making learners multilingual:

The reason why I want to become a teacher is that due to the fact that I have had the luck of growing up with two languages, thanks to certain life circumstances, I assume that it is now my obligation to return this gift back to society. I consider that I have the obligation to teach students regarding the aim that one day they may become [multilingual] as the [current] European proposals advocate.

In this questionnaire, their ‘love for teaching’ (Sinclair, 2008) was relevant to several student teachers. While Alicia and María professed their love and admiration for teaching for the first time, Nancy rephrased her original answer to reaffirm this love, explaining that after the *practicum* she liked teaching more than at the beginning of the module: “because after having been six weeks giving classes in a secondary school I have realised that I like it more than I thought before. I will feel happy if I devote my life to teaching English”. Pilar, however, changed her initial answer (in which she said that she liked teaching) to acknowledge that becoming a teacher was not her vocation: “I have to admit that teaching for me is not a vocational thing. Teaching teenagers is not my childhood dream, but I think I could make a change if I finally have the chance to teach”. Another student teacher who changed his answer was Daniel. He was now attracted by the idea of being able to make a difference in our current society: “I want to become a teacher because it is a job whose purpose is to improve society”. On the other hand, some reasons continued being referred to only by one or two participants: the significance of teaching in our society, the ‘desire to work with young students’, and the ‘influence of significant others’ (e.g. past teachers) (*ibid.*).

Finally, a new motivation for becoming a FL teacher emerged in this revision of the questionnaire: the desire to change the pedagogical *status quo*. Five participants contended that their aim as teachers would be to improve our current educational system and change how teaching is conducted in FL education (e.g. “I would like to change the

educational situation that we have nowadays in our society” [Lorena] or “I feel the necessity of changing the system in which the second language is taught” [Tania]). These participants projected an image of themselves as ‘agents of educational change’ (Saban *et al.*, 2007). Marcos, for example, intended “to become a teacher of English to improve the current situation”. He explained that thanks to the module he had become aware of the pressing need to change how the English language is taught:

This module has made me aware of the fact that the way in which English is taught in Spain should be changed if we want to improve the present situation. I want to promote this change, and this change can be done by encouraging autonomous learning, teaching English for communication, and differentiating learning.

Nevertheless, this need for a change did not mean that he would totally reject the traditional approach to language teaching: “the traditional way of teaching the language, based on ‘fill in the gaps’ exercises and lists of vocabulary would play a role in my teaching, but it would not be the heart of it”. A more learner-centred view of language teaching was also advocated by Leticia:

I want to become a teacher of English because I would like to participate and be involved in a change in the teaching of English which is more centred [on] the learner and in which they can feel involved in their own learning process.

Although she did not refer explicitly to her intention to change the *status quo*, Fátima indicated her willingness to work on LA in her future teaching practice: “because I want to discover everything I have learnt in this subject, that is, experimenting with the principles of pedagogy for autonomy”.

### **6.5.2 The participants’ personal concerns and feelings about becoming a teacher of English**

In general, the participants’ personal concerns and feelings about becoming a teacher of English did not change much (see Table 6.16). As it happened in the previous questionnaire, different student teachers regarded teaching as a great responsibility due to the significant influence that the teacher can exert on learners’ education and life:

I am aware of the fact that the future of many learners depends on their teachers. As an English teacher, I would like to prepare my students for the future and give them the tools to learn both in the short term and the long term. For this purpose, I will have to empower my students, giving them the possibility to self-regulate their learning and become agents of their learning process. (Marcos)

I feel a lot of respect for this profession since the power over the students is really big and we have to take into consideration how influential a teacher can be. (Pilar)

Lola, for instance, had realised that as a teacher she would be responsible for contributing to her learners' autonomy and lifelong learning: "now I feel that the challenge and my responsibility [for] my students' autonomy and their achievement of lifelong learning are bigger". Moreover, she was "a bit scared" because she had become aware of all the things that teachers can do in their teaching practice so as to provide learners with more effective and meaningful learning.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-Pessimistic attitude	+Positive attitude
<b>Anita</b>	-Fear -Positive attitude	=Positive attitude
<b>Blanca</b>	-Fear -Teaching as a responsibility	Same answer
<b>Carla</b>	-(FL) teaching as a complex job	=(FL) teaching as a complex job
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Pessimistic attitude	Same answer
<b>Daniel</b>	-Pessimistic attitude	+Insecurity
<b>Delfin</b>	-Fear	=Fear +(FL) teaching as a complex job
<b>Fátima</b>	-Pessimistic attitude	=Pessimistic attitude
<b>Fenella</b>	-Teaching as a responsibility	=Teaching as a responsibility +(FL) teaching as a complex job
<b>Guillermo</b>	-(FL) teaching as a complex job	=(FL) teaching as a complex job +Fear +Positive attitude
<b>Kristel</b>	-Positive attitude -Teaching as a responsibility	Same answer
<b>Leticia</b>	-Positive attitude	=Positive attitude
<b>Lola</b>	-Positive attitude -(FL) teaching as a complex job	=Positive attitude +Fear +Pessimistic attitude +Teaching as a responsibility
<b>Lorena</b>	-Positive attitude -Teaching as a responsibility	=Positive attitude =Teaching as a responsibility
<b>Mar</b>	-Positive attitude	Same answer
<b>Marcos</b>	-(FL) teaching as a complex job	=(FL) teaching as a complex job +Teaching as a responsibility
<b>María</b>	-Positive attitude -(FL) teaching as a complex job	=Positive attitude =(FL) teaching as a complex job
<b>Nancy</b>	-Positive attitude	=Positive attitude
<b>Pilar</b>	-Fear -Teaching as a responsibility	=Teaching as a responsibility +Positive attitude
<b>Tammy</b>	-Positive attitude	=Positive attitude
<b>Tania</b>	-Positive attitude -(FL) teaching as a complex job	=Positive attitude

Table 6.16. The participants' personal concerns and feelings about becoming a teacher of English in both questionnaires

Like Lola, two other student teachers began to harbour negative feelings as well. On the one hand, Guillermo was having mixed feelings about the idea of becoming a FL teacher. He felt "excited", but at the same time "frightened of failure" in case his

teaching practice does not fulfil his learners' learning needs. He was, however, willing to put into practice the new ideas he had learned ("I am willing to give it my best shot"). Daniel, on the other hand, changed his initial mood of pessimism for a feeling of insecurity which was caused by his difficulty in coming to grips with the enactment of LA. He had never experienced the promotion of autonomy and cooperative learning either as a learner or as a teacher and this fact was making him feel insecure about it:

I feel a little bit insecure because I would like to promote autonomy and cooperative learning; however, I have never worked in that way and it makes me feel insecure. Furthermore, I have never seen any teacher working in that way, so it is difficult for me to [have] an idea of how it would be.

Teaching was still viewed as a complex job. For some student teachers, this original conception did not change at the end of the module. Marcos continued thinking that being a teacher of English is a constant challenge, in this case, as regards two aspects: "the challenge to change and the challenge to overcome difficulties". In comparison with his initial answer, he added that it was his intention as a prospective teacher to subvert the *status quo*. He could not "accept the situation as it is" and emphasised his need "to become a researcher and look for alternatives to make the most of [his] students' capabilities". Guillermo also contended that teaching is not an easy task, but he felt that they were better prepared to manage their lessons and highlighted the value of reflection to improve teaching practice. There were also new student teachers like Fenella who remarked on the difficulty of teaching. Apart from the responsibility it entails, she pointed out that nowadays teaching is becoming more complex and demanding. She argued that education is no longer based on transmitting just knowledge, but also values and "helping students to broaden their minds with new ideas so that they are not ignorant or easily manipulated".

On the whole, most of the student teachers shared a positive attitude towards the idea of becoming a teacher of English. They were motivated and willing to begin teaching. Some of these participants were more positive than at the beginning of the module mainly because they felt that they were more prepared to teach:

I think that when I was born, I had already decided that I wanted to be a teacher. Now, in addition to that, I have notions (good notions I think) of teaching and I also have tools so I'm looking forward to it. (Tammy)

I feel even more motivated now that I have received specialised training. (Tania)

Alicia, for example, went from a pessimistic attitude to a more positive one. She forgot about *oposiciones* in this questionnaire and was more confident that she would find a job and that she would be a good teacher since now she had more experience and had received specific training in teaching. Anita was also confident of becoming a good FL teacher as she had learned different strategies and teaching methods which were not based on a traditional view of FLT but on promoting learners' autonomous learning:

After the [module], I think I will be able to become a good teacher. I have learnt there are many strategies and methods to teach the language, based not only on the textbook and teaching grammar rules. I think I will be able to motivate and engage them in the learning process. Moreover, students will work autonomously, searching their own materials and according to their needs, which is a very positive aspect for them and for me as a teacher.

Similarly, Lorena had a more positive attitude since she had learned various teaching strategies which she considered very useful and she was willing to improve the pedagogical *status quo* by putting them into practice:

I have learnt several useful strategies and ways of teaching that are very helpful for my teaching, so I see things in a more positive way. I am willing to try to improve the situation and to put these strategies into practice when I have the opportunity to teach, and I think that teachers should be more engaged in this improvement.

Nancy was also motivated to test what she had learned during the teacher education programme: "I feel energetic in the sense that I would like to put into practice some aspects I have learnt during the master's and see if the results I get are positive ones or not". Finally, there were also a few student teachers who had a pessimistic attitude. In this respect, Fátima emphasised in her questionnaire the hopelessness of having to take *oposiciones* after the programme, which led her to hold even more pessimistic expectations about her future teaching career. Lola, in contrast, was deeply pessimistic about the overall lack of collegiality among teachers that there is at schools nowadays.

### **6.5.3 The participants' self-image as a foreign language teacher**

As we can observe in Table 6.17, two main images about their role as a FL teacher could be identified in the student teachers' new answers. On the one hand, 11 participants regarded themselves as 'motivators' (Farrell, 2006). In their responses, they expressed their desire to become FL teachers who are able, and know various strategies, to motivate their learners. Some of these participants held this idea from the beginning. Fenella, for instance, added in this respect that she wanted to be a teacher who makes



learners be interested in learning English “as most of them think it is not useful and necessary” and that she was willing to “teach them that learning is not only passing an exam, but there are other paths like encouraging them to [achieve] their aspirations”. For participants like Pilar and Lola, their role as a motivator was a new conception in their self-image as a FL teacher. While Pilar wanted “to be an inspiring and motivating teacher” who makes her learners realise how important their education is, Lola aimed to foster a positive attitude towards the TL among pupils.

On the other hand, most of the student teachers made reference to themselves as ‘facilitators’ (Farrell, 2006; Saban *et al.*, 2007; Voller, 1997) in their future teaching practice. In this sense, Guillermo continued regarding himself as a facilitator of opportunities for communication, whereas Anita was still willing to become a teacher “who helps and supports [learners] as much as possible” and “gives them many strategies to develop learning in an accurate way, who could provide them with as much learning as possible, according to their needs”. The idea of being a facilitator was new for participants like Fenella, who wanted to be a teacher who cares for and helps her learners in their personal development, and Pilar, whose main objective as a prospective teacher would be to help her learners “to get what they want for their future”.

Many of these new references to their role as facilitators were related to the notions of autonomy and learner-centredness. On this occasion, there were more student teachers who stated their intention to work either on the development of LA or on a learner-centred approach to FLT, thus being sensitive to learners’ needs:

I would like to implement principles of learners’ responsibility and autonomy and foster intrinsic motivation. (Blanca)

I would like to give my students responsibility for their own learning. (Clotilde)

I would like to be a teacher who focuses the lesson more on the learner [...], a teacher who is worried about the students’ needs and teaches according to these needs. (Leticia)

I want to be a teacher who is open to dialogue and listens to her students. I want to ask them about their interests and opinions and make them feel that they are the essential part of their own learning process [...] I want to be sensitive to my students’ different needs (differentiation) and build my pedagogical framework around this idea. (Lola)

I would like to become that teacher who puts learners in the centre of the learning and teaching processes. I aim at getting the best of my students and myself in the foreign language classroom by meeting my students’ needs and fostering lifelong learning. (Tania)

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-Motivator -Close to learners -Funny	=Motivator +Facilitator +Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner +Sensitive to learners' needs
<b>Anita</b>	-Educator -Facilitator -Close to learners	=Educator =Facilitator +Motivator +Sensitive to learners' needs
<b>Blanca</b>	-Close to learners	+Agent of educational change +Facilitator +Motivator
<b>Carla</b>	-Funny and serious -Motivated and professional	Same answer +Reflective practitioner
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Close to learners -Innovative and creative	+Facilitator
<b>Daniel</b>	-Unable to define his self-image	+Facilitator +Motivator
<b>Delfin</b>	-Unable to define her self-image	Same answer
<b>Fátima</b>	-Agent of educational change	+Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner
<b>Fenella</b>	-Motivator	=Motivator +Facilitator
<b>Guillermo</b>	-Facilitator -Innovative and creative	=Facilitator
<b>Kristel</b>	-Facilitator -Motivator -Motivated and professional	Same answer
<b>Leticia</b>	-Facilitator -Motivator -Sensitive to learners' needs -Funny	=Facilitator =Motivator =Sensitive to learners' needs +Close to learners
<b>Lola</b>	-Close to learners -Motivated and professional -Understanding	Same answer +Facilitator (+Democratic leader) +Motivator +Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner +Sensitive to learners' needs
<b>Lorena</b>	-Motivator -Close to learners	=Close to learners
<b>Mar</b>	-Motivated and professional	=Motivated and professional +Facilitator +Motivator
<b>Marcos</b>	-Agent of educational change -Facilitator (Democratic leader)	=Agent of educational change =Facilitator (Democratic leader) +Reflective practitioner +Sensitive to learners' needs
<b>María</b>	-Facilitator	+Motivated and professional
<b>Nancy</b>	-Funny and serious	+Respected by learners
<b>Pilar</b>	-Educator	+Facilitator +Motivator
<b>Tammy</b>	-Motivator	=Motivator +Facilitator
<b>Tania</b>	-Facilitator -Innovative and creative	=Facilitator =Innovative and creative +Sensitive to learners' needs

Table 6.17. The participants' self-image as a FL teacher in both questionnaires

Apart from communication in the TL, Guillermo became aware that autonomy was not included in his original conception of FLT and was willing to promote it in his future teaching:

Having finished this [module], I would also like to implement the idea of autonomy, self-regulation, and self-criticism as well as reflection. In my previous questionnaire I did not

include the previously mentioned ideas, but I would be willing to incorporate them as soon as I get the opportunity to do so.

Daniel, who had not been able to define his self-image as a teacher of English, acknowledged the overall lack of autonomy in FL classrooms. He pointed out in this questionnaire that his aim as a teacher would be to foster autonomous learning by means of cooperation, creativity, and group work “because they are things that nowadays are ignored within our current educational system”.

Marcos’ new answer maintained similar ideas to the ones expressed in his first questionnaire on “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”: the FL teacher as a ‘democratic leader’ (Saban *et al.*, 2007) and his self-image as an ‘agent of educational change’ (*ibid.*). This time his intention to develop LA was more explicit. He wanted to work on learner differentiation and explore the ‘space of possibility’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) by means of reflection on his own teaching practice:

I would like to be a teacher who promotes autonomy [...] I would like to differentiate learning, because I think that this is the only way to be an effective and successful teacher: students have different needs and the teacher has to adapt [himself/herself] to them. I would also like to explore the space of possibility and push reality forward. For this purpose, I will have to reflect on my own practice and become aware of the things that could be changed. (Marcos)

The image as an agent of educational change was also mentioned by Blanca who expressed her desire to change the pedagogical *status quo*: “one who carries out new ideas and implements changes to improve Spanish students’ bad level of English”.

Another student teacher who wanted to be “learner-centred” was Alicia. She aimed to become a teacher who makes use of “activities that are overall learner-centred” and who pursues “teaching goals that are well-organised and adaptable to [her] students’ needs”. This change in her beliefs towards a more learner-centred view of FLT was made evident in her “need to be an effective teacher for the sake of [her] students’ well-being”. She added that she would also teach following a communicative approach based on the use of tasks. Her new self-image as a FL teacher further fitted the concept of ‘adaptive expert’ formulated by Darling-Hammond (2006). In this sense, Alicia wanted to be “reflective” and “flexible” (“I need to adapt to my students and not make them adapt to me”); knowledgeable, that is, well-informed and educated so that she could better educate her learners; and “up-to-date with the latest methods and theories about teaching and language learning”. In a similar vein, Fátima and Lola underlined their

need as teachers to become lifelong learners who take responsibility for enhancing their professional development:

I consider that it is a job in which you have to maintain a constant connection with advances in society, for example, new technologies. (Fátima)

I want to be curious and try to learn as much as possible about any new methodology or pedagogical approach that may improve my teaching. (Lola)

As regards other professional and personal qualities as FL teachers, some student teachers continued wanting to be close to learners. In this respect, Lorena was still willing to be a friendly teacher, but formulating rules that learners would have to respect:

As I said in the first questionnaire, I would like to be a friendly teacher and I want my students to be interested in my subject although being a friendly teacher does not mean having no rules in the classroom. *Students have to know that there are some limits in class that they have to respect; that they have freedom of choice in classroom's decisions, but that they have to bear the rules and their consequences in mind.* (emphasis added)

From the original questionnaire, only Tania still referred to her willingness to be creative and innovative “by using surprising materials, contents, or any means which can help to motivate students”, whereas María was the only new student teacher wishing to be a motivated professional who really enjoys teaching and does her best so that learners can acquire knowledge about the TL and become fluent in it.

#### **6.5.4 The participants' beliefs about the foreign language learner's knowledge, skills, and competences**

As can be seen in Table 6.18, the vast majority of the student teachers continued emphasising FL learners' need to develop their language skills in the TL. On this occasion, more students made reference to the four language skills, although there were still student teachers who expressed a strong preference for two particular skills:

All the aspects of a language are important, but I would like to emphasise the listening and speaking skills, which are essential for communication. (Fenella)

I think that the practice of the listening skill and the speaking skill is the most important aspect for students to learn a foreign language because they are really in touch with the new language. (Leticia)

Well, here I have doubts. I think that I should say that the four skills are equally important. I have studied it, but I have to be sincere and I still think that speaking and listening are the most important ones. I know that objectively all of them are important, but I'm not totally convinced yet. (Tammy)

However, it must be stressed that, from all the language skills, the development of speaking continued being regarded as “the most important aspect” of FLL.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-Grammar and vocabulary -Language skills: L, R, S, W <sup>61</sup>	=Language skills: S +Autonomy +Self-regulation and self-actualisation
<b>Anita</b>	-Grammar and vocabulary	+Intercultural competence +Language skills: L, R, S, W
<b>Blanca</b>	-Grammar -Language skills: S	=Language skills: S
<b>Carla</b>	-Grammar and vocabulary -Language skills: S	=Language skills: S +Autonomy +Learning to learn and learning strategies
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Grammar -Language skills: S	Same answer
<b>Daniel</b>	-Grammar -Intercultural competence -Language skills: S	=Intercultural competence +Cooperative skills +Creativity +Social values
<b>Delfin</b>	-Language skills: L, S	Same answer
<b>Fátima</b>	-Language skills: S	
<b>Fenella</b>	-Language skills: S	=Language skills: L, S
<b>Guillermo</b>	-Intercultural competence	=Intercultural competence +Autonomy
<b>Kristel</b>	-Grammar -Language skills: S, W	Same answer
<b>Leticia</b>	-Language skills: L, R, S	=Language skills: L, S
<b>Lola</b>	-Grammar and vocabulary -Language skills: R, S, W	=Language skills: L, R, S, W
<b>Lorena</b>	-Grammar and vocabulary -Language skills: L, R, S, W	=Grammar and vocabulary =Language skills: L, R, S, W
<b>Mar</b>	-Intercultural competence	=Intercultural competence +Autonomy
<b>Marcos</b>	-Language skills: L, R, S, W	=Language skills: L, R, S, W +Grammar and vocabulary
<b>María</b>	-Language skills: L, R, S, W	=Language skills: L, R, S, W +Autonomy
<b>Nancy</b>	-Language skills: L, R, S, W	=Language skills: W +Learning to learn
<b>Pilar</b>	-Language skills: S	=Language skills: L, R, S, W +Grammar and vocabulary +Intercultural competence
<b>Tammy</b>	-Language skills: L, S	=Language skills: L, S
<b>Tania</b>	-Grammar and vocabulary -Language skills: L, S	=Language skills: L, R, S, W +Intercultural competence +Autonomy +Learning to learn

Table 6.18. The participants' beliefs about the FL learner's knowledge, skills, and competences in both questionnaires

One of the most significant changes in this category affected the value that the student teachers attached to the learning of grammar and vocabulary in FLL. For seven

<sup>61</sup> L: Listening, R: Reading, S: Speaking, W: Writing.

student teachers, they were no longer a relevant aspect for learners to learn. Tania, for instance, changed her mind about the importance of grammar in language learning:

After this [module] and as I have already mentioned, *students do not need a 'solid grammar'*, maybe they will need some notes of grammar or explanations, but what is not recommended is to base our classes on a grammar methodology. (emphasis added)

Anita added that “to learn English is not to learn grammar rules”. Other participants maintained both aspects in their new answer. As an illustration, Lorena held that communication is the most important aspect when learning a FL, but it is not the only one as grammar and vocabulary are also necessary. Only two student teachers included grammar and vocabulary as regards their original answer. Pilar explained that learners should learn vocabulary and “complementary grammar” in order to develop their communicative skills in the TL, whereas Marcos contended that both aspects “are very important” as long as vocabulary is taught in context and the learning of grammar fulfils a more communicative purpose:

[S]tudents who practise the four English skills will be also learning vocabulary and grammar. In this sense, we have to teach vocabulary in context, because words and expressions are normally contextualised and that is how we are going to find them. In the same token, *grammar should be used for communication, and not just as an isolated feature of the language.* (emphasis added)

Another change in the student teachers' beliefs was related to the importance that they gave to the promotion of intercultural competence in FLL: “it is also important for students to be *culturally aware*. Language classes should be open to include cultural activities and cultural information” (Guillermo, emphasis added). This time twice as many student teachers argued that learners should learn about the culture and “the main cultural components attached to the language” (Tania).

Unlike the previous questionnaire, more student teachers made reference here to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competences that FL learners should develop during their learning process. Most of these skills and competences were related to one fundamental concept: LA. María, for example, emphasised the importance of fostering autonomy in order to adapt learners to a society which is becoming more and more complex. Apart from autonomy, Carla added that it is necessary that learners learn how to learn and acquire various learning strategies. Alicia also highlighted autonomy as an essential aspect of the learning process and pointed out that learners should be able to self-regulate their learning and strive for ‘self-actualization’ (Maslow, 1954):

They need to be able to learn by themselves, to be independent and responsible. They need to learn to prioritize and to reflect on their actions, pushing themselves to be better at everything they do. They need to learn to set goals and to work towards achieving them. (Alicia)

Concerning LA, Guillermo and Mar stated that learners should have a voice in the learning process, take greater responsibility for decision-making, and be able to evaluate their learning outcomes:

They should also be given the choice to choose those materials they feel are most significant to them. Freedom of choice and voice should be given to students. (Guillermo)

Now I also want my students to be able to choose what they want to learn, to evaluate themselves, to search information on their own, etc. (Mar)

Daniel, on the other hand, underlined that learners need to acquire “social values” and develop their creativity as well as the ability to cooperate and work in groups.

Finally, it must be noted that Fátima did not mention any aspect that FL learners should learn, but she complained that nowadays they are mainly interested in the final mark, basically because they see English as a school subject they have to pass and not as a communicative tool. In this sense, it was pointed out by Lola and Pilar that learners need to become aware of how the language learning experience is going to be of value to them personally, which would increase their motivation in the FL classroom.

### **6.5.5 The participants’ beliefs about the foreign language teacher’s professional knowledge, roles, and qualities**

Table 6.19 summarises the participants’ beliefs about the FL teacher’s professional knowledge, roles, and qualities in their revision of the questionnaire. First, we can observe that PCK (Shulman, 1986, 1987) was still relevant to two student teachers (Delfin and Fátima), whereas no participant made reference here to teachers’ CK. Nine student teachers underlined FL teachers’ need to have SMK (*ibid.*), either in terms of knowledge of the subject (i.e. English) and the contents they have to teach or in terms of a high level of proficiency in the TL. Ten participants referred to aspects related to teachers’ GPK (*ibid.*), for instance, knowledge of different teaching and assessment methods, teaching materials, and effective strategies for classroom management.

Chapter 6. Results and discussion

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-SMK -Leader -Motivated -Patient and understanding -Strong and rational	=SMK + GPK +Facilitator +Motivator +Reflective practitioner +Close to learners
<b>Anita</b>	-GPK, SMK and Knowledge of his/her learners -Sensitive to learners' differences/needs	=Knowledge of his/her learners +Facilitator +Motivated
<b>Blanca</b>	-GPK and SMK	Same answer +Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner
<b>Carla</b>	-GPK, PCK and Knowledge of his/her learners -Motivator -Sensitive to learners' differences/needs	=Knowledge of his/her learners =Motivator +Facilitator (+Democratic leader) +Reflective practitioner
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Knowledge of his/her learners -Understanding and cooperative	Same answer
<b>Daniel</b>	-CK and GPK	=GPK + Knowledge of his/her learners
<b>Delfin</b>	-GPK, PCK, and SMK	Same answer
<b>Fátima</b>	-GPK and PCK -Innovative and understanding	=PCK + Knowledge of his/her learners
<b>Fenella</b>	-Facilitator -Motivator -Innovative	=Motivator +SMK and Knowledge of his/her learners +Understanding
<b>Guillermo</b>	-GPK -Motivator -Leader, role model, facilitator of knowledge -Understanding	=Motivator +Facilitator and guide +Reflective practitioner
<b>Kristel</b>	-GPK and SMK -Understanding	Same answer +Knowledge of his/her learners +Close to learners
<b>Leticia</b>	-Motivator -Sensitive to learners' differences/needs -Understanding	=Motivator =Sensitive to learners' differences/needs +GPK and Knowledge of his/her learners +Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner +Close to learners
<b>Lola</b>	-SMK -Motivator -Reliable and talkative -Understanding	=Motivator +Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner +Professional +Sensitive to learners' differences/needs
<b>Lorena</b>	-Motivator -Sensitive to learners' differences/needs -Patient	=Motivator =Sensitive to learners' differences/needs +GPK +Reflective practitioner and researcher
<b>Mar</b>	-Motivated	Same answer +Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner +Innovative
<b>Marcos</b>	-SMK -Sensitive to learners' differences/needs -Understanding	=SMK + GPK =Sensitive to learners' differences/needs =Understanding +Facilitator and guide +Motivator
<b>María</b>	-GPK and SMK	=GPK and SMK +Sensitive to learners' differences/needs
<b>Nancy</b>	-SMK -Motivated -Sensitive to learners' differences/needs	Same answer
<b>Pilar</b>	-SMK -Patient and understanding	Same answer +Adaptive expert/ Lifelong learner +Innovative and motivated
<b>Tammy</b>	-Educator	Same answer
<b>Tania</b>	-GPK	=GPK + Knowledge of his/her learners +Motivator

Table 6.19. The participants' beliefs about the FL teacher's knowledge, roles, and qualities in both questionnaires



It was noted that in this category more student teachers' beliefs became learner-centred. Leticia and Lorena, for example, advocated a more active role on the part of learners in this questionnaire. To this end, they considered that teachers must know strategies for providing motivating instruction in which learners become more involved in their own learning process. In her original answer, Kristel held that teachers should know how to create a supportive learning environment where learners feel comfortable about participating and expressing their doubts. Here she added that they also need to have knowledge of various teaching methods in order to be able to respond to the different characteristics of each group of learners. In her view, teachers should know their learners' interests to provide them with activities they feel motivated to do: "Besides, a teacher needs to know what his/her students enjoy doing and listening, so she/he is close to them and can organise activities they like doing".

Kristel was not the only student teacher who contended that the FL teacher should have specific knowledge of his/her learners. Indeed, this type of knowledge became more common in the student teachers' responses (Anita, Carla, Clotilde, Daniel, Fátima, Fenella, Leticia, and Tania). They pointed out that teachers should know their learners' needs, interests, language level, learning difficulties, personal characteristics, and sociocultural background. In comparison with her initial answer, Anita emphasised teachers' need for a deeper knowledge of their learners: "the teacher should know his/her students. He/she should know the level, the abilities, and the needs of his/her students to provide better strategies to learn the language". Tania, for instance, placed this knowledge as the first priority for teachers: "to my first comment I would like to add that the first thing teachers have to know is their students, what they need to succeed in studying a foreign language". This focus on learner-centredness was also evident in those student teachers' remarks that teachers should be sensitive to learners' needs and individual differences so as to adapt their teaching practice to them:

A teacher has to be not only professional at his[/her] work, but also a person who takes into account the differentiation that takes place in the classroom in order to adapt his[/her] methodology and teaching strategies to provide effective learning to his[/her] students. (Lola)

A teacher needs to know that not every student is the same, that there are individual differences and needs that have a lot of influence on the way of teaching. (Lorena)

Students do not learn at the same pace, so teachers have to adapt their teaching to the different levels, as well as to the different interests and needs. (Marcos)

It is essential that teachers take into account learners' differences. (María)

Different teacher roles were again identified in this revision of the questionnaire. The most common one in the student teachers' responses corresponded to the teacher as a 'motivator' (Farrell, 2006). Nine students pointed out that FL teachers should be able to motivate and engage students in the learning process. Marcos suggested improving learners' motivation by giving them autonomy and voice in the classroom as well as providing them with activities which really involve them:

The teacher has to motivate her/his students. If she/he fails to do that, students will not learn English. There are many ways to motivate the students, and one of them is giving them autonomy and voice. In the same token, the teacher should be able to provide students with activities and tasks that really engage them. By doing this, the teacher would be developing students' intrinsic motivation and eagerness to learn.

In this sense, three student teachers (Alicia, Carla, and Guillermo) advocated that teachers should work on autonomy. For Carla, FL teachers need to promote autonomous learning and develop learners' learning strategies. Moreover, she added that they should be willing to relinquish control over the teaching-learning process or, in her words, "to share the control of the class" with learners. In his previous questionnaire, Guillermo had emphasised that the teacher should be a leader, role model, and facilitator of knowledge. At this point he abandoned this belief and made reference to more 'learner-centred' roles for the FL teacher such as 'guide' (*ibid.*), 'facilitator' (Farrell, 2006; Saban *et al.*, 2007; Voller, 1997), and motivator:

Teachers should also give students freedom of choice when choosing materials for class. They should promote learning to learn and foster the need for autonomy. Of course students should be given guidance on this matter by the teacher. They should also promote self-regulation, help students to reach their own goal set by the students themselves and also to be a good motivator and listener. (Guillermo)

Marcos also wrote that teachers should act as a guide and facilitator for learners: "the teacher has to guide students during this process and help them become more effective learners". A similar opinion was voiced by Anita who wrote in her new answer that teachers must "help and support [learners] as much as possible".

A new image of the teacher emerged in the participants' responses: the teacher as a reflective practitioner. In this respect, Guillermo and Lorena argued that teachers should develop a critical and inquiry-oriented approach to their teaching practice. According to Lorena, they also need to incorporate research into their teaching in order to improve it and this improvement must be learner-centred:

I believe that a teacher should be critical of his/her own work to endeavour the best performance possible. This will help him/her to improve his/her work. (Guillermo)

Teachers should know [...] the way of improving their teaching through research. Teachers have to reflect on their teaching too in order to improve it for the students' benefit. (Lorena)

For Alicia, not only should teachers be “critical” and “reflective”, but they must also “be intuitive and anticipate and adapt to problems”. Closely related to the image of the teacher as a reflective practitioner, several participants explained that teachers should be ‘adaptive experts’ (Darling-Hammond, 2006) and lifelong learners. They must be fully responsible for their own professional development, updating their knowledge base for teaching, adding to their professional skills and competences, and being aware of the most recent advances in research on education:

I would add being [up to date] as far as research on education is concerned. (Blanca)

They always need to be able to improve and [keep up to date] in their own teaching. (Leticia)

A great teacher will always be up to date: writing sample essays, receiving detailed feedback, reading. (Mar)

Teachers mainly have to be worried about getting informed. (Pilar)

For Lola, these advances must be specifically concerned with PA: “a teacher has to be aware of the innovations that other researchers come up with in the field of education, and especially in the notion of pedagogy for autonomy”.

Finally, the student teachers mentioned various qualities that FL teachers should have when teaching. These major qualities were: being understanding (5 participants), being motivated (4 participants), being close to learners (3 participants), and being professional and innovative (2 participants each). Here it is interesting to highlight two student teachers' new comments related to the role of the teacher in developing learner motivation. On the one hand, Mar added to her initial image of the FL teacher that a good teacher must also be *innovative* regarding his/her teaching practice in order to motivate his/her learners: “now I know that a good teacher is the one who is not afraid of innovating, who tries to do things differently for his/her learners to be motivated”. Anita, on the other hand, regarded *teacher motivation* as an essential condition for learner motivation: “one important aspect to develop good teaching of English is to be motivated. If the teacher is motivated, he/she will be able to motivate students and involve them in their learning process without too much effort”.

### **6.5.6 Aspects of foreign language teaching in Spain the participants supported and rejected or criticised**

In the revision of the questionnaire, there were fewer aspects which the student teachers supported in FLT in Spain (see Table 6.20). Three out of the four student teachers who originally supported the implementation of bilingual education programmes reaffirmed this support at the end of the module. While Blanca and Clotilde did not change their initial answers, Alicia argued in favour of the development of bilingual education as opposed to those voices that question or raise serious doubts as to its effectiveness in school settings:

When I mention that I support the bilingual programme in Spain I usually don't receive a positive response. Well, I stick with what I say: I support the bilingual programme. I have been fortunate to see it evolve and to see the results in the students and all I can say is wow! On a daily basis I talk to kids in the 1 ESO<sup>62</sup> bilingual class in English and I can say without doubt that they will graduate with an advanced level of English. I think those who are so critical of the bilingual programme should pay a visit to a school and see what's going on for themselves.

Other aspects from the previous questionnaire which were still supported by some of the student teachers were the early introduction of FLT in the school curriculum (2 participants), learner-centred education (1 participant), and teachers (1 participant). Regarding teachers, Mar had become aware that if she wanted to be a good teacher, she would have to innovate, take risks in her teaching, and provide opportunities to work on the promotion of her learners' autonomy and motivation: "now I know that you have to be a risk-taker if you want to be a good teacher. You have to experiment towards autonomy, find other ways to assess the learners, and different ways to motivate them".

New positive aspects of FLT in Spain were identified mainly by Anita and Pilar. In her previous questionnaire, Anita was not able to identify any aspect of FLT which she supported. On this occasion, she did highlight different aspects which she valued positively. First, she pointed out the high number of hours of exposure to the TL that learners have in the timetable. In her opinion, teachers only need to know how "to make the most of these hours". Second, she considered that "the teachers of English are well trained" to do their job and that it is very positive to have native language assistants in the FL classroom. Finally, Anita made reference to the introduction of ICT into FLT and the fact that many schools are outfitted with a wide range of audiovisual resources and materials, although she claimed that "not all the teachers of English use them".

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<sup>62</sup> *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (Compulsory Secondary Education).

Pilar, in contrast, referred to the promotion of a bottom-up approach to education. She supported the autonomy in terms of professional freedom which is granted to teachers in order to innovate teaching practice: “I support the freedom given to teachers by the [educational] institutions to be creative, imaginative and implement new methods, so they can make changes in the educational system from the bottom”.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-Implementation of bilingual education	=Implementation of bilingual education
<b>Anita</b>	-No positive aspect	+High number of hours of exposure to the TL +Native language assistants +Teachers (qualification) +Use of ICT
<b>Blanca</b>	-Implementation of bilingual education	Same answer
<b>Carla</b>	-Early introduction of FLT in the school curriculum	Same answer
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Implementation of bilingual education -Native language assistants	Same answer
<b>Daniel</b>	-Grammar	+No positive aspect
<b>Delfin</b>	-Practical approach to FLT	Same answer
<b>Fátima</b>	-Language instruction	+No positive aspect
<b>Fenella</b>	-Grammar	+A communicative approach
<b>Guillermo</b>	-Use of ICT	=Use of ICT
<b>Kristel</b>	-Early introduction of FLT in the school curriculum	Same answer
<b>Leticia</b>	-Teachers	+No positive aspect
<b>Lola</b>	-Grammar	+No positive aspect
<b>Lorena</b>	-Early introduction of FLT in the school curriculum -Learner-centred education	=Learner-centred education
<b>Mar</b>	-Teachers	=Teachers
<b>Marcos</b>	-Use of ICT	Same answer
<b>María</b>	-Use of ICT	=Use of ICT
<b>Nancy</b>	-Practical approach to FLT	Same answer
<b>Pilar</b>	-Early introduction of FLT in the school curriculum -Implementation of bilingual education	+A bottom-up approach to education
<b>Tammy</b>	-Grammar	
<b>Tania</b>	-Grammar	+No positive aspect

Table 6.20. Aspects of FLT in Spain the participants supported in both questionnaires

The most significant change in the student teachers' beliefs affected their conception of grammar in FLT. This time no participant made reference to the teaching and knowledge of grammar as a positive aspect of FL education, which led many of them to acknowledge that there was consequently no aspect which they supported. One example of this change was Tania:

I would like to rectify this answer or at least explain it in a better way. I have never agreed with the methodology used in Spain in ELT, focused too much on grammar, but if I had to say something positive, I supposed that too much grammar helped us with writing. Nevertheless, now that the [module] has finished I have realised that this conception is totally wrong and, in my opinion, this system should be completely changed.

As seen in her words, she became aware of the need to subvert the pedagogical *status quo* and, for that reason, there was nothing that she could support in FLT. Something similar happened to Daniel. He used to support the teaching of grammar and how it is practised in the classroom, but after finishing the module he held that its study is not so important in FLL: “after this module, probably nothing, because even the only thing which I considered that it was well worked (grammar) is not really necessary to learn a language”. Lola also disagreed with her original answer in the questionnaire. She went from attaching great value to the teaching of grammar to stating that the knowledge of grammar rules is not essential to learn and speak a FL:

Three months ago, I used to think that the intense grammar instruction we have been enduring throughout our long years as language learners was enough to make us proficient in at least some areas of a foreign language. Now I know that we do not need to know all the grammar rules by heart to be good at a language.

After revising her questionnaire, Tammy identified a more useful aspect in FLT than grammar: “now I think that teaching students how to be autonomous is more important than the notions of grammar”. She explained that her initial support to grammar responded more to an external influence than to her personal conviction about the relevance of grammar when learning English: “I have to say that I have never given much importance to grammar, but as many people did, I thought that it was me who was wrong; however, it wasn’t me. Now I’m pretty sure”.

Other student teachers who disagreed with their previous answers were Leticia and Fátima. Leticia contended that after the module there was no positive aspect in the teaching of English in Spain she could support. She further argued for the urgent need to change how FLT is conducted, which should be focused more on communication and less on grammar:

I really think that teachers should make an important change in ELT in Spain where the only main goal of a teacher must be the learning of the English language. I mean that students should learn to communicate in a foreign language and should not learn only the English grammar. Therefore, nowadays, from my experience and what I have learned, I cannot say any aspect which I support in the teaching of ELT in Spain.

Fátima originally thought that FLT is well adapted to learners. Now she did not consider the teaching practice developed in many school settings as the best approach to language teaching and learning: “I disagree with my previous answer. Now I don’t think ELT is well adapted to learners because the most common teaching in the schools is based on a traditional methodology, without feedback...”.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills -Use of Spanish to teach the FL	Same answer
<b>Anita</b>	-Poor work on language skills -Use of Spanish to teach the FL	=Poor work on language skills +Emphasis on grammar instruction +Textbook
<b>Blanca</b>	-Poor work on language skills	+Ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted
<b>Carla</b>	-Poor work on language skills -Use of Spanish to teach the FL	+Emphasis on grammar instruction +Lack of LA in FL education +Textbook
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Implementation of bilingual education	+Promotion of a traditional approach to FLT
<b>Daniel</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills	=Poor work on language skills +Promotion of a traditional approach to FLT
<b>Delfin</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Use of Spanish to teach the FL	=Emphasis on grammar instruction =Use of Spanish to teach the FL
<b>Fátima</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills	=Poor work on language skills +Lack of LA in FL education
<b>Fenella</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills	=Poor work on language skills
<b>Guillermo</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills	=Emphasis on grammar instruction =Poor work on language skills +Lack of LA in FL education
<b>Kristel</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills	+The teaching methods adopted +Use of Spanish to teach the FL
<b>Leticia</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills	=Emphasis on grammar instruction =Poor work on language skills
<b>Lola</b>	-Use of Spanish to teach the FL	=Use of Spanish to teach the FL +Lack of cooperation among teachers +Lack of LA in FL education
<b>Lorena</b>	-Poor work on language skills	=Poor work on language skills +Emphasis on grammar instruction
<b>Mar</b>	-Teachers	=Teachers
<b>Marcos</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills -Teachers	=Emphasis on grammar instruction =Poor work on language skills +Lack of LA in FL education
<b>María</b>	-Teacher-centred education -Textbook	=Textbook +Emphasis on grammar instruction +Poor work on language skills
<b>Nancy</b>	-Poor work on language skills	Same answer
<b>Pilar</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills	=Emphasis on grammar instruction =Poor work on language skills
<b>Tammy</b>	-Emphasis on grammar instruction -Poor work on language skills -Teachers	Same answer +Textbook
<b>Tania</b>	-Poor work on language skills -Use of Spanish to teach the FL	=Use of Spanish to teach the FL +Ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted

Table 6.21. Aspects of FLT in Spain the participants rejected/criticised in both questionnaires

As can be seen in Table 6.21, once more the aspects the student teachers rejected or criticised clearly outnumbered the aspects they supported. The table also makes it clear that their beliefs about the aspects they most rejected did not change. Thus, two specific aspects of FLT in Spain continued attracting more criticism from the student teachers: 1) the poor work on language skills and 2) the great emphasis on grammar instruction. On this occasion, 13 participants from the sample criticised the lack of

attention which is paid to the development of language skills (mainly listening and speaking). Most of these student teachers continued attributing the poor development of these language skills to teachers' great emphasis on grammar instruction. María, who had not referred to this aspect in her previous questionnaire, defined this emphasis as an obsession: "the second aspect I reject now is the emphasis which is given to grammar. Some teachers are *obsessed* with grammar, and they forget to teach the language skills, which are essential in the acquisition of the language" (emphasis added). Lorena and Marcos concurred that FLL in Spain is largely based on the study of grammar rules and vocabulary, whereas communication by means of the TL is often overlooked:

[T]he communicative part of the language isn't put into practice in Spanish classrooms and it is a very important part of it. Students learn a lot of grammar and vocabulary, but they don't put these aspects into practice, so it isn't very useful because they don't learn how to communicate in the language. The main objective of learning a language is to know how to use it in communicative situations, but it isn't in this way in Spain. (Lorena)

In Spain, secondary school teachers mainly focus on grammar and vocabulary, and they forget English skills. That is, their classes are based on the linguistic features of the language and do not take into account that students cannot learn the language without practising it. Teaching speaking, listening, writing, or reading is rare nowadays. (Marcos)

Pilar, for example, suggested that speaking is regarded as less important or optional in comparison with the learning of grammar:

I maintain what I said at the beginning of the year, where grammar is still the central skill in Spanish education, and the real approach to speaking a language is seen as something accessory that teachers are [required] to do.

It was again pointed out that the result of this constant emphasis on grammar instruction is learners' inability to achieve a level of proficiency in the TL which may enable them to use it properly outside the classroom:

Teaching English in Spanish schools is based on explaining grammar rules, so speaking and listening activities are not really common in class. Communication/interaction in class only occurs a few times during the course, and students do not keep in touch with the language very frequently [...] In general, *teaching/learning English in Spain is not really effective to use the language in its real context*. (Anita, emphasis added)

For that reason, some student teachers underlined the need for learners to get more exposure to the TL in the classroom by means of a teaching approach which is more communicative:

A teacher cannot teach a language just by teaching the grammatical aspect of the target language. It is necessary for learners to be able to produce language, to create the language they are learning. (Delfin)



There is still too much focus on grammar in some classrooms. They [i.e. teachers] should adopt a more communicative approach, which fosters/promotes the use of all skills and not just one or two. (Guillermo)

This particular focus on communication was again regarded as the best way to make learners perceive the usefulness of learning the FL: “teachers’ work should be based on [following] a communicative method in their lessons. In this way, children or teenagers would see the usefulness of learning a foreign language” (Fenella). Another aspect which various participants still criticised was the excessive use of the textbook in FLT:

English classes are based on the textbook, so students do not use any real or authentic material. (Anita)

The course book is used without adapting the contents to the learners’ needs or interests, so learners get discouraged. (Carla)

The overuse of the textbook: most teachers use the textbook in an excessive way. They only teach what is included in the textbook, and they do not pay attention to the students’ needs and interests. (María)

In addition to the aspects identified in the previous questionnaire, there were new aspects which the student teachers referred to. One of them was the promotion of traditional teaching. Clotilde deleted her initial criticism about the implementation of bilingual education and stressed the need to replace traditional approaches to language teaching (“I totally reject the old methods of English language teaching. I think students need innovative approaches because we are not living in the 50s”). Daniel criticised a behaviourist view of education as well as many teachers’ lack of innovation and rejection of new pedagogical resources and methods. He regretted that “those are not the ways to teach a language. However, it is almost the only way we can find in Spain”. Likewise, Lola pointed out “the poor level of innovation and collaboration among teachers”. On the other hand, Blanca and Tania highlighted the ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted in current FL education. They emphasised the need for teachers and institutions to reconsider the approaches which are being put into practice:

I cannot understand why the teaching of English in Spain still follows an approach which is producing bad results. I don’t know why a radical change is not implemented by the highest institutions. (Blanca)

I would add that teachers should reconsider their methods because in most cases they are not working. There are many methods, techniques, and strategies that teachers can apply depending on the student’s needs. (Tania)

Finally, several student teachers criticised the lack of LA in FLT in Spain. It was acknowledged that the development of autonomy and a learner-centred approach are still far from being a widespread reality in many school settings:

My previous experiences as a learner of English have made me aware of the fact that teachers do not usually differentiate in the class. Therefore, they are not taking into consideration that not all students have the same needs, interests, and preferences [...] As far as motivation is concerned, the teachers of English do not motivate their students at all. They do not give them autonomy and decide everything that happens in the class. All in all, ELT in Spain should be aware of [...] the importance of autonomous learning if we really want students to learn English. (Marcos)

Fátima also made reference to the authoritarian role of the teacher and the lack of negotiation in the teaching-learning process: “there is not enough interaction, power of negotiation... Sometimes, we still find the authoritarian teacher and less learner-centred classes”. The consequence of this absence of autonomy was clearly identified by Carla: “autonomy is not fostered and learners do not get involved in their learning process”.

### **6.5.7 The participants’ perceived obstacles, problems, or dilemmas in foreign language teaching in Spain**

The same learner-related obstacles were identified at the end of the module: 1) language proficiency, 2) personal theories and beliefs, and 3) poor commitment to education (see Table 6.22). As it happened in the previous questionnaire, the most common learner-related obstacle for the participants was ‘learners’ poor commitment to education and learning’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016). This time 13 student teachers pointed out learners’ lack of motivation and interest in the learning process. There were, however, trainees who had a more positive attitude towards this obstacle and who acknowledged the teacher’s crucial role in improving learner motivation:

Another problem could be the lack of motivation of students. If the teacher has good strategies and teaching methods to engage students in their own learning process, this teacher will achieve the success of his/her students. (Anita)

I see more or less the same obstacles as in the beginning but, on the other hand, I am more positive to face them. Of course there will be a lot of constraints at schools, but also a lot of solutions to them. Maybe, we have to face students with a lack of motivation or with no responsibility in class in the future but, as teachers, we have to put our strategies into practice in order to motivate them and get the best from them. (Lorena)

In addition to their demotivation and passivity, participants like Fátima and María highlighted a problem which in their view is becoming more and more common in many school settings: learners’ disruptiveness and their lack of respect for teachers.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire	2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire
<b>Alicia</b>	-L <sup>63</sup> : Language proficiency -C: Institutional culture ( <i>oposiciones</i> )	=L: Language proficiency +L: Poor commitment to education and learning +C: Lack of parents' and the school's support
<b>Anita</b>	-L: Language proficiency -L: Poor commitment to education and learning	=L: Language proficiency =L: Poor commitment to education and learning
<b>Blanca</b>	-T: Teaching practices -C: Traditions in FLT (lack of a communicative approach)	Same answer +T: Professional values
<b>Carla</b>	-L: Language proficiency -L: Poor commitment to education and learning -C: Dominant community expectations	=L: Poor commitment to education and learning +C: Lack of parents' and the school's support
<b>Clotilde</b>	-L: Language proficiency -T: Teaching practices -C: Traditions in FLT (traditional approach) -C: Institutional culture (teacher-pupil ratio)	=T: Teaching practices =C: Traditions in FLT (lack of a communicative approach)
<b>Daniel</b>	-C: Institutional culture (lack of resources; teacher-pupil ratio)	+T: Teaching practices +C: Traditions in FLT (ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted)
<b>Delfin</b>	-L: Language proficiency -L: Poor commitment to education and learning -C: Institutional culture (lack of resources; teacher-pupil ratio)	Same answer +T: Professional values
<b>Fátima</b>	-C: Dominant political values -C: Traditions in FLT	+L: Poor commitment to education and learning +C: Lack of parents' support
<b>Fenella</b>	-T: Teaching practices -C: Traditions in FLT (lack of a communicative approach)	Same answer +L: Personal theories and beliefs +L: Poor commitment to education and learning
<b>Guillermo</b>	-L: Language proficiency -L: Poor commitment to education and learning -T: Teaching practices -T: Professional values -C: Traditions in FLT (traditional approach)	=L: Poor commitment to education and learning =T: Professional values +C: Lack of parents' support
<b>Kristel</b>	-T: Professional values -T: Teaching practices -C: Traditions in FLT (Use of Spanish to teach the FL; lack of a communicative approach) -C: Institutional culture (teacher-pupil ratio)	=T: Professional values =T: Teaching practices =C: Traditions in FLT (ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted)
<b>Leticia</b>	-C: Institutional culture (lack of resources) -C: Traditions in FLT (textbooks)	Same answer
<b>Lola</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning -C: Institutional culture (educational system) -T: Professional values	=L: Poor commitment to education and learning =C: Institutional culture (institutions) +C: Dominant family expectations
<b>Lorena</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning	=L: Poor commitment to education and learning
<b>Mar</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning -C: Institutional culture (educational system; lack of resources)	Same answer
<b>Marcos</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning -T: Inability to foster motivation -C: Institutional culture (educational system)	=L: Poor commitment to education and learning +L: Language proficiency
<b>María</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning	=L: Poor commitment to education and learning
<b>Nancy</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning -T: Professional values	=L: Poor commitment to education and learning =T: Professional values
<b>Pilar</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning -C: Institutional culture (teacher-pupil ratio)	+T: Professional values
<b>Tammy</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning -T: Professional values -C: Institutional culture (lack of resources; teacher-pupil ratio)	(+"Every teacher can do something")
<b>Tania</b>	-C: Institutional culture (lack of resources)	+T: Professional values +C: Lack of parents' and institutions' support

Table 6.22. The participants' perceived obstacles, problems, or dilemmas in FLT in Spain in both questionnaires

<sup>63</sup> L: learner-related obstacle, C: Contextual obstacle, T: teacher-related obstacle.

Second, some student teachers pointed to learners' language proficiency. Alicia and Marcos underlined the difficulty of dealing with learners' different language levels in the classroom. Anita, on the other hand, continued complaining about their low level of proficiency in English, which in her opinion makes it "difficult to teach the language". Nevertheless, she considered that this obstacle can be overcome "if the teacher adapts his/her teaching methods to their level and, step by step, provides them with good strategies for learning. In this way, every student could progress accurately and get a higher level in a short period of time". Third, Fenella was the only student teacher who mentioned 'learners' personal theories' and beliefs (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016). She held that most learners do not have a positive attitude towards the English language since they see it mainly as another school subject.

In this questionnaire, there were more student teachers who made reference to 'teachers' professional values' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) as an obstacle in FLT. Some of them, for instance, became aware that many teachers are professionally demotivated. In the previous questionnaire, Delfin emphasised just learners' lack of motivation. Here she added that "even teachers" also lack motivation and interest in their job. Something similar happened to Pilar. At the beginning of the module, the obstacles she identified were learner-related (i.e. learners' poor commitment to education) and contextual (i.e. the teacher-pupil ratio per class). Now she rephrased her initial answer to note teachers' lack of professional commitment to effecting the educational change necessary in FLT:

The first day I mentioned the problems that come from the students, their motivation and the [ratio], but after this [module] I have to mention a big problem as it is the demotivation of teachers and their lack of interest in changing things and [engaging] more with their own job.

For Nancy, this lack of motivation and commitment is attributable to "the educational system in Spain". Apart from their demotivation, new aspects related to teachers' professional values were mentioned: their individualism and resistance to change. Blanca, Guillermo and Tania remarked on the 'lack of collegiality' (Manzano Vázquez, 2016; Vieira, 2009b) among teachers nowadays and stressed the need for more cooperation. They also argued that teachers resist innovating their teaching practice because of their fear of failing and being criticised by their colleagues, which leads them to maintain the *status quo*.

One of the most significant changes in this category affected the contextual obstacles identified. Only two obstacles from the previous questionnaire were still

mentioned by the student teachers: 1) the ‘dominant institutional culture and demands’ and 2) the ‘dominant traditions, frameworks, and guidelines in FLT’<sup>64</sup> (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007). Concerning the former, Lola broadened the horizons of her original answer and considered that the problems affecting FLT in Spain go from high educational institutions to learners’ families:

In my opinion, the problems and obstacles that affect ELT apply to all levels of education, from the Ministry of Education itself and the educational law to the students’ families. There is a need for collaboration among all the educational sectors if we want to improve the learning process of the students, in this case, language learning.

In the previous questionnaire, she criticised the educational system which she blamed for learners’ lack of motivation. Now she emphasised the need for a bottom-up approach to educational reform and policies in which teachers act as ‘agents of educational change’ (Saban *et al.*, 2007). She advocated the teacher’s key role in changing and improving how language teaching is conducted since he/she is in touch with learners and knows their learning needs:

We must look for solutions to the lack of motivation that prevails in our educational system, and the first step must be taken by those who directly exercise the teaching practice, that is, teachers, because they are those who act as mediators between the students and their families and the school and public administration. This is the reason why teachers are those who know better the actual needs of learners and those who can transfer them to the educational authorities in order to make major changes to improve the quality of education in our country.

As far as the second contextual obstacle is concerned, several student teachers continued criticising the lack of a communicative approach to FLT<sup>65</sup> and its negative consequences for learners. Previously, Clotilde contended that learners are unable to have a conversation in English and attributed this fact to the teacher-pupil ratio per class which in her view prevented them from developing their speaking skills. However, she became aware that learners’ inability to use the TL for communication is not due to the high number of students per class, but to the fact that teachers do not promote situations which encourage learners to participate and interact in the classroom:

I realise that the problem with communication is not because of the large number of students per class, but because teachers do not promote enough participation and interaction so students do not practise it and they finish secondary school without knowing how to communicate in English.

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<sup>64</sup> These obstacles have been shortened to ‘institutional culture’ and ‘traditions in FLT’ in Table 6.22.

<sup>65</sup> As noted in section 6.2.7, this obstacle can also be considered as teacher-related, making reference to teachers’ teaching practices in FLT.

Kristel also realised that the main problem in FLT is not the number of students per class, but the teaching method employed. Daniel changed his answer in order to note the ineffectiveness of the approaches adopted in preparing learners to communicate outside the classroom: “the main obstacle is the tradition of working in a wrong way, which makes students unable to learn the language and to communicate”.

Finally, a new contextual obstacle emerged in this questionnaire. Five student teachers referred to the lack of support from parents, institutions, and the school. In this sense, Alicia held that “the school can be an obstacle if it does not side with the teacher”, whereas “parents can sometimes be a problem if they are unwilling to collaborate with the school”. Tania removed her initial comment on the lack of resources and teaching materials in FLT and highlighted the lack of collaboration not only among teachers, but also from parents and institutions:

In my first answer, I just referred to the material issue, which is important, but now I realised that there are more essential aspects that influence the teaching process. In my opinion, teachers cannot deal with problems, dilemmas, and obstacles by themselves, so the main constraint to begin with is the lack of colleagues’, parents’, and institutions’ support. With support and collaboration I think that every problem is less hard.

## **6.6 Analysis of the Final Questionnaire**

The questionnaire first inquired into the participants’ conviction about the need to foster LA in FL education and their beliefs about the benefits of promoting PA. Figure 6.1 shows that most of the student teachers were ‘very convinced’ (13 participants) or close to being ‘very convinced’ (10 participants) of the need for LA. Only one participant (Nancy) seemed to be just convinced, adopting a more neutral position.

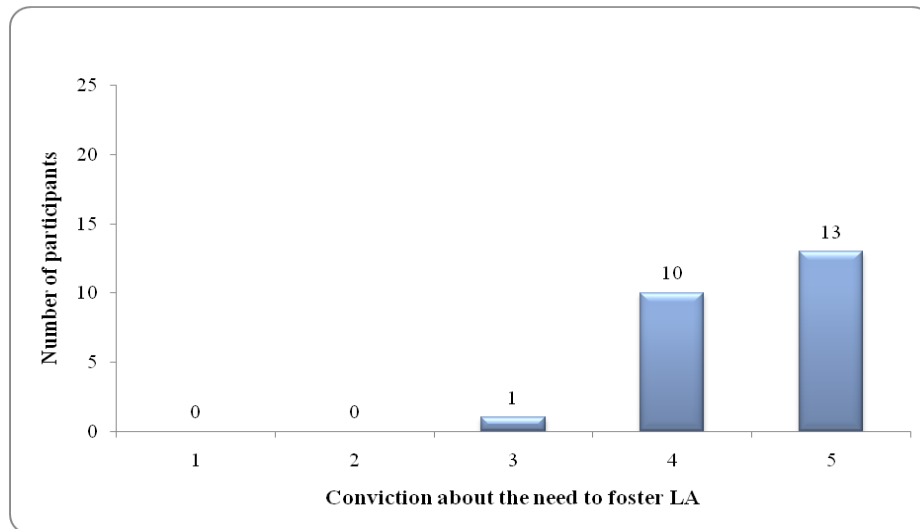


Figure 6.1. The participants' conviction about the need to foster LA in FL education

As shown in Table 6.23, the most important benefit which the student teachers perceived in the development of PA was related to motivation. Fifteen participants considered that PA could contribute to enhancing learners' commitment and motivation. They held that learners would become more motivated since teaching would be based on their learning interests and choices. Closely related to this idea, 13 participants noted that PA could help increase learner involvement in the learning process. Learners would show more initiative and would assume more responsibility for their own learning:

I consider that implementing pedagogy for autonomy will help students to be responsible learners because, as they have to be involved in their own learning process, they must take responsibilities and make choices about what they want to learn. (Leticia)

The implementation of pedagogy for autonomy would allow students to become responsible for their own learning and enhance intrinsic motivation. In addition, it would enable students to make decisions and reflect upon their own learning process, thus leading to more actively involved learners. (Marcos)

This involvement would be promoted by the fact that learning would be more democratic. Six student teachers positively valued that learners could have a voice in the teaching-learning process and they could become more involved in aspects related to decision-making; negotiation of goals, contents, and learning activities; and assessment methods (e.g. self-assessment and peer-assessment). The same number of participants argued that PA would enable learners to gain more independence.

	Better classroom atmosphere	Democratic learning	Independence	Learner involvement	Learner differentiation	Learning awareness	Lifelong learning	Meaningful learning	Motivation
Alicia	X	X	X	X				X	X
Anita					X			X	
Blanca									X
Carla					X				X
Clotilde				X					X
Daniel							X		X
Delfin		X		X		X			X
Fátima		X		X			X		X
Fenella		X		X					
Guillermo	X	X							X
Julia			X				X		
Kristel			X	X					X
Leticia				X					X
Lola					X	X	X		
Lorena			X					X	
Mar				X					
Marcos		X		X					X
Maria				X		X			
Nancy									X
Pilar					X				X
Sabina			X	X			X		X
Silvia				X		X			X
Tammy								X	
Tania			X	X					

Table 6.23. The participants' beliefs about the benefits of implementing PA in the FL classroom

Other perceived benefits pointed to more meaningful/lifelong learning, increased learning awareness, and learner differentiation. On the one hand, it was noted that PA would encourage lifelong learning and the acquisition of skills which are associated with this concept (e.g. self-regulation and learning to learn). It would also contribute to raising learners' awareness of their own learning process. Four student teachers underlined that by means of reflection learners could become aware of their learning needs, difficulties, outcomes, and progress. Four other student teachers pointed out that the promoting PA would allow teachers to 'provide for learner differentiation' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007). In this respect, it was acknowledged that classes are frequently given without taking into account learners' individual differences and PA could help overcome this deficiency:

Language teaching will be more effective since learners' individual needs and interests are taken into account. (Carla)

When we practise a learner-centred approach in the classroom, we encourage our students to reflect on their interests and the learning goals they want to achieve. This can help the teacher to guide his[/her] lessons towards the learners' interests and differentiation and improve his[/her] decision-making during the lessons. (Lola)



Alicia and Guillermo further stressed that PA could help promote a healthy classroom atmosphere in which learners would feel more relaxed to learn and the relationship with the teacher would be based on mutual respect.

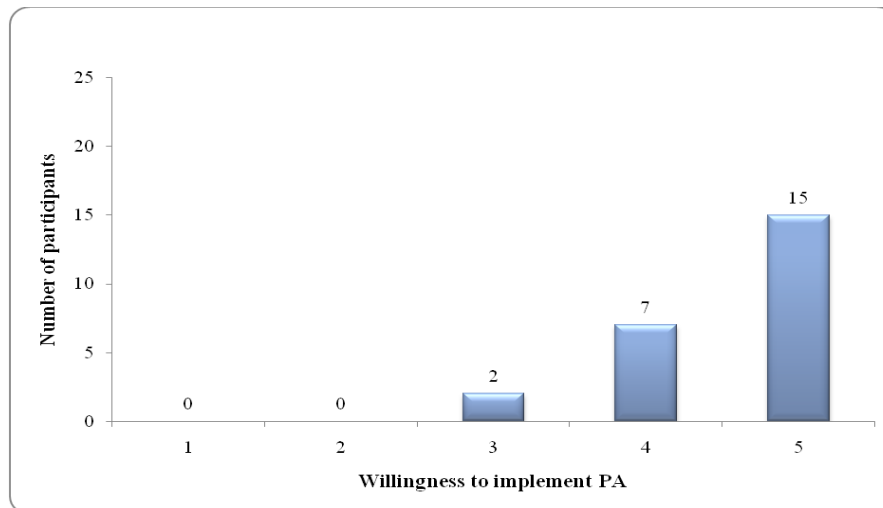


Figure 6.2. The participants' perception of their willingness to implement PA in their future teaching

Second, the questionnaire explored the student teachers' general perception of their willingness, ability and opportunity to develop PA as prospective teachers. As we can observe in Figure 6.2, most of them were very willing (15 participants) or close to being very willing (7 participants) to implement PA in their future teaching practice. Only two student teachers were just willing to do so. In the questionnaire, the student teachers stated different reasons why they were willing to implement PA in their teaching (see Table 6.24). The most common one (16 participants) referred to the benefits and positive results that PA could have in terms of learning (e.g. higher motivation, more learner involvement, and lifelong learning). Leticia, for instance, conceived of PA as a way to increase learners' motivation since they could become active participants and not "feel as '*slaves*' to do only what the teacher says" (emphasis added). Student teachers like Guillermo and Marcos remarked that PA could contribute to more meaningful and individualised learning:

I would like to do so as I feel that, by giving students the choice to learn what they feel is important, they will end up learning more than what is prescribed in the textbook. (Guillermo)

Pedagogy for autonomy would enable to satisfy every learner's needs, *making our teaching practice much more effective*. (Marcos, emphasis added)

	Willingness	Reasons for being willing to implement PA
<b>Alicia</b>	4	-Benefits and positive results of PA
<b>Anita</b>	4	-Benefits and positive results of PA (individualised learning)
<b>Blanca</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA
<b>Carla</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA -PA as a more effective approach for the practice of FLT
<b>Clotilde</b>	5	-Need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i>
<b>Daniel</b>	4	-LA as an educational objective in Europe -PA as a more effective approach for the practice of FLT (useful tool for classroom management)
<b>Delfin</b>	4	-Benefits and positive results of PA (individualised learning)
<b>Fátima</b>	4	-Benefits and positive results of PA (learner involvement) -Personal satisfaction as a teacher
<b>Fenella</b>	3	-Willingness to test PA
<b>Guillermo</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA (motivation and meaningful, individualised learning)
<b>Julia</b>	5	-Willingness to test PA
<b>Kristel</b>	5	
<b>Leticia</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA (learner involvement and motivation) -PA as a more effective approach for the practice of FLT
<b>Lola</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA
<b>Lorena</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA -PA as a more effective approach for the practice of FLT
<b>Mar</b>	4	-Benefits and positive results of PA (learner involvement and motivation)
<b>Marcos</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA (learning awareness, motivation, and individualised, lifelong learning) -PA as a more effective approach for the practice of FLT
<b>María</b>	4	-Benefits and positive results of PA
<b>Nancy</b>	3	
<b>Pilar</b>	5	-Need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i> -Willingness to test PA
<b>Sabina</b>	5	-PA as an innovative approach
<b>Silvia</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA (lifelong learning and motivation)
<b>Tammy</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA (meaningful, lifelong learning)
<b>Tania</b>	5	-Benefits and positive results of PA

Table 6.24. The participants' reasons for being willing to implement PA in their future teaching

As noted in the previous quotation, PA was regarded not only as an approach to improve and make the learning process more effective, but also the teaching practice. In this sense, Lorena emphasised that PA could be beneficial to both learners' and teachers' work, whereas Fátima added that promoting autonomous learning would provide her with greater satisfaction as a teacher. For Clotilde, PA represents an innovative approach which could help change the pedagogical *status quo*:

I think that pedagogy for autonomy is the way to achieve 21<sup>st</sup>-century education. New teachers have to escape from our past. We have to try to reinvent schools by saying goodbye to the old paradigm (boring classes focused on grammar rules).

It is interesting to point out that three student teachers wanted to work on PA because they would like to test it and see whether it works in the FL classroom. One of them was Fenella who was more neutral about her willingness to promote PA and needed "to prove that this is a reality and not another utopian view of education". The

other student teacher who adopted a neutral attitude was Nancy<sup>66</sup>. She had a positive perception of PA, considering it “a very good and successful idea” for FLT. However, she placed some restrictions on its development as she would not implement it with those groups of learners who are more disruptive.

As can be seen in Figure 6.3, the participants had different perceptions of their ability to implement PA in their future teaching. Four of them were very confident about it. Ten participants chose the next option in the scale, whereas eight participants were more neutral about their own ability. Two student teachers, however, were not confident about being able to promote autonomy in their classroom.

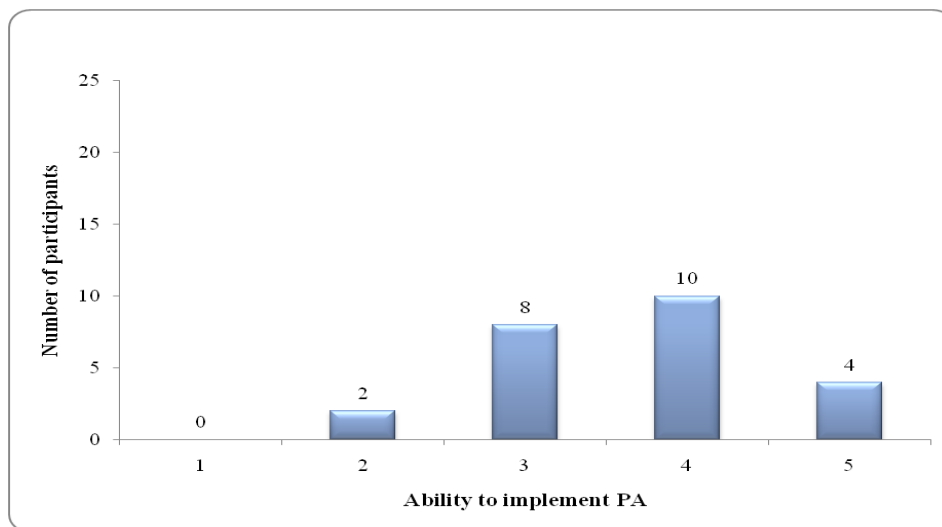


Figure 6.3. The participants’ perception of their ability to implement PA in their future teaching

I like challenges and the development of autonomy is a great challenge. In addition, I am quite keen on trying to continuously improve my teaching practice. I also like reflecting on my own practice and trying to find the way to solve potential problems that may arise in the classroom. I consider that teaching should be centred on learners and that learners’ opinions, interests, preferences, and needs are to be taken into consideration. Consequently, I think I meet all the requirements to implement pedagogy for autonomy. (Marcos)

Marcos was one of the few participants who had a more positive perception of his ability to implement PA since most of them reported feeling certain doubts and concerns about it (see Table 6.25). Some of these doubts were raised by the student teachers’ lack of teaching experience:

I am convinced. I know the theory, how to do it, but now I need experience and practice. I need to see myself in the role of the teacher. (Carla)

<sup>66</sup> Regarding the learning portfolios, Nancy was the only student teacher who still seemed to have doubts about the implementation of PA.

Chapter 6. Results and discussion

I cannot be 100% sure since my teaching experience is very little, but I am really willing. (Kristel)

I don't know very well because I have never been in charge of a class. (Pilar)

I have the intention and the willingness, but I am young, I have no experience and I don't know if I am able yet. I think that experience will make it possible that I answer a 5 next time I will be asked this. (Tammy)

	Ability	View about their ability to implement PA
<b>Alicia</b>	4	-Doubts about her readiness for PA
<b>Anita</b>	3	-Fear (fear of failure) -Need for more training in PA
<b>Blanca</b>	4	-PA as a challenging task (extra work of PA) -Doubts about her readiness for PA (not sure of doing it well)
<b>Carla</b>	4	-Lack of teaching experience
<b>Clotilde</b>	5	-Lack of practical experience in PA
<b>Daniel</b>	4	
<b>Delfin</b>	4	-PA as a challenging task (extra work of PA)
<b>Fátima</b>	3	-Need for more practice in the development of PA
<b>Fenella</b>	2	-Lack of teaching experience
<b>Guillermo</b>	5	-Positive perception of his ability
<b>Julia</b>	5	-PA as a challenging task (extra work of PA)
<b>Kristel</b>	3	-Lack of teaching experience
<b>Leticia</b>	4	-Doubts about her readiness for PA
<b>Lola</b>	3	-Lack of practical experience in PA
<b>Lorena</b>	4	-Positive perception of her ability
<b>Mar</b>	3	-Need for more practice in the development of PA
<b>Marcos</b>	5	-Positive perception of his ability
<b>María</b>	3	-Depending on learners -Problem of enactment
<b>Nancy</b>	4	-Positive perception of her ability
<b>Pilar</b>	3	-PA as a challenging task (extra work of PA) -Doubts about her readiness for PA -Lack of teaching experience
<b>Sabina</b>	4	-Doubts about her readiness for PA (not sure of doing it well)
<b>Silvia</b>	2	-Fear (fear of failure) and lack of confidence -Need for more theoretical knowledge about PA -Problem of enactment
<b>Tammy</b>	3	-Lack of teaching experience
<b>Tania</b>	4	-Depending on the context and learners

Table 6.25. The participants' view about their ability to implement PA in their future teaching

Two student teachers were concerned by the fact that they had no first-hand experience in PA. Clotilde considered that during the module she had gained theoretical knowledge about PA, but lacked practical experience in the promotion of LA. A similar opinion was held by Lola:

I still have several concerns about the implementation of autonomy in my language teaching because, so far, I only know it [at a theoretical level]. I have never experienced it before, neither as a student nor as a teacher [...] I guess that I will have to start step by step and introduce autonomy in my classroom very slowly at the beginning so as to gain more confidence in my teaching.

Mar and Fátima underlined their need for getting more practice in the development of PA “to do it more effectively”, whereas Anita was the only student teacher who felt that she would need more training in order not to fail.

Five student teachers harboured doubts about their readiness for PA. One of them was Leticia who would not be completely sure of her ability to implement PA until she faces such a situation: “I feel with enough motivation and the strength to achieve it, although I do not know until I face a classroom full of teenagers and can put it into practice and observe if pedagogy for autonomy works”. Alicia had “some reservations” about PA not because of its effectiveness or lack of it but because of her own capability to foster LA. She held that the promotion of PA “isn’t something to be taken lightly” and stressed the need to do it gradually. Thus, she would begin with those aspects of PA she is more comfortable with and, once she becomes more experienced and confident, she would increase the amount of autonomy she encourages in her classroom. Blanca and Sabina were not sure whether they would do it correctly, but they had “the intention of, at least, trying to implement it”.

There were also two student teachers who maintained that their ability to promote PA would depend on factors such as the teaching context and learners:

I am willing to put into practice this kind of pedagogy within my classroom. But at the same time, I am afraid because I am not sure how to put it into practice in certain cases since students vary depending on the level, the age, the context, the school, etc. (María)

I am willing to implement it. If I am able or not depends also on the context and the students’ circumstances. I think that it is possible if it is gradually implemented. (Tania)

Other students remarked on the fact that PA is a great challenge which requires more work, especially on the part of the teacher:

It demands harder work from the teacher, at least in comparison with a traditional approach. (Blanca)

I know this is not an easy task to develop, but every teacher can do something. I will have to prepare my classes deeply and to develop a clear framework of daily work to implement pedagogy for autonomy in my teaching. (Delfin)

I know it is not going to be easy to implement it. It requires continuous effort on the part of the teacher and the student. (Julia)

Finally, as we have seen in Figure 6.3, two student teachers were not confident about being able to foster autonomy in their classroom. These students were Silvia and Fenella. On the one hand, Silvia felt that she was not prepared to promote PA due to

various reasons (e.g. her lack of confidence and ‘the problem of enactment’ [Kennedy, 1999]):

I think I should be more informed about pedagogy for autonomy and [make sure] how it can be implemented; otherwise, the results could be chaotic. I think I should read a lot about autonomy and [begin by] implementing it gradually, in order to be more confident and not to feel lost.

For Fenella, her lack of teaching experience would initially lead her to rely on a traditional approach to language teaching: “not really, because I am not an experienced teacher at the moment and I prefer to use traditional methods. However, it does not mean that I am not going to introduce it little by little in my professional development”.

In general, the student teachers were sure of having the opportunity to implement PA in their future teaching (see Figure 6.4): seven participants were ‘quite sure’, nine participants were close to this state, and seven participants opted for option 3, the most neutral one. Only one participant seemed to have more doubts about it.

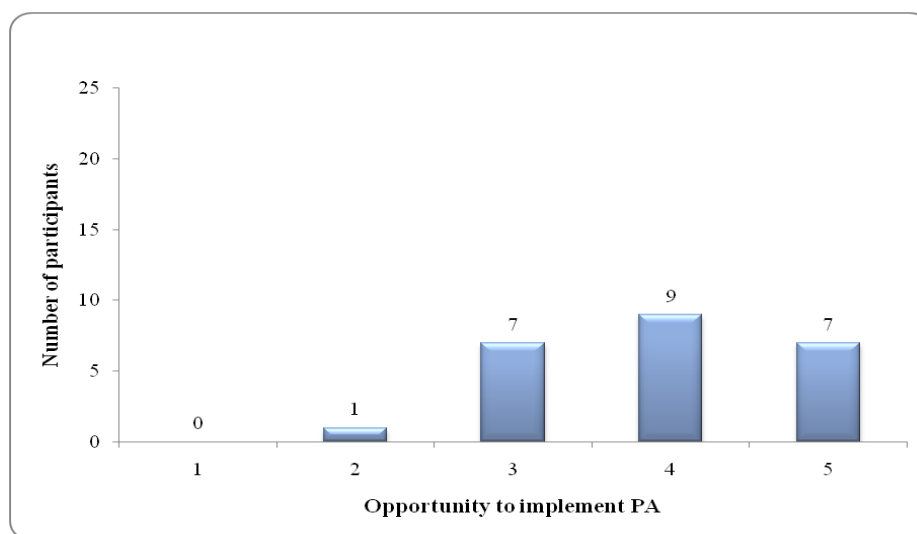


Figure 6.4. The participants’ perception of their opportunity to implement PA in their future teaching

As shown in Table 6.26, student teachers like Fátima, Julia, Marcos and Sabina were firmly convinced of the feasibility of promoting PA in the FL classroom:

If I become a teacher, I have no doubt. I don’t think teachers, [colleagues], the curriculum, or the educational system prevent it. (Fátima)

Nowadays this pedagogy is being implemented successfully, so why would I have any problem to do so? (Julia)

I would like to point out that every teacher can do something and that pedagogy for autonomy can be implemented (to a greater or lesser extent) in every setting. (Marcos)

I do not see the reason why I will not have it [i.e. the opportunity] since every teacher is more or less free to teach as they want to. (Sabina)

Nancy, on the contrary, harboured more doubts as to whether she would have the opportunity to implement PA. She emphasised that there are many constraints in schools and teachers often lack professional freedom: “sometimes you cannot do what you would like to”.

	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Beliefs about their opportunity to implement PA</b>
<b>Alicia</b>	5	-Sure of having the opportunity to implement PA
<b>Anita</b>	4	-Depending on learners -Meeting certain conditions (having the right materials and resources)
<b>Blanca</b>	5	-Depending on the teacher’s motivation and willingness
<b>Carla</b>	4	-Depending on the context
<b>Clotilde</b>	4	-Depending on the context
<b>Daniel</b>	3	-Presence of constraints
<b>Delfin</b>	3	-Depending on learners and parents -Meeting certain conditions (obtaining good results)
<b>Fátima</b>	5	-Sure of having the opportunity to implement PA
<b>Fenella</b>	4	-Sure of having the opportunity to implement PA
<b>Guillermo</b>	4	-Depending on the context and learners
<b>Julia</b>	5	-Sure of having the opportunity to implement PA
<b>Kristel</b>	3	-Depending on the context
<b>Leticia</b>	4	-Depending on the teacher’s motivation and willingness
<b>Lola</b>	3	-Lack of LA in FL education
<b>Lorena</b>	3	-Meeting certain conditions (obtaining good results) -Presence of constraints (learners’ response, parents, and the school)
<b>Mar</b>	4	-Depending on the teacher’s motivation and willingness
<b>Marcos</b>	5	-Sure of having the opportunity to implement PA -Depending on the teacher’s motivation and willingness
<b>María</b>	3	-Not completely sure
<b>Nancy</b>	2	-Presence of constraints -Teachers’ lack of professional freedom
<b>Pilar</b>	4	-Depending on teachers
<b>Sabina</b>	5	-Sure of having the opportunity to implement PA
<b>Silvia</b>	4	-Depending on the teacher’s motivation and willingness
<b>Tammy</b>	5	-Meeting certain conditions (reaching the goals and covering the contents)
<b>Tania</b>	3	-Depending on the context and learners

Table 6.26. The participants’ beliefs about their opportunity to implement PA in their future teaching

The rest of the student teachers thought that PA can be implemented in the FL classroom, although they expressed various concerns about it. Eight students underlined that promoting PA depends on factors such as the context (e.g. the school), the circumstances surrounding the teaching practice, other teachers, and learners:

Depending on the context it would be easier or not. (Clotilde)

Yes and no, I’m not 100% sure as I’m not sure what social context I will be in and what the needs of the students will be, nor am I 100% sure that I will receive the support and backing I need to do so. (Guillermo)

Again I do not want to say I am [completely] sure since when I go to a school I can find many different situations, sometimes not very good ones. But I will try. (Kristel)

Hopefully yes, although it depends on the people I work with and the support I get. (Pilar)

For Anita, for example, PA is feasible in FLT, but it depends on learners' readiness for autonomy and having the right materials and resources to implement it.

Lorena and Delfin also mentioned the influence of parents and subjected the implementation of PA to one condition: obtaining good results. Thus, Lorena regarded "the school, students' families, or students' responses" as potential obstacles to PA. Nevertheless, she considered that as long as it is successful, these problems can be overcome:

I consider that if I implement pedagogy for autonomy in my teaching and it has a good response and good results, there will not be any problem with it because the aim of education is autonomy, and the school as a whole and families are supposed to want the best for their students and children. If I obtain good results, I think that I will not have any problem with implementing this.

Similarly, Delfin argued that as long as PA produces good results, parents will agree with its development ("I think that it could be possible because if a different way of teaching works and learners learn, parents will be happy"). Tammy, on the other hand, held that the opportunity to implement PA will exist as long as learners reach the goals and cover the contents they are required.

Lola had doubts about the feasibility of PA because she was aware from her previous language learning experience that LA is still far from being a prominent educational goal in FL education:

I am about to start my *practicum* in a secondary school so I do not really know about the situation of teaching there. But as far as I remember from my years at school, teachers did not seem to be aware or interested in this approach, at least I never saw any teacher who [taught] following a learner-centred approach.

In this sense, various student teachers pointed out that the promotion of PA just depends on the teacher's motivation and willingness to implement it:

Although the way is not easy and sometimes obstacles will likely appear, we as teachers must be motivated to overcome any difficulty and impediment. (Leticia)

Every teacher can do something. In the end, he/she just needs to be motivated. (Mar)

I think that there will be some constraints to implement pedagogy for autonomy in my teaching. However, I think that the teacher is the one who decides if he/[she] wants to implement it or not. Since I am willing to implement pedagogy for autonomy in my teaching, I am quite sure that I will have the opportunity to do it. (Marcos)

I think we will always have the opportunity to implement it in our teaching, despite constraints and difficulties. It depends on our willingness to implement it and face those difficulties and make an effort to overcome them. (Silvia)



The questionnaire also investigated the participants' beliefs about the difficulties, constraints, challenges, and fears they would have to face when trying to implement PA (see Table 6.27). Most of these difficulties would be related to the student teachers themselves. Nine participants, for example, were afraid of implementing PA and not being successful or not being able to develop the approach properly. Some of them, however, were determined to overcome this fear due to the need to innovate FLT:

Fear of failure is one of the difficulties that I will face when trying to implement pedagogy for autonomy. However, this will not prevent me from trying to implement it because I have to accept the challenge to change. (Marcos)

I have fear of failure because changes are a challenge and sometimes lack of confidence may arise. However, I want to overcome my fears and I think the best way is taking on the challenge by observing and analysing my own practice and exercising decision-making to improve in those aspects in which my practice was weaker, as well as reading literature on pedagogy for autonomy and facing the challenge of innovation. (Lola)

As noted in the previous quotation, the student teachers' fear related in some cases to their lack of confidence and teaching experience, especially concerning practical work on PA:

The lack of experience is what mainly contributes to your insecurities and fears. You question yourself so many things like: Will this that I am implementing work? Will my learners learn with this new pedagogy? Will I implement it correctly? (Julia)

My main fear is all the previous work and [planning] it requires. *I have never done it* so I guess those fears are normal in the beginning. (Pilar, emphasis added)

For Sabina and Lola, this lack of practical experience added to the difficulty of translating PA into practice in the classroom (i.e. 'the problem of enactment' [Kennedy, 1999]) and the lack of a model for the implementation of PA:

I only know the theory and not having seen it implemented before, I find it difficult to visualise how a proper lesson focused on pedagogy for autonomy would work. (Lola)

The most important constraint I have is that I have never [experienced] pedagogy for autonomy so I do not have a model to follow. (Sabina)

Alicia, Delfin and Clotilde had doubts about their ability to promote PA, in particular about their ability to relinquish the right amount of control, to create a democratic atmosphere, and to overcome potential obstacles. Concerning the development of PA, Pilar was not the only participant who regarded it as a challenging task. Tammy was also aware that this approach is more demanding than the traditional method: "teaching by implementing autonomy is much more difficult and time-consuming than traditional teaching so I know I will have to work harder".

	<b>Constraints, difficulties, challenges, and fears in the implementation of PA</b>
<b>Alicia</b>	-Student teacher-related constraint (ST): Doubts about her ability to promote PA (ability to relinquish control)
<b>Anita</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of failure) -L: Learners' response to PA
<b>Blanca</b>	-ST: Lack of confidence -C: Dominant family expectations (as regards the role of the teacher) -C: Lack of support from parents
<b>Carla</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of losing control over the situation) -C: Lack of support from parents and the school
<b>Clotilde</b>	-ST: Doubts about her ability to promote PA (ability to overcome potential obstacles) -ST: Fear (fear of failure)
<b>Daniel</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation)
<b>Delfin</b>	-ST: Doubts about her ability to promote PA (ability to create a democratic atmosphere) -C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (the school's [traditional] teaching culture) -L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation)
<b>Fátima</b>	-C: Lack of support from parents -L: Language proficiency (learners' low level of proficiency in the TL) -L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation and disruptiveness) -L: Learners' response to PA
<b>Fenella</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of not finding the right materials and activities) -C: Dominant family expectations (parents' preference for traditional methods)
<b>Guillermo</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of failure) -L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation)
<b>Julia</b>	-ST: Lack of teaching experience
<b>Kristel</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of failure) -L: Language proficiency (variety of language levels in the classroom) -L: Poor commitment to education and learning (disruptiveness)
<b>Leticia</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of failure) -ST: Lack of teaching experience -C: Lack of support from parents and the school -L: Learners' response to PA -T: Lack of support from teachers
<b>Lola</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of failure) and lack of confidence -ST: Lack of practical experience in PA and problem of enactment -C: Dominant traditions, frameworks, and guidelines in FLT (traditional approach to FLT)
<b>Lorena</b>	-C: Dominant family expectations (as regards the role of the teacher) -C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (the school's [traditional] teaching culture) -L: Learners' response to PA
<b>Mar</b>	-ST: Lack of teaching experience -C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (need to follow the curriculum) -C: Lack of support from parents -T: Lack of support from teachers
<b>Marcos</b>	-ST: Fear (fear of failure) -C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (the school's [traditional] teaching culture)
<b>María</b>	-C: Lack of support from parents -L: Learners' response to PA
<b>Nancy</b>	-C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (the school's [traditional] teaching culture)
<b>Pilar</b>	-ST: Lack of practical experience in PA -ST: Perception of PA as a challenging task (extra work of PA)
<b>Sabina</b>	-ST: Lack of practical experience in PA and lack of a model for the implementation of PA
<b>Silvia</b>	-ST: Doubts about her ability to implement PA -L: Learners' response to PA -T: Teachers' professional values (individualism and lack of cooperation)
<b>Tammy</b>	-ST: Perception of PA as a challenging task (extra work of PA) -C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (the school's [traditional] teaching culture)
<b>Tania</b>	-C: Lack of support from parents and the school

Table 6.27. The participants' perceived difficulties, constraints, challenges, and fears in implementing PA

Other difficulties would arise from external factors to the student teachers, for instance, the lack of support from others (e.g. learners' parents, the school, and teachers). On the one hand, various participants were worried about not gaining parents'

approval and support for the promotion of PA: “many of them won’t understand this new way of teaching and they may disagree” (María). It was pointed out that parents may reject PA due to the ‘dominant expectations’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) that they have about teaching. They often expect the teacher to be someone who controls and directs the learning process. Otherwise, he/she is not doing his/her job:

Parents could also see this way of working as a strategy by the teacher for not working. (Blanca)

Some families may see autonomy as a way of teaching in which their children can do whatever they want in the classroom and that there is no responsibility and authority from the teacher. (Lorena)

In this sense, Fenella remarked that “parents seem reluctant to changes and prefer traditional methods”. Regarding the teaching context, six student teachers considered that the ‘dominant institutional culture and demands’ (*ibid.*) could also represent an obstacle to PA, especially in those schools which have a traditional teaching culture and are unwilling to change it:

Maybe, the school tradition is not similar to your ideas and, consequently, you have to change your teaching and adapt it to the school’s thinking. (Lorena)

Schools could also be a constraint if they are too traditional and do not really like innovative approaches. (Marcos)

Most schools already have a fixed dynamic for teaching so they don’t like someone com[ing] and implement[ing] something they don’t know about or they don’t agree with. (Nancy)

For Tammy, convincing the school and learners’ parents of the appropriateness of PA would depend mainly on obtaining good results: “maybe it takes time to make the students, the parents, and the school get used to it, but [as soon as] they see good results, I can’t see any problem”. Silvia, on the other hand, pointed to teachers and their ‘lack of cooperation’ (Manzano Vázquez, 2016; Vieira, 2009b) in many school settings as one of the main obstacles to the implementation of PA.

The student teachers also made reference to learner-related difficulties. Four of them emphasised ‘learners’ poor commitment to education’ (i.e. lack of motivation and disruptiveness) (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016) and their language proficiency (i.e. the presence of different language levels in the classroom and learners’ low level of proficiency in the TL). Nonetheless, what worried many of these student teachers was how learners would react to the development of PA. They were concerned about learners’ response to the new approach, which may be a negative one (Lorena);

their acceptance or rejection of PA since it is unknown to them (Anita and Fátima); their lack of readiness for autonomy (María); and their difficulty in adapting themselves to PA as they are not used to assuming responsibility for their learning (Leticia and Silvia).

	Perceived changes in their beliefs about FLT
<b>Alicia</b>	-Aware of the importance of reflection in FLT -Becoming familiar with the notion of LA
<b>Anita</b>	-More traditional vision of FLT at the beginning of the module
<b>Blanca</b>	-Change to a more learner-centred approach to FLT -Less emphasis on grammar instruction
<b>Carla</b>	-Becoming familiar with the notion of LA -Change in her beliefs about power in the classroom
<b>Clotilde</b>	-Change in her beliefs about power in the classroom
<b>Daniel</b>	-Less emphasis on grammar instruction -More traditional vision of FLT at the beginning of the module
<b>Delfin</b>	-More traditional vision of FLT at the beginning of the module
<b>Fátima</b>	-Becoming familiar with the notion of LA
<b>Fenella</b>	-Becoming familiar with the notion of LA
<b>Guillermo</b>	-Change in his beliefs about power in the classroom
<b>Julia</b>	-Becoming sensitive to the need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i>
<b>Kristel</b>	
<b>Leticia</b>	-Becoming familiar with the notion of LA -Change in her beliefs about power in the classroom -Less emphasis on grammar instruction
<b>Lola</b>	-Aware of the importance of developing PA in FLT
<b>Lorena</b>	-Change to a more learner-centred approach to FLT -Becoming sensitive to the need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i>
<b>Mar</b>	-More traditional vision of FLT at the beginning of the module
<b>Marcos</b>	-Change to a more learner-centred approach to FLT
<b>María</b>	-Aware of the importance of developing PA in FLT -Less emphasis on following the textbook
<b>Nancy</b>	-More traditional vision of FLT at the beginning of the module
<b>Pilar</b>	-Aware of teachers' freedom to innovate in FLT -Becoming sensitive to the need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i>
<b>Sabina</b>	-Less emphasis on grammar instruction -More traditional vision of FLT at the beginning of the module
<b>Silvia</b>	-Becoming familiar with the notion of LA -Change to a more learner-centred approach to FLT
<b>Tammy</b>	-Change to a more learner-centred approach to FLT -Less emphasis on grammar instruction
<b>Tania</b>	-Aware of the importance of reflection in FLT

Table 6.28. The participants' perceived changes in their beliefs about FLT

Finally, all the participants from the sample considered that the module had helped them reconsider and change their beliefs about FLT (see Table 6.28). Six student teachers realised that their vision of FLT at the beginning of the module was dominated by a more traditional approach. Two of these students were Anita and Delfin who argued that they were first influenced by their previous language learning experience, but thanks to the module they had gained knowledge about alternative approaches to FLT:

In a first moment, I thought the way of teaching English was by the traditional method (explaining grammar rules and doing activities about it), because it is the method by

which I have acquired the language. Through this [module], I have learnt that there are many ways of teaching and all of them are more effective than the traditional one. (Anita)

Until this [module], I saw teaching as I had learnt, under traditional beliefs and methods based on grammar and exams, but I have changed my view about education because I have learnt that there are other ways in which learners learn to learn. (Delfin)

One of these new approaches to FLT was PA and the development of autonomy. Six participants underlined that by means of the module they had become familiar with the notion of LA, which was not included in their original conception of FLT. In fact, the questionnaire revealed that only three participants from the sample were familiar with it before the module and that this familiarity remained at a theoretical level:

I knew a little bit, just as an objective of the European Union and the Erasmus programme. (Daniel)

I knew something about learner autonomy, which was briefly mentioned in other subjects. Nevertheless, they have not shown how learner autonomy could contribute in a beneficial way to the student as we did in this subject. (Julia)

I knew that the development of autonomy was included in the LEA<sup>67</sup>. Nevertheless, I didn't have a clear idea of how it could be promoted in the foreign language classroom. (Marcos)

In this sense, five student teachers experienced a change in their beliefs to a more learner-centred approach to language teaching. Silvia, for instance, became aware that LA was not originally part of her vision of FLT, but now she considered it essential for contributing to learners' growth. For this reason, she reoriented her main teaching aims which became developing "students' self-determination, lifelong learning, and critical thinking". Something similar happened to Tammy:

Now my objectives are others, they have changed totally because I think of how much my students can learn if I teach them through autonomy [...] I truly believe that what I have learnt here is what I have to do and I will do it.

Blanca also observed a change in her way of conceiving and conducting lessons:

I think my lessons will be now totally different from the lessons I would have delivered two months ago. I will apply all the new ideas I didn't know before, especially about promoting learners' autonomy and not focusing lessons on grammar.

She was not the only student teacher who changed her beliefs about the importance of grammar. Daniel, Leticia, Sabina and Tammy explained that the module had helped them place less emphasis on grammar instruction in their vision of FLT.

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<sup>67</sup> *Ley de Educación de Andalucía* (Education Law of Andalusia).

Four student teachers reconsidered their beliefs about the idea of power in the classroom. Carla, for example, had never considered that by relinquishing control the teacher could enhance learners' commitment and motivation: "I would have never thought that less control would lead to more engagement from the learner's side". Clotilde was aware that she had become more flexible and now she was open to negotiation with learners: "I had never thought about negotiation with students and now I realise it is an easy and important step that I will take if I become a teacher". A similar opinion was voiced by Leticia: "this [module] helped me to change the idea that the teacher has the power inside the classroom since the power must be shared [between] teachers and students; a negotiation must also exist [between] both parties". In this respect, Guillermo became aware of the relevance of a democratic atmosphere in the classroom: "I now think that giving students more choice and asking them what they want out of the class will lead to better harmony in the class and to a comfortable learning atmosphere".

Julia, Pilar and Lorena developed a critical view of education, acknowledging the pressing need to change the pedagogical *status quo*:

It [i.e. the module] has helped me to know that all of us as future teachers can do something to change the traditional view of education. (Julia)

I never thought teachers were this free to innovate and now I know that English has been taught in the wrong way since second language teaching was implemented in Spain. (Pilar)

Our society is changing so quickly nowadays and that is why we, as future teachers, have to innovate and to search for different ways of teaching. We have to try to improve the situation and to get better results. (Lorena)

Lorena admitted that she was "a bit sceptical regarding autonomy" at the beginning of the module as she thought that it would be very difficult to foster it due to learners' overall lack of commitment to learning. However, she adopted a more positive attitude and advocated a learner-centred approach to FLT, in which the teacher must go from being the main actor in the classroom to a 'facilitator' (Farrell, 2006; Saban *et al.*, 2007; Voller, 1997):

I have learned to reflect on many important and relevant aspects such as motivation, self-regulation, or students' autonomy in the classroom. Before doing this [module], I thought sometimes of these aspects, but I never realised how important they are and how much we have to think of them in order to improve education and ourselves as teachers. I have learned that teachers have to support and help their students but that they are not the main figure in the classroom and that they have to put the learner in the centre of the classroom because they are the ones who have to improve and to progress, they have to develop

themselves and to learn how to learn, and this is our function as teachers, to help them know how to learn. (Lorena)

She further highlighted teachers' key role in bringing about educational change: "if we keep on waiting for a change without doing anything, nothing is going to happen and everything is going to keep being the same. 'Every teacher can do something' and I really think so". In this respect, Alicia and Tania had become aware of the importance of reflection for improving FLT.

## 6.7 Analysis of the participants' cases

This section analyses the cases developed by the participants to enact PA during their *practicum* experience. While 19 student teachers completed their *practicum* at a secondary school, the five other student teachers taught at an OLS. The main difference between both educational contexts lies in the learners. While the learners at the secondary school are teenagers (age 12-18), the learners at the OLS are both teenagers and adults. Moreover, as opposed to secondary education, enrolling on the course at the OLS is voluntary<sup>68</sup>, so it can be assumed that the learners who attend this school are more motivated to learn the FL. They are also grouped according to their language proficiency (i.e. A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1). As noted in section 5.5.5, the cases could be done in pairs or individually. Thus, half of the student teachers opted for the first option, whereas the other half did it on their own. All the cases were developed within the teaching of English as a FL, except for the cases by Carla and Lola which were enacted within the teaching of German and Arabic respectively. Table 6.29 summarises the educational context, the grade or level of language proficiency of the class, and the activities developed in each case.

	<b>Educational context, grade/level of language proficiency, and activities developed</b>
<b>Alicia and Blanca</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 12, age 17-18)</li> <li>-Listening activity from the textbook: Answering some questions and deciding whether a series of statements were true or false</li> <li>-Listening activity including the three listening stages: 1) Pre-teaching some vocabulary and holding small group discussions, 2) watching a video and doing activities about it (answering questions, multiple-choice activity, and true/false activity), and 3) holding a whole-group discussion</li> <li>-Self-assessment: Completing two grids in which they reflected on the two listening activities and evaluated their listening skills during each activity</li> </ul>
<b>Anita</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 11, age 16-17)</li> <li>-Speaking activity: Explaining the plot of the last film they watched to Anita</li> <li>-Matching activity about a list of vocabulary provided by Anita</li> </ul>

<sup>68</sup> The prerequisite to enter the OLS is to have completed the first cycle of compulsory secondary education, that is, grade 7 (age 12-13) and 8 (age 13-14).

## Chapter 6. Results and discussion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listening activity: Watching two trailers and answering some questions</li> <li>-Task in groups: Collaborative writing (writing the plot of a film)</li> <li>-Completing a grid in which they expressed their opinion about the writing task</li> </ul>
<b>Carla</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-OLS (A2)</li> <li>-Learning stations</li> <li>-Questionnaire: Reflecting on the activity (i.e. the learning stations) and their learning experience during its completion</li> </ul>
<b>Clotilde and Mar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 12, age 17-18)</li> <li>-Speaking activity between the learners and native English speakers<sup>69</sup>: Holding a conversation</li> <li>-Self-assessment: Completing two grids in which they reflected on and evaluated their speaking skills, the activity, and their performance during the activity</li> </ul>
<b>Daniel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-OLS (B1)</li> <li>-Learning stations</li> </ul>
<b>Delfin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-OLS (B1)</li> <li>-Reading activity: Filling the gaps found in two texts using the vocabulary studied and answering a series of questions</li> <li>-Task in pairs: Creating and performing a dialogue based on situations provided by Delfin (e.g. “student A strongly believes that we will all be slim in the future. Student B does not believe [so]”)</li> <li>-Questionnaire: Reflecting on how they felt speaking in English, what kind of strategies they used in the classroom, and what they could do to improve their language proficiency</li> </ul>
<b>Fátima</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 12, age 17-18)</li> <li>-Textbook activities</li> <li>-Individual task: Writing a ‘for and against’ essay</li> <li>-Completing a small grid in which they evaluated Fátima and her teaching</li> </ul>
<b>Fenella</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 7, age 12-13)</li> <li>-Vocabulary activities (flashcards, <i>realia</i>, matching activity, and games + finding the ingredients necessary for a recipe in a supermarket flyer and cutting them out to decorate a poster)</li> </ul>
<b>Guillermo and Marcos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 8 and 9, age 13-14 and 14-15)</li> <li>-Project work + Self-assessment (evaluating their work during the project) and peer-assessment (evaluating their peers’ presentations)</li> <li>-Questionnaires: 1) Reflecting on their learning habits, interests, and reasons for learning English; and 2) Reflecting on their language skills, homework, their attitude in class, and their project</li> </ul>
<b>Julia and Lorena</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-OLS (A1, B2, and C1)/ Secondary school (grade 9, age 14-15)</li> <li>-Speaking activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level A1- Reviewing questions and their construction in English (“the students had to guess the famous person the teacher was by [asking] yes/no questions and wh-questions”)</li> <li>Level B2- Finding out the differences between two pictures</li> <li>Level C1- Discussion in groups and with the teacher</li> </ul> </li> <li>-Task in pairs: Creating a role-play (working on the language function ‘giving advice’)</li> <li>-Questionnaire: Reflecting on the usefulness of the activity/task for their learning and the difficulties experienced when doing it</li> </ul>
<b>Kristel and Pilar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 7 and 11, age 12-13 and 16-17)</li> <li>-Task in pairs: Seeking information about a sport and making an oral presentation about it</li> <li>-Task in groups: Writing a short script and filming a scene</li> <li>-Questionnaire (selecting yes/no): Expressing their opinion about the task</li> </ul>
<b>Leticia and Tammy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 7, age 12-13)</li> <li>-Task in groups: Collaborative writing (writing a composition on a topic of their choice)</li> <li>-Questionnaire: Reflecting on their learning experience during the task</li> </ul>
<b>Lola</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 9, age 14-15)</li> <li>-Quiz</li> <li>-Questionnaires: 1) Reflecting on their attitude towards the learning of Arabic and 2) Reflecting on the activity done</li> </ul>
<b>María</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 11, age 16-17)</li> <li>-Task in groups: Collaborative writing (making up a story using the words they had on a sheet of paper [e.g. “a taxi, an old enemy, and Valentine’s Day”])</li> <li>-Questionnaire: Reflecting on their language skills and more specifically on writing and the writing task they did</li> </ul>
<b>Nancy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 8, age 13-14)</li> <li>-Individual task to practise the four language skills: 1) the learners access a website where they choose a story and listen to it to understand what the story is about, 2) they listen to it with English subtitles, 3) they write a summary of it, and 4) they tell their story to the rest of the class</li> <li>-Questionnaire: Reflecting on their learning during the completion of the task, its influence upon their language proficiency, and the difficulties experienced when doing it</li> </ul>
<b>Sabina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Secondary school (grade 11, age 16-17)</li> </ul>

<sup>69</sup> A group of New Zealand learners who visited the school where Clotilde and Mar completed their *practicum*.



	-Task in pairs and groups: Collaborative writing (writing an informative essay) -Questionnaire: Reflecting on and evaluating their learning experience during the task
<b>Silvia</b>	-Secondary school (grade 7, age 12-13) -Worksheets
<b>Tania</b>	-OLS (B1) -Speaking activity + Peer-assessment: Holding a conversation about a specific topic while they were evaluated by their peers -Questionnaire: Reflecting on the activity (benefits, difficulty, etc.)

Table 6.29. Educational context, grade/level of language proficiency, and activities developed in the participants' cases

In general, the decisions about the content and the learning activities were made only by the student teachers and they were largely based on the need to work on areas in which the learners had difficulties and the desire to change the pedagogical *status quo* by innovating or improving prevailing teaching practices. Tania, for example, developed a speaking activity because she observed that the learners had problems with this language skill and that there was not too much group interaction in the classroom. María based her case on collaborative writing due to the learners' difficulties with this skill. Guillermo and Marcos focused on reflective inquiry and learning to learn because they noticed that in their classrooms there were learners who were not used to reflecting on their own learning and who had no clear idea of how to learn the TL:

Some students did not really know how to improve their level of English and learn the language effectively. Some of them said that they “worked hard but failed the exams” and, when they were asked what they could do to improve their performance, they did not really know what to answer. *Therefore, we decided to find the way to raise students' self-awareness and make them realise what their difficulties were and how they could be solved.* (emphasis added)

Leticia and Tammy decided to promote learner involvement and motivation by means of group work, an approach which was hardly implemented in the classroom. Alicia and Blanca worked on listening because they wanted to make the practice of this skill a more interactive activity for the learners (i.e. “to break away from the drone of the basic routine of listening to a recording and then answering some questions”). In their teaching practice, they juxtaposed a more traditional listening activity from the textbook with a more innovative and communicative one they designed.

The only student teachers who gave their learners a voice in determining the content and the learning activities were Guillermo and Marcos (see section 6.7.1) and Kristel and Pilar. Before beginning their teaching practice, they handed out a questionnaire to the learners to know what aspects of FLL they thought they needed to improve and what type of activities they would like to do in the classroom. The data obtained revealed that they were aware of their need to practise speaking and that they

had a strong preference for group work, the use of new technologies, and communicative activities. For this reason, Kristel and Pilar “decided to work on a task in which the students could develop their communicative skills and had some autonomy”. Both student teachers, however, did not have complete freedom to develop their teaching practice as they had to adapt it to the topics of the textbook at the request of their school supervisor. Despite this, they were able to find ‘spaces for manoeuvre’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) so as to adjust these topics to the learners’ preferences. Pilar, for instance, had to design her lessons by drawing on the content of the unit of work the learners were dealing with (i.e. sports). The task she proposed to her learners was to seek information about a sport and make an oral presentation about it. This way, they could work on their speaking skills and make use of new technologies, aspects identified in the questionnaire. Kristel, on the other hand, promoted group work. The unit of work she had to work on dealt with films so she encouraged the learners to write a short script and film a scene in which they were the actors.

### **6.7.1 Principles of pedagogy for autonomy in the participants’ cases**

Table 6.30 details the principles of PA (*ibid.*) which the student teachers promoted in their cases. Most of them *encouraged responsibility and choice* among their learners, which in turn contributed to the *development of their intrinsic motivation*. One of these student teachers was Carla. When she planned her teaching practice, she searched for an activity which fulfilled two purposes: 1) to promote a more constructivist approach to FLL in which the learners had an active role and they could monitor and control their learning process and 2) to *provide for learner differentiation*. It was for this reason that she decided to design and implement learning stations. In the classroom the learners had different ‘stations’ representing a wide range of learning activities in which they could practise the four language skills, grammar, and vocabulary. They were free to work individually or in pairs and they could choose the activities they wanted to do and in what order. In this way, they could work at their own pace and according to their particular learning interests, needs, and abilities in the TL. Moreover, some activities included the solutions so they were responsible for correcting their own answers. While the learners worked autonomously on each ‘station’, Carla’s role was to help them whenever they had any doubt or question. The same procedure was followed in the learning stations implemented by Daniel.

	Alicia and Blanca	Anita	Carla	Clotilde and Mar	Daniel	Delfin	Fátima	Fenella	Guillermo and Marcos	Julia and Lorena	Kristel and Pilar	Leticia and Tammy	Lola	María	Nancy	Sabina	Silvia	Tania
Responsibility, choice, and flexible control	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Learning to learn and self-regulation	X		X	X		X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Cognitive autonomy support									X					X	X		X	
Integration and explicitness																		X
Intrinsic motivation	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Learner differentiation			X		X													
Action-orientedness		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Conversational interaction	X		X	X	X	X				X	X					X		X
Reflective inquiry	X		X	X		X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X

Table 6.30. Principles of PA (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) in the participants' cases

Kristel, Leticia, María, Pilar and Tammy gave their learners responsibility for forming the groups and choosing the topic, sport, or film they were going to focus on. Lola, for instance, engaged the learners in designing the learning activity. From the beginning of her teaching practice, she aimed to encourage their responsibility for the learning process and to promote their intrinsic motivation: “I wanted to motivate them and make them see that they have to take charge of their learning [...] I wanted them to be involved”. To this end, she decided to organise a quiz and gave the learners full responsibility for designing it. By revising what they had studied in previous lessons, they had to create the cards with the questions and the answers for the activity.

Learner responsibility was also encouraged by means of self-assessment and peer-assessment. Alicia, Blanca, Clotilde and Mar involved their learners in evaluating their listening and speaking skills. Tania created a learning environment where responsibility for the learning process was shared by means of cooperative learning. The learners got into groups of four in which two learners held a conversation while the two other learners played the role of “examiners”. They were responsible for assessing their classmates' interaction and pointing out “the negative and positive aspects of their conversation” (e.g. correcting their mistakes, highlighting aspects to improve, etc.). It

must also be noted that concerning PA Tania was the only student teacher who reported having made the rationale of the activity explicit to the learners prior to its completion<sup>70</sup> (“before handing out the activity, I explained to the learners what the activity was about, the objectives, and the reason why they were going to do it”).

Guillermo and Marcos combined both self-assessment and peer-assessment. Apart from encouraging responsibility, choice, and intrinsic motivation, they promoted project work to *provide opportunities for self-regulation and action-orientedness*. The learners were provided with a list of projects from which they had to choose the one they liked most. During its completion they were fully responsible for monitoring their work. For this purpose, they were given a grid in which they had to keep a record of the days they spent in each step of the project, the problems they had, and the solutions they found<sup>71</sup>:

Task: Final project	Days						Main problems and solutions
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. Decide on the research topic							
2. Draw up a list of possible resources							
3. Assign group roles and begin research							
4. Continue research							
5. Develop and rehearse presentation							
6. Make presentation							

Next, the learners evaluated their classmates’ presentations and completed a questionnaire in which they evaluated their own work during the project. In this case, self-assessment and peer-assessment involved not only the learners but also the student teachers. Guillermo and Marcos held that:

The assessment of our performance and the lessons that we teach can be very useful to know how we can improve our teaching methodologies and practice. This is extremely important if we want to remain professional in our job. By identifying our weaknesses, we can improve our work as teachers and cater for the needs of all our students.

Thus, each student teacher completed a grid in which they reflected on and evaluated one of their lessons in the *practicum*, becoming aware of various aspects they could improve in their future teaching practice:

<sup>70</sup> ‘Creating opportunities for integration and explicitness’ and ‘providing opportunities for learning to learn’.

<sup>71</sup> By encouraging the learners to find their own solutions to problems, Guillermo and Marcos created opportunities for ‘cognitive autonomy support’ (Stefanou *et al.*, 2004).

I think I should use easier vocabulary in the next class as some of the vocabulary may have been a little bit overambitious in some cases [...] I would have liked to have guided a bit less. I think I might have helped too much. (Guillermo)

I think that this lesson has been too controlled by the teacher [...] I have come to the conclusion that, even if students were motivated and engaged, they could have been even more motivated and actively engaged if I had given them more autonomy [...] Regarding my teaching approach, I think that the class has been communicative, but partially. Warming-up activities [...] were not really communicative since the questions were similar for every student and the interaction pattern was quite traditional (the teacher asks and one of the students answers). From my point of view, this should be improved in order to give students the chance to use the language for communication. (Marcos)

By means of the same grid, they were also evaluated by a peer. Marcos was observed and assessed by Elisa, another student teacher of the programme who was doing her *practicum* at the same secondary school, whereas Guillermo was assessed by Marcos. Lastly, both student teachers engaged the learners in assessing their teaching by completing a questionnaire at the end of their teaching practice and constantly getting feedback from them, for example:

The first day I taught a lesson, the students were told to spend the last ten minutes of the lesson writing down their opinion [about my teaching] on a little piece of paper: if they had liked the lesson and the methodology or if they had any suggestion for the following classes [...] These comments were very important as they helped me to plan the coming sessions by taking students' opinion into account and tailor teaching to their needs [...] I usually asked the students if they felt that the lessons were useful for them and their learning process, if they had any difficulty, or if they would like to learn something new. This way, I was able to receive immediate feedback and talk to students about their concerns and the way in which the lessons could be improved upon. (Marcos)

Fenella and Silvia also encouraged responsibility, although they emphasised the learners' motivation, particularly affective components such as self-confidence and self-efficacy. They taught at the same secondary school and encountered enormous difficulties when promoting PA. The first difficulty was the 'learners' poor commitment to education' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016). The vast majority of the learners came from disadvantaged families with low educational aspirations, so they lacked motivation and had little interest in FLL. Second, they had a very low level of proficiency in English, which constrained the type of activities they could do in the classroom. Third, the learners were very impatient and gave up easily in the face of challenges. They were also very dependent upon the teacher, being unable to do their work on their own or without the teacher's approval. After observing several classes, both student teachers concurred in their diagnosis of what the learners mainly lacked:

Frequently, I got the impression that they did not see themselves able to [succeed] or improve [...] They saw themselves as having no ability. (Fenella)

I realised that they lacked motivation, interest, strategies to learn, a meaningful practice, and so on. But especially they lacked one basic thing: confidence in themselves, in their own capacities. (Silvia)

Fenella worked on vocabulary: “once I got to know my learners, I decided to broaden their knowledge of vocabulary by teaching some words related to ‘sweets and cakes’ as they may enjoy learning things they like”. Due to their characteristics, the activities carried out in the classroom needed to be “very dynamic and enjoyable”. For this reason, she engaged the learners in learning vocabulary through flashcards and *realia*, matching words with the concept, and playing different games in which they sometimes adopted the role of the teacher “to give them responsibility and make them feel important”. After this, she focused on enhancing the learners’ self-efficacy by “making them feel able to work independently. [She] wanted them to feel they are active and productive and can make things on their own”. For this purpose, she prepared an activity on recipes. The learners were provided with different recipes including the vocabulary they had studied in previous lessons. The idea was that in pairs they chose one recipe and worked by themselves, finding the ingredients necessary for the recipe in a supermarket flyer and cutting them out to decorate a poster.

Silvia focused on encouraging independence and motivation in the learners: “I wanted to make them realise they could work by themselves and become better learners. I wanted to promote their self-esteem, self-confidence, and motivation”. She adapted her teaching to the teaching practice followed by her school supervisor and taught by means of worksheets. The difference was that she gradually gave the learners more independence and responsibility: “when the students worked on their worksheets, I supported them individually, encouraging them to trust their own capacities and stressing the fact that they were able to carry out tasks on their own”. Furthermore, she constantly provided them with positive feedback:

[I]n order to let them know that I expected more from them. I used to tell them things like “you see? You knew it without my help”, “you know more than you think, just try it!”, or “I can’t believe you have already finished, I feel so glad!” and their smiles told me that it was working.

She also created opportunities for ‘cognitive autonomy support’ (Stefanou *et al.*, 2004). The learners were unable to solve problems on their own and they always relied on the teacher to solve them. Therefore, she encouraged them to find their own solution paths: “when they [ran into] any difficulty, I showed them that they had the necessary

resources to overcome it instead of telling them the answer; and I congratulated them every time they used those tools (previous worksheets and their notebooks)”. Other student teachers who created opportunities for cognitive autonomy support were María and Nancy. Like Silvia, María encouraged the learners to generate their own solutions to problems (e.g. looking for synonyms whenever they did not know a word in English). Nancy’s learners also experienced some difficulties with vocabulary. However, rather than providing them with the translation, “[she] told them to use the dictionary. This way, they [could] become more responsible and autonomous”.

Anita combined a teacher-directed approach with a more learner-directed one. The task she proposed to her learners was to work in groups to write the plot of a film. By means of this task, she wanted to achieve three objectives: 1) to promote group work and cooperative learning since the learners were used to working individually, 2) to encourage them “to know the language as a communicative process”, and 3) to foster their creativity and *intrinsic motivation*. She devoted three sessions to the development of her case in which she encouraged ‘flexible control’ (Aviram and Yonah, 2004), that is, she moved from an introductory session where she directed the learners’ actions in the classroom to two other sessions where the learners could have more control over their learning, working on their own and at their own pace. In these two sessions, they completed the task. They were given freedom to choose the peers they wanted to work with and the genre they wanted to write about. The learners were also fully responsible for organising themselves within the group (i.e. defining their role in it) and making decisions about their piece of writing (e.g. in terms of structure, style, etc.).

There were, however, student teachers who gave their learners little autonomy in terms of responsibility and choice. Despite promoting some principles of PA (see Table 6.30), Delfin developed her case in two sessions in which she had total control over the teaching-learning process. The first session was an introduction to the topic of the activities designed: “I explained the general topic and I made a list of vocabulary that they would find in the text of the reading activity” (emphasis added). The second session was devoted to “the completion of the activities [she] had prepared”. Fátima adopted a more traditional approach. She taught in grade 12, that is, the last year of post-compulsory secondary education. During this grade, learners are thoroughly prepared for their university entrance exam. For that reason, Fátima focused on preparing her learners for the writing section of this exam. They worked on how to

write a ‘for and against’ essay. Her case was implemented in two classes. The first one was devoted, on the one hand, to the explanation provided by Fátima. In this case, the student teacher acted as a transmitter of information, whereas the learners were passive consumers of knowledge: “I explained them [i.e. the slides] one by one and they took notes”. She played a dominant role in the classroom:

*I said to them that we were going to focus on a for and against essay and I explained the main characteristics that appeared in the PowerPoint presentation [...] I showed a list of useful connectors that they had to include in their writing activity. (emphasis added)*

The learners spent the rest of the class doing different textbook activities which were selected by Fátima. They were done individually or with the student teacher. In the second class, the learners completed some extra activities and they wrote their essay. As we can see, the teaching-learning process was teacher-controlled.

Most of the student teachers developed, to a greater or lesser extent, an *action-oriented approach* to FLL. They encouraged their learners to take a more pro-active role in their learning process, experiencing a sense of personal agency and self-determination (e.g. Carla, Guillermo, and Marcos). In many cases, this approach was implemented by means of the accomplishment of different language learning tasks (see Table 6.29). *Fostering conversational interaction* was also a prominent pedagogical principle in various cases. Julia and Lorena, for example, decided to address one common problem in FL classrooms: many learners’ reticence to speak in the TL because of their anxiety and embarrassment. They considered that the solution to this problem was to create a relaxed atmosphere in which the learners could feel more confident and motivated to talk. For this reason, they provided their learners with activities/tasks to interact among themselves in pairs or groups. Clotilde and Mar organised a speaking activity between their learners and a group of New Zealand learners whereby they emphasised ‘transformation-oriented communication’ (van Lier, 1996). The participants worked in groups of four (two Spanish learners and two New Zealand learners) and the procedure of the activity was similar to the one in speed dating. The Spanish learners had five minutes to hold a conversation with the native speakers and, when they heard a whistle, they had to sit with another pair of New Zealand learners. With this activity the student teachers aimed to “create a context of language use where the students had a reason to attend to the language, providing them with an *opportunity to use the language to express their own personal meanings*” (emphasis added). Other examples of conversational interaction were found in the case



by Alicia and Blanca (the learners engaged in small group discussions and a whole-group discussion), Delfin (the learners created and performed their own dialogues), Kristel (the learners filmed a scene based on a script they wrote), and Tania (the learners held a conversation about a specific topic).

Transformation-oriented communication (or conversational interaction) also involves negotiating the pedagogical agenda with learners. In this sense, Sabina was the only student teacher who engaged in negotiation with her learners. She contended that the practice of writing should be a more cooperative activity in FLL:

Traditionally, writing has been considered a solitary activity that must be done in silence; that is why many teachers prefer it to be done for homework. However, I have a different perspective [on] this issue: practising collaborative writing in class rather than individual writing at home can bring [many] pedagogical benefits to the learners.

She pointed out that they can have more opportunities to interact and engage in negotiation of meaning and that collaborating with their peers can help them reduce their anxiety when writing and foster their self-confidence. In her case, she focused on informative essays. First, she explained to the learners the structure of this type of essay and the connectors they could use. After this, she negotiated the topics for the essay with the learners and gave them the opportunity to *choose* the one they liked most, thus encouraging their responsibility for the learning process and their intrinsic motivation:

I negotiate with the students three topics to write about. They have to be related to the vocabulary they have just studied in the unit about culture and customs. After a short discussion, we agree that the topics will be: ‘*La fiesta de la primavera*’, ‘*sleeping la siesta*’, and ‘Spain as a tourist destination’. In pairs, they have to choose one of the topics to write an informative essay.

The task promoted cooperative learning by means of pair and group work since, after writing their essay, each pair of learners had to join another pair with the same topic and write a final version of the essay using ideas from both texts.

Finally, many student teachers *promoted reflective inquiry*, creating opportunities for *learning to learn*. At the end of their teaching practice, they provided their learners with a questionnaire (or grid) so that they reflected, for instance, on their learning experience during the activity/task, its usefulness for their learning, or the difficulties they had faced. Some examples of the questions included in these questionnaires are listed below:

Write a brief comment on whether you liked working on the learning stations.  
What didn't you like?  
Do you have the feeling of having learned something through the learning stations?  
Would you recommend this learning method to other people? Explain your answer.  
Would you like to work with this learning method again in the future?<sup>72</sup> (Carla)

Did you like working in groups? Why?  
Advantages and disadvantages  
Would you rather write compositions individually? Why?  
Do you think that with this experience you have learned something from your classmates? Why? (Leticia and Tammy)

Focusing on writing, what do you do in the classroom in order to improve your writing skills in English?  
What do you do on your own in order to improve your writing skills?  
Do you think that "creative writing" is a good activity in order to improve your writing skills? a. Yes, I do b. No, I don't Why?  
Would you like to do this kind of activities in a regular way? (María)

Have you learnt something by doing this task? What?  
Has it been a challenge for you? Why?  
What difficulties have you [encountered] while doing it?  
Do you think you would improve your English by doing more tasks of this kind? Why?  
Do you think you would improve your listening skill through tasks like this [one]? (Nancy)

Have you ever carried out a 'peer-assessment activity'? If yes, could you describe please in which situation/context and assess the experience?  
What is your opinion about the activity of assessing your peers? (Level of difficulty, value, and benefits)  
Describe what difficulties you have [encountered] during the activity.  
In your opinion, what are the main advantages and disadvantages of this activity?  
Would you like to do this activity more frequently in class? (Tania)

As we have seen in the case by Guillermo and Marcos, there were also instances in which learner reflection was accompanied by teacher reflection. Sabina, for example, designed two questionnaires for her case. The first one was for the learners to evaluate their learning experience. In the second one, it was her who reflected on and evaluated the task carried out:

Questionnaire for the teacher

1. What are the benefits obtained through this activity?
2. What obstacles have I [encountered]?
3. How can I solve these obstacles?
4. Was the learners' attitude positive or negative?
5. Has the activity been useful [to] them?

By means of these questions, she became aware of possible changes she could introduce to her case. Reflecting on her teaching practice also enabled Tania to realise that her speaking activity could be improved upon by promoting more learner involvement. Thus, in the future she would involve the learners in defining the criteria for peer-

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<sup>72</sup> These questions are translated from German thanks to Dr. Javier Martos Ramos (University of Seville, Spain).

assessment and would encourage them to choose the topics for the activity according to their interests.

### 6.7.2 The participants' evaluation of the cases

The student teachers evaluated the outcomes of their cases by means of classroom observation and the questionnaires/grids mentioned above. In general, the outcomes were very positive. First, the learners liked the activities carried out in the classroom, finding them “interesting” (Tania), “funny, entertaining” (Nancy), “motivating” (Clotilde and Mar), “innovative” (Carla), and “useful to improve their learning” (Lola). In fact, they expressed their willingness to do them again in the future. The learners particularly liked those activities including group work since they had the opportunity to work with other classmates and learn collaboratively. Many of them also enjoyed the activities because they were far from being the traditional activities from the textbook.

Second, most of the student teachers observed high levels of motivation in the learners when they worked on their own. They were more genuinely engaged in the learning activities and therefore the results of their work were more positive:

I noticed that most of the students were engaged [in] it. I could see how they enjoyed working on it. They were interested in doing it as well as possible, they were motivated when doing this task and that is something that caught my attention because in other classes in which I did not do this task, the students were less attentive and less interested in the subject. (Nancy)

The results surprised me a lot, since they made a huge effort. Most of them went beyond and filmed about ten or fifteen minutes<sup>73</sup>, they dressed up and most of them even included subtitles, something that I did not require. They seemed very proud of their job and they wanted to play their movies over and over again. And personally I felt great. (Kristel)

Pilar remarked that “the learners seem to like working this way and asked for more sessions of independent work”. Sabina, for instance, noticed that her task on collaborative writing succeeded in motivating those learners who were usually less motivated: “even those students who look more disengaged from the subject seem to be interested in the activity”. For Guillermo and Marcos, the reason for the learners' higher motivation was giving them freedom to work, choose the topic, and make decisions about what to include in their project.

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<sup>73</sup> The requirement was to film a scene which lasted at least five minutes.

In the case by Leticia and Tammy, the outcomes exceeded the student teachers' initial expectations. When they began the *practicum*, they did not have great expectations for their pedagogical project. They thought that due to their young age the learners would not concentrate on the task and would not take it seriously. They were also afraid of losing control over the situation:

We have to recognise that we were afraid of losing control of the class because from the very beginning to the end this kind of practice requires that students talk to each other, and we considered the possibility of wasting the hour because they could talk about other things which [could] not be related to what they had to do.

Nevertheless, their experience was completely satisfactory. They pointed out that the learners proved to be more autonomous than they expected, which led them to acknowledge that “[they] made a huge mistake creating such low expectations”. During the task the learners were very motivated and they were entirely responsible for their work: “they organised themselves in an incredible way. We observed that each one had a function: one learner wrote, the other one looked up [words] in the dictionary, and the other one looked for information”. Leticia and Tammy emphasised that due to the positive results obtained “this research is another incentive to implement pedagogy for autonomy when we become teachers”.

The outcomes were very positive even in those contexts where the student teachers encountered great difficulties to develop their case. Fenella and Silvia observed that the learners got more involved in the learning process, they trusted more in their own capabilities, and they were satisfied with their work:

They felt proud of themselves for the final result. They were very responsible and motivated and made a big effort doing the task. (Fenella)

As time went by, they stopped asking continuously and only wanted to show me that they had done the activity without help, or even asked for more worksheets when they had finished; they showed satisfaction when they solved problems and wanted to demonstrate that they had knowledge and capability. The way they looked at me or smiled when they received feedback and were congratulated, and the way they got involved, told me that the action plan was working. Furthermore, I noticed that their motivation had increased. (Silvia)

For them, the key to this change was to adopt a more learner-centred approach to learning:

Students appreciate when you worry about them and do activities they like. (Fenella)

I noticed that the students got more involved when they felt that the teacher cared and had expectations for them. When they were on their own, they complained when they had any problem, skipped activities, and never checked their answers (if they were correct, the

spelling...). However, when they felt that the teacher expected something from them, they made an effort to meet the expectations and got much more involved. (Silvia)

Both student teachers, however, missed having more time to work on LA. For Silvia, it was completely necessary to work longer on this aspect since some learners were still dependent upon the teacher.

The experience was positive not only for the learners but also for the student teachers. Some of them wrote that the case had enabled them to explore the benefits of PA and be more sensitive to the need to change the pedagogical *status quo*:

Personally, the experience has been very positive since it has allowed me to put my theoretical knowledge into practice and realise that pedagogy for autonomy actually works. In the future, I would like to continue working in this direction... even if I don't find myself in a context with the ideal characteristics [for the development of LA]. This project has helped me realise that teachers can always do something to make students become active participants in the teaching process. (Carla)

This experience taught me that I always need to make my lessons enjoyable, look for successful teaching methods, innovate... (Fenella)

Personally, this experience has been fulfilling since we have tried something new and their response has been positive. It is obvious that if you change the methodology [according to] your students' interests, they will work and learn more. (Kristel and Pilar)

In her teaching context, Silvia became aware that it is possible to 'manage local constraints so as to open up new spaces for manoeuvre' (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) and that teachers' involvement is vital in this respect:

This action plan helped me strengthen my original belief that it is not that students are not capable, but that they lack positive judgements and expectations from others and from themselves. I think that it is always possible to do something, to innovate in the classroom, despite the negative characteristics of students and despite the obstacles and constraints that may be found. And the greatest mistake a teacher can make is to think that getting involved is, in certain circumstances, a waste of time.

Other student teachers realised the importance of collaboration among colleagues and how learners can help improve teaching practice:

This experience has been very helpful to take on board the observer's comments, accept criticism and also to stand back and examine our teaching styles and methods. It has really helped us to understand the importance of teacher-teacher assessment [...] The comments given by students have helped us to improve professionally, assess the quality of our materials, think about our teaching methodologies, and reflect upon how they could be adapted or improved. (Guillermo and Marcos)

We have to say that we have enjoyed doing this piece of work together because as students said in the questionnaire we have helped each other, we have joined several ideas and we have felt the peer support. (Leticia and Tammy)

## 6.8 Analysis of the interviews

As noted in section 5.5.8, eight student teachers from the sample agreed to be interviewed for the research. These students were Lola, Marcos, Silvia, Tammy, Carla, Daniel, Julia, and Tania. The first four student teachers completed their *practicum* at a secondary school, whereas the four other students taught at an OLS.

Once they had completed the module and the *practicum*, the first objective of the interview was to explore these student teachers' ideal vision of the teaching of English as a FL. Following Tudor (2001), two main visions were identified in their responses: 'the communicative classroom' and 'the classroom as a school of autonomy'. Tania's ideal vision was communicative because in her opinion "this is the main shortcoming of our current educational system. There is no communication in the classroom, so the four language skills are not properly developed"<sup>74</sup>. For Marcos, a communicative approach is "the most effective method for learning a foreign language". He stressed that learners must develop the language skills and, above all, they must learn to communicate since "learning just grammar and vocabulary doesn't make you speak a language". To promote communication in his teaching, he would use a task-based approach. However, he placed some restrictions on the use of tasks since grammar cannot be completely neglected in FLT: "we cannot always teach by means of tasks as it is necessary to teach a little bit of grammar, maybe in a more implicit or inductive way". Daniel and Silvia also underlined that classes should be more communicative, promoting learners' use of the TL for communication. "This way they can see the usefulness of the language" (Silvia). Both participants concurred that it is necessary to make learners realise that English is a tool for communication and not another school subject. In this regard, Silvia blamed the emphasis on grammar instruction for learners' overall lack of communicative competence. She considered that learning grammar can be useful for communication, but "it should be acquired by practising and using the language rather than filling gaps".

Six participants had the promotion of autonomy as a central aim in their ideal vision. Marcos, for instance, was determined to gradually give his learners autonomy and see how they respond to it. Carla advocated an approach focused on LA to motivate learners and encourage them to play a more active role in their learning. She was further

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<sup>74</sup> The quotations included in this section are translated from Spanish.

convinced that this approach could lead to “better learning and better results”. Tania also advocated PA as opposed to a teacher-centred approach which in her view fails in helping learners fend for themselves and develop skills such as personal initiative, creativity, and critical thinking.

Both Julia and Tammy stressed the feasibility of PA in the FL classroom. Julia rejected a teacher-centred approach and argued that the teacher should “step aside” and act as a ‘guide’ (Farrell, 2006) in the teaching-learning process. Tammy stated that her “ideal vision after studying the concept of autonomy [was] to teach by fostering autonomy”. In this respect, she was convinced that PA can be implemented once learners get used to this approach. She was, however, aware that there are also circumstances which may prevent escaping from a traditional approach, for example, the pressure to prepare learners for their university entrance exam and the need to follow the curriculum. Apart from a communicative approach, Daniel aimed to promote cooperative learning, the use of ICT, and LA. He highlighted the need for a learner-centred approach (“teachers have to adapt their teaching to the learner instead of forcing the learner to adapt himself/herself to their teaching”) and regarded PA as a way to bring teaching closer to learners. In his opinion, nowadays “it is easy for teachers to distance themselves from learners’ world as it changes fast”. For this particular reason, he held that listening to learners’ opinions would help the teacher keep up to date regarding their interests and, consequently, he/she could include topics and design learning activities which appeal to learners. In this way, their behaviour would improve and they would be more motivated.

Lola’s ideal vision was the only one which was not related to the teaching of English but Arabic. This vision combined learners’ interaction by means of the TL with the development of reading and the teaching of vocabulary and grammar: “I consider that grammar in the learning of Arabic is very important”. She added that she saw herself as an instructor rather than an educator and rejected teaching at a secondary school due to learners’ overall lack of motivation. In fact, her ideal vision of learners was based on adult learners who are committed and motivated to learn. Although her vision had not changed, she explained that the module had helped her pay more attention to learner diversity in her teaching practice: “from now on, I will adjust my teaching to learners’ different needs and pace”.

Four student teachers (Carla, Julia, Tammy, and Tania) pointed out that their vision of FLT had changed after the module. They acknowledged that LA was not part of their original vision since they were not familiar with this notion and its practical implementation in the classroom: “before the [module], I had no idea about the concept of autonomy. I believed that I would have to choose even the books that learners would read! My vision was very traditional” (Tammy). In a similar vein, Carla and Julia argued that their vision at the beginning of the module was a traditional one due to the influence of their previous language learning experience in which they were taught by means of a traditional, teacher-centred approach:

[B]ecause we always rely on what we have experienced in our previous classes, on how our lessons of English were at school, following the textbook, with too much grammar and filling-gap exercises. Then, you think that there is only this path and you don't stop to think that there may be another way to do things. (Carla)

My vision was influenced by what I had observed in my teachers and none of them fostered autonomy [...] Yes, it was based on my experience as a learner. I had never seen anything related to this [i.e. LA], anything which was different to ‘I give you some activities and we check grammar’. My experience was not focused on autonomy, negotiation, or that the learner could choose. (Julia)

Tania maintained that her vision had changed because now it included LA, but it remained unaltered regarding her belief about the ineffectiveness of the traditional method and the need for a communicative approach: “before the [module], according to my experience, I knew that the traditional method based on grammar doesn't work. I thought that if I ever became a teacher, I would have to change it and make it more communicative”.

Daniel and Marcos, on the contrary, considered that they had a similar vision to the one they had when they began the module. For Marcos, the difference was that now he could base his vision of FLT on pedagogical principles:

At the beginning of the [module], there were things I wanted to implement, but I didn't know what pedagogical principles were behind. Well, I studied Translation [...] Now I have more notions about methodology, about pedagogy. All these notions have allowed me, not to change my vision since it is very similar to the one I had before, but to base my ideas on pedagogical principles.

Autonomy, for example, was originally part of his ideal vision: “I thought that learners need a little bit of autonomy, need to be given choice and responsibilities because that is the only way they learn”. Nevertheless, he lacked the pedagogical knowledge to foster it. Although it was very similar, Daniel perceived that his vision included a more learner-centred approach. In this sense, he explained that through the ideal English



lesson plan he became aware that his lessons at the beginning of the module tended to be structured around the teaching of grammar and that they were very teacher-centred: “I imposed the topic rather than asking learners about their interests”. Unlike her colleagues, Silvia argued that originally she had no ideal vision of FLT: “I studied Translation so I never thought about the possibility of teaching”. However, during the module she developed a learner-centred one:

I believe that now I focus my vision of teaching on... I have forgotten about the class itself and I focus more on learners, on what I can get from each of them. It is true that it is difficult to attend to each learner when having 30 students. It is difficult but not impossible.

	Perceived challenges in FLT
<b>Carla</b>	-C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (educational administration and schools' lack of freedom)
<b>Daniel</b>	-C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (educational system and lack of inspection) (Q1) <sup>75</sup> -L: Poor commitment to education and learning (disruptiveness)
<b>Julia</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation and disruptiveness) -T: Professional values (lack of cooperation and fossilisation)
<b>Lola</b>	-C: Dominant family expectations (parents' influence on the teaching method) (Q2) -L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation) (Q1, Q2) -T: Professional values (individualism and lack of cooperation) (Q1)
<b>Marcos</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation) (Q1, Q2) -T: Professional values (fossilisation)
<b>Silvia</b>	-C: Dominant institutional culture and demands (educational system) (Q1) -T: Professional values (resistance to innovation)
<b>Tammy</b>	-C: Dominant family expectations (traditional expectations about FLT) -T: Lack of support from teachers (unfamiliarity with the notion of LA)
<b>Tania</b>	-L: Poor commitment to education and learning (lack of motivation and disruptiveness) -T: Professional values (individualism, lack of cooperation, and fossilisation) (Q2)

Table 6.31. The interviewees' perceived challenges in FLT

Second, the student teachers were asked about the various challenges they perceived in FLT (see Table 6.31). Concerning learners, the main challenge continued being their ‘poor commitment to education and learning’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007; Manzano Vázquez, 2016). Five out of the eight student teachers were concerned about learners’ lack of motivation and disruptiveness in the classroom. Julia and Tania, for instance, underlined that this poor commitment is a particular constraint in compulsory secondary education. They did their *practicum* at the OLS where they had no problem with motivation and discipline. “Teaching there is a pleasure”, according to Julia, whereas at a secondary school “it is not so easy to teach since you must constantly motivate learners to work and you lose too much time”. For Tania, the OLS is the ideal

<sup>75</sup> (Q1) means that the challenge was also mentioned by this participant in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...” (section 6.2). (Q2) means that it was mentioned in the subsequent revision of the questionnaire (section 6.5).

teaching context: “I really enjoyed my *practicum* because that is the teaching context where the teacher can actually teach English”. Marcos also remarked on learners’ overall lack of motivation in secondary education. He attributed this demotivation to the activities promoted in FLT which are not useful for motivating learners: “if we just give them filling-gap activities, that cannot help to motivate them. On the contrary, it makes them become bored and dislike studying and learning. It doesn’t motivate them because it is not something that motivates”.

Some participants alluded to ‘teachers’ professional values’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007). Tania and Lola pointed out the ‘lack of a collaborative culture among teachers’ (Manzano Vázquez, 2016; Vieira, 2009b) for the implementation of innovative approaches such as PA. In this sense, Julia acknowledged the difficulty of making all secondary school teachers subscribe to similar pedagogical principles:

I think that one challenge is to promote interdisciplinarity as teachers do not have the same beliefs, the same ideology... At the Official Language School it is easier to follow the same approach and make everybody pull in the same direction, but in a secondary school it is more difficult because you have to agree with the physics teacher, the maths teacher, the biology teacher, and not everybody is willing to do so.

As far as LA is concerned, the problem for Tammy can be the lack of support from “other colleagues [who] may not be familiar with this concept and may question your work as a teacher”. As we will see below, this unfamiliarity with LA was one of the constraints that some participants found when promoting PA in their *practicum*. In this respect, Julia, Marcos and Tania emphasised that the challenge for teachers is to avoid ‘fossilisation’ (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) and take responsibility for their professional development by retraining themselves as teachers and getting familiar with new approaches to FLT: “education and teaching methods constantly change, but normally teachers don’t retrain themselves. They don’t gain new pedagogical knowledge, but they are just anchored in the past” (Marcos).

Regarding the context, one challenge is the ‘dominant institutional culture and demands’ (*ibid.*). Carla pointed to the Andalusian Education Authority (*Consejería de Educación de Andalucía*), complaining that schools are not free to regulate education, but they are subject to the guidelines and syllabus developed by this regional institution: “at the Official Language School they made several teaching proposals to the Education Authority, but they were rejected. Then, you realise that it is the administration itself which poses the obstacles”. Daniel, on the other hand, was very critical of the current

situation of education in Spain. He considered that “political institutions are not interested in having a competent educational system. What is the value of promoting educational reforms or discussing the law if they are not implemented in primary and secondary schools?”. He maintained that there should be a more rigorous process of inspection at schools and added that the institutions should encourage teachers’ professional development: “I believe that teachers’ work is not facilitated in many aspects. For instance, if they want to attend any teacher education programme, they have to do it in their spare time. Therefore, they become reluctant with time”.

Silvia still had a pessimistic view of education and argued for a whole re-conceptualisation of the Spanish educational system: “there are so many things that don’t work [...] The great challenge is to change everything. I cannot tell you just one thing. It is necessary to change how everything is done”. This re-conceptualisation must change not only the pedagogical *status quo*, but also “the vision of education that parents, teachers, and learners have”. In her opinion, it is the teacher who is in the end fully responsible for bringing about this change: “teachers have more power to do it because they are in touch with learners [...] They have to innovate and change their teaching practice according to the social demands and learners’ needs”. According to her, the factors which prevent this educational change are teachers’ laziness to change after many years of teaching, their fear of failure, and their doubts about learners’ response to a new teaching method.

Finally, Lola and Tammy regarded learners’ parents as another challenge. For Lola, parents can exert a great influence on teachers’ teaching method: “in my *practicum* I became familiar with the situation of some teachers who had been told by parents how they should teach their lessons”. Tammy, in contrast, was more concerned about parents’ negative judgement about the teaching method as a result of their traditional expectations about FL education:

Parents are used to the textbook, activities on grammar, and lists of vocabulary. For example, if the learner gets home and begins to do a comic, parents can begin to question what the learner is going to learn from this, especially if they don’t know why it is done.

However, she continued thinking that the best way to convince them about the appropriateness of any new approach (e.g. PA) is obtaining good results: “if parents see positive results, they can change their mind”.

Next, the interview inquired into these participants' experience and beliefs regarding the promotion of LA. The eight student teachers promoted LA in their *practicum*, although some of them (like Lola and Silvia) ran into more difficulties. The time given to work on LA was the main constraint for Carla. She was allowed to teach two classes<sup>76</sup> and in one of them she was told to teach a specific topic so she had only one class to foster autonomy. The difficulty for the three other participants at the OLS lied in the enactment of PA. Daniel admitted that in the beginning it was difficult for him to plan a lesson aimed at LA. Julia and Tania referred to the extra work and the difficulty of designing activities to foster LA, especially because of their lack of experience concerning the development of PA: "I was never taught a lesson focused on autonomy. There were only filling-gap activities and so on" (Tania). Nevertheless, the three student teachers underlined that both the support from their school supervisor and the fact that many learners were (motivated) adults made the task easier for them:

I felt confident since I worked with older learners so I knew that I would have no problem with the learners running wild. Maybe, in a different context, without the guide I had with this teacher who had worked on autonomy, and with more noisy students, I would have felt more nervous or insecure. (Daniel)

I felt comfortable. Well, most of the students are adults so there is no problem of discipline or that the students can make a lot of noise in the classroom. (Julia)

Those students make everything easier because they are motivated, they ask questions, they interact, and they use English as the language for communication. (Tania)

In the secondary school context, Marcos and Tammy pointed out that they were given complete freedom by their supervisors to develop their teaching practice. The major difficulty Marcos encountered was the learners' unfamiliarity with PA<sup>77</sup>:

They were not used to being granted autonomy. Their teacher followed a communicative approach, but she never gave the learners autonomy or choice in the classroom. Everything was very controlled, following the textbook or the teacher's patterns [...] She held all the responsibility and told the learners what they had to do.

For Tammy, the difficulty lied in making her teaching practice have an impact on the learners' learning behaviour and habits:

You cannot change in one month and a half, especially at the end of the course, the way the learners are used to working with the other teacher. If they had been my learners since September... Within that constraint, I tried to give them as much autonomy as possible.

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<sup>76</sup> The classes at the OLS last two hours.

<sup>77</sup> During the interview, the student teachers pointed out that LA was an educational goal at the OLS but not in secondary education.

As noted above, Lola and Silvia faced more difficulties when promoting LA in the FL classroom. For Lola, the difficulty in fostering LA lied in the various constraints she found. First, she had to cope with her lack of experience regarding the development of PA. The second constraint was her supervisor's and the learners' unfamiliarity with PA:

When I told my supervisor that I would like to put pedagogy for autonomy into practice, his reaction was “what is that?”. Although he didn't put any constraint, he wasn't familiar with the notion of autonomy. He is a good teacher but the traditional one, having everything under control, transmitting knowledge and doing activities [...] I also asked the students if they had experienced this way of learning in other subjects, but they knew nothing about it, so I had to begin from scratch.

The third constraint, as we will see below, was the lack of time to develop her case. Silvia, on the other hand, contended that she could promote LA but “at a very basic level”. Apart from the difficulties mentioned in section 6.7.1, she remarked in the interview that she lacked the support from her supervisor: “she wasn't used to this teaching approach. She said to me, ‘Yes, yes. I think it is very interesting but too difficult’ [...] ‘Yes, that is good, but here it is not possible, here it is not possible’”. One day she was reproached by her supervisor for giving the learners too much responsibility:

I gave the learners sheets of activities to complete on their own. The problem was that they were very impatient and became frustrated quickly. For some of them it was difficult and, in fact, one student got upset and threw the sheets into the air. Then, she told me that I was giving them too much responsibility. She didn't give them responsibility. She just chose the easiest way as many teachers do [...] I felt I wanted to work more on autonomy, but I couldn't.

On the whole, most of the student teachers valued positively their experience in the *practicum*. Julia, for example, claimed that, despite the extra work of PA, the experience was extremely rewarding since “the important thing is that learners learn although you have less spare time”. For Marcos, Daniel, and Silvia, it was also rewarding as they could perceive the learners' higher motivation during the development of LA:

The truth is that the learners were really motivated and they liked the lessons a lot. That is why I believe that autonomy works. (Marcos)

It was very rewarding because when learners do something new, you can see the excitement on their faces. Seeing the novelty, changing... the fact of changing the physical space of the seat to which they are confined. Giving them freedom to move, to walk around the classroom, to interact, and to communicate among themselves. I think the result was quite good. The learners were more motivated because they did something different. Having the freedom to move around the classroom relaxes them. They can get

away from the routine at the school where they have to sit and be quiet for six hours. (Daniel)

As they gained independence, I could see on their faces that they got excited because they knew how to do it and every time they asked me fewer questions and they not only wanted to do each activity but also to show me that they had done the whole sheet and they wanted another one. That was a huge step for me. I couldn't believe it [...] They were motivated because they felt they were able to do it on their own. If we promote this during the whole academic year, it must have very positive results. (Silvia)

As we can see above, Silvia had a positive perception of her experience regarding its influence on the learners. On a more personal level, however, she felt that it had not helped her understand PA. A similar opinion was voiced by Lola. She was happy because she could promote a relaxed atmosphere in which “the learners had fun, participated a lot, and became motivated to work”. Nonetheless, concerning the implementation of PA, she considered that the experience had been insufficient to fully understand and put into practice this approach:

The experience itself was satisfactory. We had such a great time and the learners really learned but, as an example of what pedagogy for autonomy can be, it didn't help me gain an insight into its implementation [...] The experience was good but short concerning the development of pedagogy for autonomy.

She felt that in terms of LA the experience had not been really meaningful to the learners either:

I think it hasn't had a great impact on the learners. To explain this approach in two or three sessions when they are surrounded by something which is completely different and without having time to really put it into practice... I tried but I feel they didn't grasp the importance of this approach for their learning. That is the feeling I have and also by the questionnaire I administered to them. They didn't understand that they have to approach their learning process in a different way. I lacked time to engage them in deeper reflection on their learning.

She claimed that in the future she would like to promote PA but if certain conditions are met: implementing PA from the beginning of the course and having complete freedom to do it in her way.

After having worked, to a greater or lesser extent, on the implementation of PA, the student teachers were asked again about their general perception of their willingness, ability and opportunity to develop this approach to FLT as prospective teachers. First, the interviews revealed that all of them were willing to foster autonomy in their future teaching practice (see Table 6.32) and that the most common reason for this willingness referred again to the benefits that PA can bring in terms of learning gains. Carla, for instance, argued that despite the extra work PA requires before its

implementation, “the results are better and what is best for the students is what should be done in education”. In a similar fashion, Tammy held that implementing PA is something every teacher should do in his/her teaching practice because “the learner learns twice. He/she feels more responsible and fulfilled, which leads to more positive outcomes”. As an illustration, she gave the following example based on her experience in the *practicum*:

The learners had to prepare an oral presentation. I didn’t tell them the subject but I let them choose.

-“But could it be about this topic?”

-“Whatever you like”

-“And with whom?”

-“You decide. The only requirement is that you have to write a minimum of three pages, but you can write about whatever you like and you can make the presentation as you please, with or without a PowerPoint presentation, with a guideline on the blackboard...”

And the learners did such a good job that even their teacher was amazed. The presentations were really good.

	Willingness	Reasons for being willing to implement PA
<b>Carla</b>	Yes	-Benefits and positive results of PA (FQ) <sup>78</sup>
<b>Daniel</b>	Yes	-Need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i> (ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted)
<b>Julia</b>	Yes	-Need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i> (ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted)
<b>Lola</b>	Yes	
<b>Marcos</b>	Yes	-Benefits and positive results of PA (motivation) (FQ) -Need to change the pedagogical <i>status quo</i>
<b>Silvia</b>	Yes	-Benefits and positive results of PA (FQ)
<b>Tammy</b>	Yes	-Benefits and positive results of PA (learner involvement) (FQ)
<b>Tania</b>	Yes	-Benefits and positive results of PA (learning to learn and lifelong learning) (FQ)

Table 6.32. The interviewees’ reasons for being willing to implement PA after the *practicum*

However, Tammy placed some restrictions on PA, pointing out that its implementation also depends on the learners: “during the *practicum* I observed six groups of students and I think that in two of those groups pedagogy for autonomy cannot be implemented because the students are not committed and they talk a lot”. Tania and Marcos were also convinced of the advantages of fostering LA. According to Tania, PA can contribute to learners’ both academic achievement and personal development. She added that this approach can help them develop their capacities for learning to learn and lifelong learning, “which should be the ultimate goal of education”. Marcos was willing to work on PA because in the *practicum* he had experienced that “it is helpful and works”. He

<sup>78</sup> (FQ) means that this idea was also expressed by the same participant in the Final Questionnaire (section 6.6).

further regarded it as a powerful tool to motivate learners and innovate. He maintained that our society is rapidly changing and learners' motivations and interests are changing as well. Therefore, the approach to FL education must change: "if we continue doing the same we have been doing in education during the last years, we are not going to achieve anything. We are not going to change this". He rejected a traditional approach to language teaching in which learners listen and react to what the teacher orders. Instead, he advocated that learners should assume greater responsibility for their own learning and, in this respect, teaching and schooling are essential to LA:

If we want to develop learners' autonomy so that they can continue learning beyond the school and act autonomously in their daily lives, teaching and the years of schooling are of the greatest importance [...] Besides, we need to ensure the continuity of this practice in the different academic years of secondary education.

Apart from Marcos, two other student teachers considered that it is necessary to change the pedagogical *status quo*. Daniel and Julia pointed out the ineffectiveness of the teaching methods adopted to date and, for this reason, they stressed the pressing need to search for other approaches which can help improve education in Spain. Thus, they concurred that the development of LA can be one of these approaches:

I am willing because I think that what has been done so far is not working [...] It is clear that we have to try something different and it seems that autonomy is the solution. If it is not, I don't know it yet. What I know is that the other method is not the solution [...] At least what has been done concerning pedagogy for autonomy seems to work [...] My idea is to make it work. I am willing to test it and see if it works. If not, I want to improve it. (Daniel)

In Spain, education is a step backwards compared with the rest of the European Union. It bothers me that we are always at the bottom of Europe as if we were an underdeveloped country in terms of education. I want to change that. And not only for me but for education in general. I think that autonomy can change this situation. (Julia)

Silvia explained that she was willing to promote various aspects related to PA, for instance, learners' critical thinking, decision-making, self-regulation and learning to learn. Nevertheless, she continued thinking that she was not able to do it yet. As she had already noted in the Final Questionnaire (see section 6.6), one of her major concerns was 'the problem of enactment' (Kennedy, 1999). She was afraid of not knowing how to translate those pedagogical principles into classroom behaviour. Moreover, she felt that she still needed more theoretical knowledge about PA and that she lacked "training in strategies concerning, for example, how to negotiate with learners or how to give them responsibility for their learning process". In this sense, Silvia was not the only student teacher who still harboured doubts about her ability to implement PA in the FL



classroom (see Table 6.33). Carla, Daniel and Lola were not completely sure of their ability either. Daniel remarked on the lack of any reference or model for the implementation of PA which he could follow during his teaching practice. Therefore, he considered that he would need “to explore the path of PA little by little” until he gets more practice and experience in its development. A similar opinion was voiced by Carla, who was still worried by her lack of teaching experience:

I think I lack practice and teaching experience. Besides, I don't know how far... I will do it gradually. It's not going to be a bolt from the blue. I also have to say that in the *practicum* I felt safe because I knew that if something went wrong, the teacher was there to help me.

	Ability	View about their ability to implement PA
<b>Carla</b>	Not sure	-Lack of teaching experience (FQ)
<b>Daniel</b>	Not sure	-Lack of a model for the implementation of PA
<b>Julia</b>	Yes	-Lack of teaching experience -Positive perception of her ability
<b>Lola</b>	Not sure	-Doubts about her readiness for PA
<b>Marcos</b>	Yes	-Positive perception of his ability (FQ) -Fear (fear of losing control over the situation)
<b>Silvia</b>	No	-Need for more theoretical knowledge about PA (FQ) -Need for more training in PA -Problem of enactment (FQ)
<b>Tammy</b>	Yes	-Lack of teaching experience (FQ) -Positive perception of her ability
<b>Tania</b>	Yes	-Positive perception of her ability

Table 6.33. The interviewees' view about their ability to implement PA after the *practicum*

After her teaching experience in the *practicum*, Lola had doubts about her ability to work on PA. As we have seen, the experience was not very fulfilling for her as far as the promotion of LA was concerned. Despite this feeling, she pointed out that in the future she would try in order to test her ability and examine the extent of PA she could develop. The rest of the student teachers, in contrast, answered affirmatively to the question, although some of them also reported feeling some concern about it. Julia and Tammy were more confident about their ability to implement PA. However, they were aware that due to their lack of teaching experience they would have to foster autonomy gradually. For Marcos, his main concern was losing control over the situation: “yes, I think so. Well, I have the fear that learners may become crazy when giving them too much autonomy, but I think I will be able”.

Third, most of the student teachers were sure of having the opportunity to work on PA in their future teaching practice (see Table 6.34). Despite their positive perception, they were aware that it would not be an easy task. Marcos noted that LA still appears alien to the FL classroom, remaining just at a theoretical level: “although in our current

educational system the law mentions the task-based approach or the concept of autonomy... Yes, they are included there, but they are not actually promoted [in the classroom]”. In spite of this lack of LA, he reaffirmed his commitment to implement PA as he was sure of obtaining good results and considered that “every teacher can do it. It is not something impossible”. Carla concurred with Marcos’ remark and, for that reason, she hoped that in the future the development of LA could become more relevant in the practice of FL education. She acknowledged, however, the need to encourage ‘flexible control’ (Aviram and Yonah, 2004): “maybe learner autonomy cannot be fostered every day since there are lessons which must be taught by following a more traditional approach, but I’m sure that we can take small steps to encourage our learners to become more autonomous”.

	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Beliefs about their opportunity to implement PA</b>
<b>Carla</b>	Yes	-Lack of LA in FL education
<b>Daniel</b>	Yes	-Presence of constraints (lack of support from parents and teachers) (FQ)
<b>Julia</b>	Yes	-Presence of constraints (the school)
<b>Lola</b>	Yes	-Sure of having the opportunity to implement PA
<b>Marcos</b>	Yes	-Lack of LA in FL education
<b>Silvia</b>	Yes	-Depending on the teacher’s motivation and willingness (FQ)
<b>Tammy</b>	Yes	-Depending on the teacher’s motivation and willingness
<b>Tania</b>	Not sure	-Depending on the context and learners (FQ)

Table 6.34. The interviewees’ beliefs about their opportunity to implement PA after the *practicum*

Daniel defined the implementation of PA as a struggle: “it won’t be easy. I am aware that it’s not going to be a bed of roses. It is something you must struggle for, but I am ready for it”. In this sense, he was still sure that when trying to develop LA he would encounter obstacles such as the lack of support from others, namely parents and teachers. He explained that there may be parents who reject PA since they “do not like experiments” and may not understand the main rationale behind this teaching approach. Concerning other colleagues, Daniel held that those teachers who teach in a more traditional way may object to the development of PA. Nevertheless, he was convinced that if good results are obtained during its implementation, these obstacles will be quickly overcome. According to Julia, the main obstacle to the enactment of PA can be the school itself: “sometimes it is the school which imposes some constraints since it doesn’t allow you to put into practice what you want to or tells you to stop doing something”. She was, however, confident of having the opportunity to work on PA since she was willing to implement it. In this regard, she added that one of the reasons why nowadays autonomous learning is not promoted in the FL classroom is teachers’

lack of motivation and commitment. In her opinion, many teachers do not enjoy teaching and they promote a teacher-centred approach to get through the lesson. “As a consequence, their demotivation is passed onto learners”.

Lola also emphasised that teachers’ motivation is essential and “even more important than learners’ motivation” to promote PA. She was aware that although the development of LA should be assumed as a collective endeavour by all teachers, in her classroom she would be completely free to work on PA:

I believe that although other teachers don’t do it, you can always do something. I think that I will have the opportunity. The best thing to do would be to implement pedagogy for autonomy as a teaching philosophy in the school. All teachers should work on it so that its impact could be greater, but irrespective of this you can do it within your classroom.

Silvia and Tammy, for instance, maintained that the promotion of PA depends mainly on each teacher’s willingness to put it into practice:

For me it is essential that all teachers do it because if each class is a different thing, learners are going to become crazy. But of course it is possible since you are the only one who is responsible for what goes on in the classroom. It is true that you have a curriculum to follow, but it is quite open. There are also obstacles outside the classroom, but in the end it is the teacher who has the last word and takes whatever actions are necessary. It would be better if all teachers were focused on promoting autonomy but yes, it is possible. (Silvia)

Yes. In the classroom you have many possibilities. If you begin to say “it is impossible” or “what if...”, that is your problem. But of course you have the opportunity. Who is going to forbid you to let students make choices, to put them into groups, or to encourage them to work on different activities? Of course you can. (Tammy)

As noted above, almost all the student teachers thought that they would have the opportunity to promote PA. The only exception was Tania who was not entirely sure. As in the Final Questionnaire, she argued that the implementation of PA is subject to external factors such as the teaching context and learners:

I don’t know. I hope so. It also depends on the context, the type of students, the motivation they have, the objectives they have... I think that little by little... In the beginning it may be difficult. It may be difficult for me and for the students. If it is something they have never seen, I am sure that it won’t be easy. It is a matter of implementing it gradually, and if it cannot be fully implemented, maybe small changes can be made.

Concerning the teaching context, she had more reservations as she thought that “nowadays it would be more difficult to implement pedagogy for autonomy in a secondary school context”.

## 6.9 Discussion of the research questions

### **1. What changes in the student teachers' beliefs about FL teaching and learning (with a particular emphasis on PA) does the present pre-service language teacher education initiative enable?**

At the beginning of the module, the participants' beliefs about FL teaching and learning were permeated by two different approaches to language teaching. As noted in previous research (Debreli, 2012; Mattheoudakis, 2007), communication was regarded by the student teachers as vital for effective language learning. Most of them advocated a communicative approach to FLT and emphasised the promotion of language use (especially the development of speaking) as a way to make learners perceive the usefulness of learning the TL. It must be noted that this emphasis on communication strengthened throughout the module. On the other hand, the student teachers had a traditional, teacher-centred vision of FLT, a finding which is consistent with previous studies in the literature (Hollingsworth, 1989; Miller and Aldred, 2000; Nicolaidis, 2008; Özmen, 2012). Various student teachers conceived of 'teaching as telling' (Bullough, 1991) or, in other words, as a process of transmitting knowledge about English grammar to learners. In this regard, it is interesting to highlight that despite rejecting the great emphasis on grammar instruction in Spain, for some participants grammar occupied a central role in their conception of FLT. They considered it an essential aspect in FL education (see Farrell, 1999; Peacock, 2001). This support, however, weakened over the course of the module, concurring with what has been observed in previous studies (Cota Grijalva and Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013; Mattheoudakis, 2007).

The vast majority of the participants perceived the role of the teacher as central in the classroom as he/she was supposed to direct and control the teaching-learning process. In this sense, the learners were conceived of as having little voice in making decisions about the learning programme. They were mainly depicted as 'containers' to be filled with the information provided by the teacher and as passive participants, frequently having things done to them rather than doing things themselves. The major reason why the participants adopted a traditional, teacher-centred approach to FLT was the influence of their 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975). Different student teachers acknowledged throughout the research that their initial vision of FLT

reproduced how they had been taught as language learners. Thus, the present study is in line with previous research which has proved the influence of trainees' previous learning experience on their educational beliefs (see Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Borg, 2005; Bramald *et al.*, 1995; Freese, 2006; Johnson, 1994; Özmen, 2012).

For most of the participants, LA was not a prominent educational goal at the beginning of the module. In the Questionnaire "Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...", only three student teachers showed their disposition to promote autonomy and independent learning in their teaching. This lack of emphasis on autonomy was also observed in the ideal English lesson plans, which hardly included opportunities to foster LA. Throughout the module, however, there was a growing concern among the student teachers about the need to promote LA in FLT. This notion gradually became part of their vision of FLT. As noted in the studies conducted by Balçikanli (2010), Camilleri (1999), Camilleri Grima (2007), and Trebbi (2008a, 2008b), the participants developed a positive attitude towards the promotion of PA in the FL classroom. They were convinced that this approach can bring considerable benefits to FL teaching and learning such as contributing to educational change in FL education and improving the language learning process (e.g. in terms of motivation, learning awareness, and learner differentiation) (see also Anderson, 2015; Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012; Martinez, 2008). It must be stressed, however, that accepting LA as an educational goal was not a straightforward process for some student teachers as they had to overcome some 'internal resistances' (Jiménez Raya, 2017b) to this notion. These resistances had to do with their tendency to associate PA with a 'chaotic' mode of teaching and their low expectations of learners (i.e. the doubts they had about learners' readiness for LA and their willingness to assume responsibility [see Vieira and Barbosa, 2009; Voller, 1997]).

Their positive perception of PA was in line with the development of more learner-centred beliefs. Throughout the module, a change towards a more learner-centred approach to FLT was observed in the student teachers' beliefs, thus concurring with previous findings in the literature (Cota Grijalva and Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013; MacDonald *et al.*, 2001; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Özmen, 2012; Trebbi, 2008b; Vieira, 2007b). The participants attached more importance to the role of the learner in the teaching-learning process, stressing the need to give learners greater responsibility for their learning, help them become more active participants in the classroom, and be more attentive to their voices. Furthermore, the student teachers became more sensitive to the

need to adapt their teaching practice to their learners' learning needs and interests (see some examples in the cases analysed in section 6.7). It must be noted, however, that some student teachers pointed out that in their teaching they would combine a learner-centred approach to FLT with a more traditional one, which was a sign of their reluctance to completely dismiss traditional teaching.

## **2. What dimensions of professional competence towards teacher and learner autonomy (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) do the student teachers develop?**

In what follows, I discuss the extent to which the student teachers developed the dimensions of professional competence towards TA/LA identified by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (*ibid.*): a) developing a critical view of (language) education, b) centring teaching on learning, c) managing local constraints so as to open up spaces for manoeuvre, and d) interacting with others in the professional community.

### *Developing a critical view of (language) education*

At the beginning of the module, the student teachers were critical of FL education concerning the great emphasis on grammar instruction and the lack of attention paid to listening and speaking in the FL classroom. Nevertheless, they did not have a critical attitude towards the lack of LA in FLT. Few participants rejected a teacher-centred approach, which was uncritically accepted by them. They assumed that the role of the teacher is to direct and control teaching and learning, whereas learners simply obey and do what the teacher says (see research question 1). This view, however, changed throughout the module. As observed in the learning portfolios, the revision of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”, and the interviews, many student teachers began to question the unequal balance of power in the classroom. They took a critical stance towards the authoritarian role of the teacher and learners' lack of voice in the teaching-learning process. They were more critical of the lack of emphasis on PA in FL education, criticising also the lack of differentiation in language teaching and learners' passive role in the classroom.

The student teachers also adopted a more critical attitude towards teachers' professional action, questioning their lack of motivation and commitment, their individualism or lack of collegiality, and their resistance to change. In this sense, they

were more critical of the lack of innovation in FLT. Throughout the module, there was an increasing awareness among the participants of the need for educational change in Spain. A greater number of student teachers began to see themselves as agents of educational change. They expressed their desire to change the pedagogical *status quo* (i.e. the traditional approach which permeates FLT) and contribute to improving the Spanish educational system.

To conclude, it must be noted that when the student teachers began the module, they attached little value to reflection and teachers' professional development. However, over the course of the module, they began to see teaching as an inquiry-oriented activity in which they have to keep themselves informed about new approaches to language education. On the one hand, several student teachers expressed their willingness to adopt a critical, reflective approach to their teaching practice. Some trainees translated this intention into practice in their cases in which they reflected not only on their own teaching experience but also on their learners' learning. On the other hand, different student teachers began to see themselves as lifelong learners. They became more aware of the need to take responsibility for their professional development in the future.

#### *Centring teaching on learning*

As noted in research question 1, the participants showed greater concern for learners and their learning throughout the module. First, they were willing to give learners responsibility for the learning process. To do this, some student teachers showed their disposition to promote self-/peer-assessment and give learners choice. Other student teachers advocated a more democratic environment in the FL classroom. They expressed their desire to give learners a voice in the teaching-learning process and engage them in the negotiation of ideas and decisions. Some of them, however, placed some restrictions on negotiation. During the module, different student teachers underlined the need to involve learners in reflection on their language learning process and to meet their individual needs, interests, and abilities. Finally, some trainees were willing to collect learner data by means of questionnaires, portfolios and interviews so as to understand and improve teaching and learning from learners' perspective.

Most of these ideas were translated into classroom practice in the cases (see section 6.7) where, in general, the learners had a more active role in the classroom and assumed greater responsibility for their learning (e.g. evaluating themselves or their

peers, monitoring their learning, generating their own solutions to problems, etc.). It must be noted, however, that the cases revealed certain contradictions between the participants' *espoused theories* and their *theories-in-use* (Argyris and Schön, 1974) or, in other words, between what the participants said they would do in their teaching and what they actually did. Student teachers like Anita, Carla, Leticia, Marcos and Pilar stated during the module that they would differentiate in their teaching practice. However, only Carla and Daniel provided for learner differentiation in their cases. As noted above, several student teachers indicated their willingness to engage learners in the negotiation of decisions. Nevertheless, Sabina was the only student teacher who promoted negotiation with the learners in the development of her case. This lack of differentiation and negotiation was a sign of the student teachers' difficulties in dealing with learner diversity and involving learners in classroom decision-making, particularly as regards content and learning activities.

The most notable example of contradiction between espoused theories and theories-in-use was observed in the case by Fátima. During the module, she expressed her willingness to promote LA and give learners a voice in the learning process. She also rejected the promotion of traditional teaching and regarded herself as an agent of educational change. However, in her case she adopted a traditional, teacher-centred approach (see section 6.7).

#### *Managing local constraints so as to open up spaces for manoeuvre*

As we saw in section 6.7 and 6.8, implementing PA in their cases was not easy for some student teachers as they encountered different obstacles (e.g. their school supervisor's restrictions on their teaching practice, the learners' poor commitment to education, their low level of language proficiency, or their lack of familiarity with PA). Despite these obstacles, the student teachers were able to find spaces for manoeuvre so as to foster autonomy, for example, adjusting their teaching practice to the learners' characteristics or adapting their supervisor's instructions to the learners' needs and interests.

In the context of secondary education, the participants also had to challenge school routines and conventions since LA was not a prominent educational goal in the FL classroom. In this sense, it must be noted that throughout the research different student teachers (e.g. Carla, Delfin, Lorena, Mar, Marcos, and Tammy) argued that despite the obstacles and the lack of LA in FLT, it is possible to take small steps to



implement PA. They began to assume that every teacher can do something to promote PA and were convinced that, to a greater or lesser extent, they could shape their pedagogical choices so as to open up possibilities for LA.

#### *Interacting with others in the professional community*

The development of this professional competence was observed mainly in the student teachers' cases. One example was the case implemented by Guillermo and Marcos who invited their learners and a colleague to help them improve the teaching-learning process through observation and feedback. This competence was also developed by means of pair work in the process of case construction. As we could observe in section 6.7, half of the student teachers decided to develop their case in pairs so they had the opportunity to work on the development of PA collaboratively, sharing their ideas and pedagogical concerns with their peers. Finally, in the cases the student teachers could also interact with their school supervisors, whose guidance and collaboration was essential for the development of some trainees' teaching practice (see Daniel, Julia and Tania in section 6.8). There were, however, other cases in which the trainees received little support from their supervisor (see Lola and Silvia).

The four dimensions of professional competence can also be measured by the participants' willingness, ability and opportunity to develop autonomy in their teaching practice. On the whole, the participants were willing to implement PA in their future teaching and they thought that they would have the opportunity to do so. In this respect, it was noted that the school, colleagues, parents and learners can exert a great influence on the development of PA, but its promotion depends mainly on the teacher's willingness and commitment. The student teachers, however, had more doubts about their ability to implement PA. Their major concern was their fear of failure and their lack of confidence. This concern was caused by factors such as their lack of previous experience regarding the development of PA, the lack of a model to follow, the 'problem of enactment' (Kennedy, 1999), and their lack of teaching experience.

**3. Does the initial teacher education initiative studied facilitate the development of the pre-service language teachers' cognition and professional competence towards teacher and learner autonomy?**

In general, I can assert that the module facilitated the development of the student teachers' cognition and professional competence towards LA and TA. On the one hand, it enabled the student teachers to become familiar with the notion of LA in FL education, integrate it into their vision of FLT, and acquire knowledge about how it can be promoted in the FL classroom. By means of the cases (i.e. case analysis and case construction), the student teachers also had the opportunity to develop their professional competence to promote PA, although as we have seen in research question 2 they harboured doubts about it. For that reason, in the future it would be necessary to provide them with in-service TEA in order to enhance their ability to implement PA in their teaching. On the other hand, the module enabled the student teachers to become more aware of their own autonomy (see Galiniené, 1999), more critical of professional contexts (see Vieira, 2007b), more determined to face constraints, more prepared to take the initiative in their professional development (see Camilleri Grima, 1997), and more reflective practitioners (see Brown *et al.*, 2007; Smith and Erdoğan, 2008; Ushioda *et al.*, 2011; Vieira and Moreira, 2008).

#### **4. What pedagogical implications can be drawn from this research for further work on pre-service language TEA?**

Incorporating the notion of LA into their vision of FL education requires student teachers to question and abandon their more traditional beliefs about FL teaching and learning. One of the pedagogical implications to be drawn from this research is that a critically reflective approach to teacher education can be a powerful means for the promotion of belief change towards LA. As we have seen, fostering critical reflection within a module aimed at LA can help student teachers become aware of their educational beliefs and recast them in line with a more learner-centred approach to FLT. Reflection and inquiry can also contribute to the promotion of TA, confirming what was noted in section 4.8.1. In this sense, the use of reflective tools in pre-service language TEA (either learning portfolios and cases as in this research or journals and diaries) can be an important avenue for student teachers to take control over their learning process, engage in self-directed professional development, gain a greater awareness of themselves as learners and prospective teachers, and build their professional identity.

This research has also highlighted the value of a case-based approach in pre-service language TEA. On the one hand, the discussion of cases dealing with LA allows

student teachers to gain an understanding of this notion and how it can be promoted in the classroom. On the other hand, case construction provides student teachers with the opportunity to explore the space of possibility between dependence and autonomy in FLT. They can experience ways of promoting PA at classroom level and, at the same time, they can develop their own autonomy. As they enact their case, student teachers take control over their teaching, are active agents in the construction of their own knowledge, and become entirely responsible for making sense of their teaching practice through continuous reflection and systematic inquiry into their experience. Moreover, working in pairs (or groups) to construct their case can help student teachers understand the development of LA as a collective endeavour. I argue, however, that these teaching experiences should be longer in terms of duration. In the present research, for example, student teachers like Lola and Silvia stressed the need for more time to work on PA during the *practicum* as they considered that their experience had been insufficient to explore how PA can be put into practice in the classroom.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that the duration of the teacher education initiative is crucial in preparing student teachers for autonomy in FL education. Although the module studied has contributed significantly to the student teachers' professional development towards TA and LA, I advocate that it should last more than 10 weeks in order to have a more profound impact on the student teachers. Extending the duration of the module would allow to discuss more cases, thus helping the student teachers overcome 'the problem of enactment' (Kennedy, 1999) and improve their ability to implement PA in their teaching.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the present study has been to analyse the impact of a pre-service language teacher education initiative for autonomy on a group of student teachers' beliefs and professional competences as regards the development of PA in the FL classroom. As we saw in chapter 6, the student teachers' initial beliefs about FL teaching and learning attached little value to the promotion of LA, being rooted in a communicative approach and a traditional, teacher-centred approach. The trainees considered that the teacher must have a dominant role in the classroom (i.e. he/she must shoulder all the responsibility for determining and controlling the teaching-learning process), whereas learners were regarded as having little voice in classroom decision-making and being completely dependent upon the teacher. In this regard, the study has revealed that this conception of FLT stemmed from the influence of the student teachers' previous language learning experience on their educational beliefs.

Over the course of the module, the student teachers' advocacy of a communicative approach to FLT strengthened, whereas their adherence to a traditional approach weakened, being replaced with a more learner-centred understanding of FL education. The student teachers began to put learners centre stage. They showed their disposition to give learners greater responsibility for their learning and encourage them to play a more active role. They were willing to create a more democratic environment in the classroom where learners could have a voice. They also developed a greater sensitivity to learner diversity. In short, after the module the student teachers showed a deeper concern for LA and were more favourably disposed towards the development of PA in the FL classroom.

The module had a significant impact not only on the student teachers' beliefs but also on their professional competence for PA as they developed important 'tools' and 'dispositions' (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2005) for the development of this approach. On the one hand, if we compare their teaching practice at the beginning (i.e. in the ideal English lesson plans) and at the end of the module (i.e. in the cases), we can observe that their teaching became more learner/learning-oriented. Now they were able to create opportunities for encouraging responsibility, choice, intrinsic motivation, reflection, and learning to learn in the classroom. On the other hand, it was observed that after finishing the module the student teachers were more reflective, more aware of their teaching self, more critical of teaching contexts, more willing to bring about educational change in FL education, more prepared to engage in self-directed professional development, and more resolved to face constraints on teaching.

Although the results obtained cannot be extrapolated to a larger group of prospective FL teachers or to a wider teacher education context than the one directly studied, several conclusions about teacher education and, more specifically, about modern language TEA can be drawn from this study. First, the present research has highlighted the importance of changing (student) teachers' beliefs about FL teaching and learning. If teacher education initiatives do not explicitly address these beliefs, (student) teachers will be likely to teach as they were taught, thus preserving, rather than changing, the pedagogical *status quo*. In this regard, the promotion of critical reflection (e.g. through 'awareness', 'confrontation', and 'transformation' [Manzano Vázquez, 2014]) can help student teachers articulate their educational beliefs and challenge them in the light of a more learner-centred vision of FLT.

As we saw in chapter 6, integrating LA into their vision of FLT was not easy for the student teachers as it was a challenging and unfamiliar idea for them. This fact emphasises the importance of teacher education in helping (student) teachers overcome their 'internal resistances' (Jiménez Raya, 2017b) to LA and providing them with knowledge about what LA entails and how it can be fostered in the classroom. In this respect, cases can be effective tools for mediating teacher cognition about PA. By providing them with cases in which LA is fostered, (student) teachers can see what other teachers have done to promote it and how they have dealt with the kind of problems they themselves may encounter in their own classroom. Thus, they can develop the confidence to foster LA in their teaching practice.

Drawing on the assumption that teacher learning should be situated within contexts of teaching and learning such as the classroom, the study highlights the value of fieldwork on PA by means of case construction. Having the opportunity to implement PA during their *practicum* enables student teachers to put their new knowledge (and new vision of FLT) into practice. They can also engage in pedagogical inquiry whereby they can analyse, reflect on and learn from their own teaching experience. Finally, implementing PA in the classroom allows student teachers to explore, on the one hand, their role in promoting educational change and, on the other, their own autonomy as teachers and how they can use it to empower their learners.

All in all, the challenge for TEA is to become a space for enhancing both teacher and learner development in (language) education. Teacher education initiatives must enable (prospective) teachers to develop the capacity to revise and reinvent their teaching practice in response to their learners' changing needs, prepare them for life and lifelong learning, and help them acquire skills such as personal initiative, critical thinking, and creativity. They also need to develop the ability to engage in pedagogical inquiry, face constraints on their teaching, monitor their own professional development, and be more critical and independent as practitioners.

To conclude, I would like to suggest possible avenues for further research in the field of modern language TEA:

- a) As pointed out by Özmen (2012: 12), “understanding the real influence of belief change or development in initial teacher education requires an observation of teachers from their pre-service education to their professional teaching contexts”. Thus, the next step in the present research would be to assess the long-term effects of the pre-service teacher education initiative studied, that is, to investigate whether the student teachers continue to work towards the implementation of PA in their future teaching practice or whether their interest in it wanes once they finish their education and are socialised into the dominant school culture. On the other hand, it would be necessary to explore the development of their educational beliefs after the module to see whether they continue to develop in line with a more learner-centred approach to FLT.

- b) As noted in section 6.9, the student teachers had doubts about their ability to implement PA in their future teaching practice. Pre-service teacher education is an important stage in trainees' professional development towards PA, but in-service teacher education can play a more crucial role in enhancing this development. For this reason, in Spain it is necessary to develop in-service teacher education initiatives directed at fostering LA and TA.
- c) To the best of my knowledge, accounts of initiatives introducing the use of cases in TEA are still scarce (the pre-service and in-service teacher education initiatives developed by Jiménez Raya in Spain and Vieira in Portugal [Jiménez Raya, 2009, 2011b, 2013, 2017a; Jiménez Raya and Vieira, 2015; Vieira, 2007b, 2007c, 2010]). It is for this reason that there is the need for further research on how case pedagogy can contribute to (student) teachers' professional development towards TA and LA. One of these research avenues, for example, could examine the potential of cases for sustaining a supportive community of practice in schools where teachers exchange experiences, are willing to work collaboratively, and create a forum for discussion and reflection on how PA can be promoted in the FL classroom.
- d) Of special relevance to TEA is the role of the teacher educator, issue which lied beyond the scope of the present research. It seems clear that teacher educators holding responsibility for TEA cannot be just mere transmitters of knowledge, but they need to redefine their role in order to act as facilitators, counsellors, or co-learners (Manzano Vázquez, forthcoming). Investigating the role of the teacher educator in TEA should become a field of study in future work.

It goes without saying that there is still a good way ahead to make autonomy an important educational concern in the practice of FLT. Hopefully, this thesis can help provide teacher educators and educational researchers with useful insights into the topic and some directions for future action in the field of modern language TEA.



## **Summary of the thesis in Spanish (*Resumen en español de la tesis- Mención Doctorado Internacional*)**

### **Introducción**

La creciente necesidad de transformar la pedagogía escolar para responder a las nuevas demandas sociales y profesionales que el mundo de hoy está imponiendo sobre el ser humano ha hecho que los educadores y los investigadores educativos investiguen cómo la enseñanza y las prácticas docentes pueden preparar a los alumnos para la vida y la formación continua. Los alumnos necesitan desarrollar la capacidad de asumir la responsabilidad de su propio aprendizaje y ser capaces de embarcarse a lo largo de su vida en un continuo proceso de reciclaje y adquisición de destrezas. Es en este discurso donde la noción de autonomía del alumno surge como un pilar central de la educación.

Promover la autonomía del alumno en clase demanda una reconceptualización de la enseñanza y del aprendizaje. Requiere reemplazar el enfoque tradicional, por el cual el profesor es la principal autoridad en el aula (es decir, él/ella determina y controla todo el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje), por un enfoque más democrático que permita a los alumnos tener control sobre su proceso de aprendizaje y que atienda a sus necesidades, intereses y habilidades. En este sentido, la formación del profesor es crucial para el desarrollo de la autonomía en nuestras escuelas. Por una parte, los (futuros) docentes necesitan adquirir el conocimiento profesional, las destrezas y las competencias necesarias para promover la pedagogía para la autonomía en su aula. Una de estas competencias es la autonomía del profesor, cuyo desarrollo se considera uno de los prerrequisitos para la promoción de la autonomía en la educación (Benson y Huang, 2008; Jiménez Raya, Lamb y Vieira, 2007, 2017; Little, 1995; Thavenius, 1999). Para promover la autonomía del alumno, los (futuros) profesores deben desarrollar primero su propia autonomía como profesionales y aprendices de la enseñanza. Por otra parte, la formación del profesor puede ayudar a los (futuros) docentes a cambiar sus creencias

sobre la enseñanza de lengua extranjera, las cuales están a menudo arraigadas en una visión tradicional debido a la influencia de su experiencia previa como alumnos (Kennedy, 1991; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992).

Siguiendo la política de la Unión Europea, en España hay siete competencias básicas en la educación primaria (6-11 años) y la educación secundaria (12-16 años), donde la autonomía del alumno se aborda bajo términos como ‘aprender a aprender’, ‘espíritu emprendedor’ y ‘sentido de iniciativa’ (BOE, 2014, 2015):

1. Comunicación lingüística
2. Competencia matemática y competencia básicas en ciencia y tecnología
3. Competencia digital
4. *Aprender a aprender*
5. Competencias sociales y cívicas
6. *Sentido de iniciativa y espíritu emprendedor*
7. Conciencia y expresiones culturales

Como refleja la LOMCE (MECD, 2013), la autonomía es uno de los principales objetivos del currículo de la educación secundaria: *Desarrollar el espíritu emprendedor y la confianza en sí mismo, la participación, el sentido crítico, la iniciativa personal y la capacidad para aprender a aprender, planificar, tomar decisiones y asumir responsabilidades* (Artículo 23). Sin embargo, la situación es muy diferente en la práctica docente. Antes de la presente investigación, examiné la promoción de la autonomía del alumno en el contexto educativo español (Manzano Vázquez, 2015). A través de diferentes estudios de caso, analicé la práctica docente de seis profesores de lengua extranjera en dos contextos educativos (una escuela secundaria y una Escuela Oficial de Idiomas) para determinar si la autonomía del alumno era un objetivo educativo importante en la práctica de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera y qué principios de la pedagogía para la autonomía formulados por Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007) eran implementados en el aula. Los resultados revelaron una clara falta de autonomía del alumno, especialmente en el contexto de educación secundaria. Los principios de la pedagogía para la autonomía eran apenas implementados, lo que parece confirmar que, como sugiere Jiménez Raya (2011a, 2017a), existe una brecha entre la teoría y la práctica en lo que concierne a la autonomía del alumno. En otras palabras, la noción de autonomía parece mantenerse en un nivel teórico ya que la práctica en el aula sigue dominada por un enfoque tradicional, centrado en el docente. Aunque estos resultados

no pueden extrapolarse a un contexto educativo más amplio que los directamente estudiados, esta imagen refleja con precisión el análisis de la situación de la educación en España realizado por el educador Richard Gerver<sup>79</sup>. En una entrevista para un periódico español, Gerver señaló que “el sistema educativo español está anclado en la era industrial”, donde el énfasis está puesto en la enseñanza y en adoptar un enfoque de control en el aula en lugar de permitir que los alumnos asuman más responsabilidad y un papel activo en el aprendizaje.

Una de las razones por las que la autonomía del alumno no se desarrolla en muchas aulas de lengua extranjera es la falta de programas de formación que tengan como objetivo preparar a los profesores para promover el aprendizaje autónomo en su práctica docente (Benson, 2011; Jiménez Raya y Vieira, 2008, 2015; Manzano Vázquez, 2016). De hecho, las publicaciones sobre autonomía se han centrado más en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje que en la formación de profesores, lo que acentúa la necesidad de promover estudios sobre enfoques hacia la formación del profesor para la autonomía. En el contexto educativo español, la brecha entre teoría y práctica en lo que concierne a la autonomía del alumno (y del profesor) es también evidente en el campo de la formación de profesores. Hace siete años, la formación inicial del profesorado de educación secundaria cambió en España. Hasta el curso académico 2009/2010, una vez que los futuros docentes habían finalizado su carrera, tenían que matricularse en un curso de tres meses llamado CAP o Curso de Aptitud Pedagógica si querían llegar a ser profesores en la escuela secundaria. Desde entonces, la formación inicial que habilita para la docencia en la enseñanza secundaria se basa en la realización de un máster (Máster Universitario de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de Idiomas) (MECD, 2008) de un año de duración. Según la Orden ECI/3858/2007 del Ministerio de Educación (BOE, 2007), los futuros docentes deben desarrollar diferentes competencias genéricas durante este programa de formación, en el que la autonomía del alumno y del profesor son objetivos relevantes. Sin embargo, como señala Jiménez Raya (2011a, 2017a), las iniciativas de formación inicial del profesorado dirigidas a la autonomía del alumno y del profesor son escasas en España. Por esta razón, es necesario fomentar pedagogías de formación de profesores en el ámbito educativo español que permitan dotar a los futuros docentes con el

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<sup>79</sup> *El sistema educativo español está anclado en la era industrial* (13 de marzo de 2014). ABC. Disponible en <http://www.abc.es/familia-educacion/20140313/abci-richard-gerver-educacion-201403112038.html>

conocimiento y las destrezas necesarias para promover un enfoque centrado en el alumno y la autonomía en el aprendizaje de lenguas.

Ante la escasez de investigación sobre formación de profesores para la autonomía (la cual es especialmente visible en España), el principal objetivo del presente estudio fue analizar el impacto de una iniciativa de formación inicial de profesores para la autonomía sobre la cognición y las competencias profesionales de un grupo de futuros docentes en lo que respecta al desarrollo de la pedagogía para la autonomía en el aula de lengua extranjera. Para ello, se persiguieron los siguientes objetivos:

- Analizar cómo una iniciativa de formación inicial para la autonomía puede contribuir a mediar en la cognición de los futuros docentes sobre la enseñanza de lengua extranjera y, más específicamente, sobre la pedagogía para la autonomía;
- Evaluar los efectos de una iniciativa de formación inicial para la autonomía sobre las dimensiones de competencia profesional de los futuros docentes para la autonomía del alumno y del profesor (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera; y
- Derivar implicaciones pedagógicas para la formación inicial del profesorado de lenguas extranjeras para la autonomía.

Basándose en los objetivos formulados anteriormente, el estudio se dispuso a responder a las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

- I. ¿Qué cambios promueve la presente iniciativa de formación inicial de profesores en las creencias de los participantes sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lengua extranjera (con especial énfasis en la pedagogía para la autonomía)?
- II. ¿Qué dimensiones de competencia profesional para la autonomía del alumno y del profesor (*ibíd.*) desarrollan los participantes?
- III. ¿La iniciativa de formación inicial de profesorado estudiada facilita el desarrollo de la cognición y la competencia profesional de los participantes hacia la autonomía del alumno y del profesor?
- IV. ¿Qué implicaciones pedagógicas pueden derivarse de esta investigación para la formación inicial del profesorado de lenguas extranjeras para la autonomía?

La tesis presentada en este trabajo se divide en siete capítulos, incluyendo esta introducción (capítulo 1). El capítulo 2 está dedicado a la formación del profesor. Discute su importancia para el desarrollo profesional del docente, los principales enfoques en la formación del profesor y el cambio de paradigma de la transmisión a la

reflexión en la formación docente. El capítulo 3 desarrolla el concepto de cognición del profesor, examinando las nociones de conocimiento y creencias del profesor. El capítulo revisa también estudios previos sobre la cognición del futuro docente. La autonomía es el tema del capítulo 4, el cual explora las nociones de autonomía del alumno, autonomía del profesor y pedagogía para la autonomía en la enseñanza de lenguas. Por otra parte, revisa investigación previa sobre el desarrollo de iniciativas de formación de profesores de lengua para la autonomía. El capítulo 5 describe la metodología de investigación del presente estudio. El capítulo 6 presenta los resultados obtenidos en cada instrumento de investigación. También discute los hallazgos del estudio en relación con las preguntas de investigación. Por último, el capítulo 7 resume las principales conclusiones que se pueden sacar de este estudio y sugiere posibles vías para futura investigación en el campo.

## **Discusión de las preguntas de investigación**

### **1. ¿Qué cambios promueve la presente iniciativa de formación inicial de profesores en las creencias de los participantes sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lengua extranjera (con especial énfasis en la pedagogía para la autonomía)?**

Al principio del curso, las creencias de los participantes sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lengua extranjera se enmarcaban en dos diferentes enfoques hacia la enseñanza de lengua. Como se apunta en investigación previa (Debreli, 2012; Mattheoudakis, 2007), los participantes consideraban que la comunicación es un aspecto fundamental para el aprendizaje efectivo de la lengua. La mayoría de ellos defendía un enfoque comunicativo en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera y enfatizaba la promoción del uso de la lengua (especialmente el desarrollo de la expresión oral) como una forma de hacer a los alumnos percibir la utilidad de aprender la lengua. Este énfasis en la comunicación se fortaleció a lo largo del curso. Por otra parte, los participantes tenían una visión tradicional, centrada en el profesor, de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera, hallazgo que es consistente con estudios previos (Hollingsworth, 1989; Miller y Aldred, 2000; Nicolaidis, 2008; Özmen, 2012). Diversos participantes concebían la enseñanza como un proceso de transmisión de conocimiento gramatical a los alumnos. En este sentido, es interesante resaltar que a pesar de rechazar el gran

énfasis en la instrucción gramatical que hay en España, para algunos participantes la gramática ocupaba un papel central en su concepción de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera. La consideraban un aspecto esencial en el aprendizaje de una lengua (véase Farrell, 1999; Peacock, 2001). Este énfasis, sin embargo, menguó a lo largo del curso, coincidiendo con lo que se ha observado en otros estudios (Cota Grijalva y Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013; Mattheoudakis, 2007).

La gran mayoría de los participantes percibía el papel del profesor como central en el aula ya que él/ella dirigía y controlaba el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. En este sentido, los alumnos tenían poca voz a la hora de tomar decisiones sobre dicho proceso. Eran principalmente representados como ‘recipientes’ a llenar con la información proporcionada por el profesor y como participantes pasivos, normalmente recibiendo la cosas ya hechas en lugar de hacerlas ellos mismos. La principal razón por la que los participantes adoptaban un enfoque tradicional, centrado en el profesor, era la influencia de su ‘aprendizaje por observación’ (Lortie, 1975). Diferentes participantes reconocieron a lo largo de la investigación que su visión inicial de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera reproducía la forma en que ellos habían sido enseñados como alumnos. De esta forma, el presente estudio coincide con anteriores estudios que han demostrado la influencia de la experiencia de aprendizaje previa de los profesores sobre sus creencias educativas (véase Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Borg, 2005; Bramald *et al.*, 1995; Freese, 2006; Johnson, 1994; Özmen, 2012).

Para la mayoría de los participantes, la autonomía del alumno no era un objetivo educativo importante al principio del curso. En el cuestionario “Reflexionando sobre la enseñanza de lengua en España...”, sólo tres participantes mostraban su disposición a promover la autonomía y el aprendizaje independiente en su enseñanza. Esta falta de énfasis en la autonomía también se observó en las lecciones ideales de los participantes para la enseñanza del inglés, las cuales apenas incluían oportunidades para promover la autonomía del alumno. Sin embargo, a lo largo del curso, hubo una creciente preocupación entre los participantes acerca de la necesidad de promover la autonomía en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera. Esta noción poco a poco llegó a formar parte de su visión de la educación. Como se apunta en los estudios realizados por Balçikanli (2010), Camilleri (1999), Camilleri Grima (2007), y Trebbi (2008a, 2008b), los participantes adoptaron una actitud positiva hacia la promoción de la pedagogía para la autonomía. Estaban convencidos de que este enfoque puede aportar considerables beneficios a la

enseñanza y aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera tales como contribuir al cambio educativo en la educación de lenguas y mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua (por ejemplo, en términos de motivación, conciencia del aprendizaje, y diferenciación del alumno) (véase también Anderson, 2015; Borg y Al-Busaidi, 2012; Martinez, 2008). Hay que subrayar, sin embargo, que aceptar la autonomía del alumno como un objetivo educativo no fue un proceso sencillo para algunos participantes ya que tuvieron que superar ciertas ‘resistencias internas’ (Jiménez Raya, 2017b) hacia esta noción. Estas resistencias tenían que ver con su tendencia a asociar la pedagogía para la autonomía con un modo ‘caótico’ de enseñanza y sus bajas expectativas acerca de los alumnos (es decir, las dudas que tenían sobre la preparación de los alumnos para la autonomía y su disposición a asumir responsabilidad [véase Vieira y Barbosa, 2009; Voller, 1997]).

Esta percepción positiva de la pedagogía para la autonomía coincidió con el desarrollo de creencias más centradas en el alumno. A lo largo del curso, se observó un cambio en las creencias de los participantes hacia un enfoque de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera más centrado en el alumno, corroborando los resultados de otros estudios previos (Cota Grijalva y Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013; MacDonald *et al.*, 2001; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Özmen, 2012; Trebbi, 2008b; Vieira, 2007b). Los participantes daban más importancia al papel del alumno en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, haciendo hincapié en la necesidad de dar a los alumnos mayor responsabilidad en su aprendizaje, ayudarles a ser participantes más activos en el aula y prestar mayor atención a sus voces. Además, los participantes eran más sensibles hacia la necesidad de adaptar su práctica docente a las necesidades e intereses de aprendizaje de sus alumnos (véanse algunos ejemplos en los casos analizados en la sección 6.7). Hay que señalar, sin embargo, que algunos participantes mantenían que en su enseñanza combinarían un enfoque centrado en el alumno con uno más tradicional, lo que era una señal de su reticencia a descartar completamente la enseñanza tradicional.

## **2. ¿Qué dimensiones de competencia profesional para la autonomía del alumno y del profesor (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007) desarrollan los participantes?**

A continuación, discuto la medida en que los participantes desarrollaron las dimensiones de competencia profesional para la autonomía del alumno y del profesor identificadas por Jiménez Raya *et al.* (*ibíd.*): a) desarrollar una visión crítica de la

enseñanza (de lenguas extranjeras), b) centrar la enseñanza en el aprendizaje, c) manejar las limitaciones locales con el objetivo de abrir nuevos márgenes de maniobra y d) interactuar con otros miembros de la comunidad profesional.

*Desarrollar una visión crítica de la enseñanza (de lenguas extranjeras)*

Al principio del curso, los participantes eran críticos hacia la enseñanza de lengua extranjera en lo que concierne al gran énfasis en la instrucción gramatical y la falta de atención prestada al desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva y la expresión oral en el aula. Sin embargo, no tenían una actitud crítica hacia la falta de autonomía del alumno en la enseñanza. Pocos participantes rechazaban un enfoque centrado en el profesor, el cual era aceptado por ellos. Asumían que el papel del profesor es dirigir y controlar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, mientras que los alumnos simplemente obedecen y hacen lo que el profesor dice (véase la pregunta de investigación 1). Esta visión, sin embargo, cambió a lo largo del curso. Como se observó en los portafolios, la revisión del cuestionario “Reflexionando sobre la enseñanza de lengua en España...” y las entrevistas, muchos participantes comenzaron a cuestionar el desequilibrio en lo que respecta al reparto de poder en el aula. Los participantes tomaron una postura crítica hacia el papel autoritario del profesor y la falta de voz por parte de los alumnos en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Eran más críticos hacia la falta de énfasis en la pedagogía para la autonomía en la educación de lengua extranjera, criticando también la falta de diferenciación en la enseñanza y el papel pasivo de los alumnos en el aula.

Los participantes también adoptaron una actitud más crítica hacia la acción profesional de los profesores, cuestionando su falta de motivación y compromiso, su individualismo o falta de compañerismo, y su resistencia al cambio. En este sentido, eran más críticos hacia la falta de innovación en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera. A lo largo del curso, hubo una mayor conciencia entre los participantes sobre la necesidad de un cambio educativo en España. Un mayor número de participantes comenzaron a verse como agentes impulsores de ese cambio. Expresaron su deseo de cambiar el *status quo* pedagógico (i. e. el enfoque tradicional que domina la enseñanza de lengua extranjera) y contribuir a mejorar el sistema educativo español.

Por último, hay que resaltar que cuando los participantes comenzaron el curso, daban poca importancia a la reflexión y al desarrollo profesional del profesor. Sin



embargo, durante el transcurso de éste, comenzaron a ver la enseñanza como una actividad orientada a la indagación en la que tienen que mantenerse informados sobre los nuevos enfoques en la enseñanza de lenguas. Por una parte, varios participantes expresaron su disposición a adoptar un enfoque crítico, reflexivo hacia su práctica docente. Algunos participantes llevaron esta intención a la práctica en sus casos, en los que reflexionaron no sólo sobre su propia experiencia docente sino también sobre el aprendizaje de sus alumnos. Por otra parte, diferentes participantes comenzaron a verse a sí mismos como continuos aprendices. Llegaron a ser más conscientes de la necesidad de asumir la responsabilidad de su desarrollo profesional en el futuro.

### *Centrar la enseñanza en el aprendizaje*

Como se apuntó en la pregunta de investigación 1, los participantes mostraron mayor preocupación por los alumnos y su aprendizaje a lo largo del curso. En primer lugar, estaban dispuestos a dar a los alumnos responsabilidad en el aprendizaje. Para hacer esto, algunos participantes mostraron su disposición a promover la autoevaluación y dar elección a los alumnos. Otros participantes defendían un enfoque más democrático en el aula de lengua extranjera. Expresaron su deseo de dar a los alumnos voz en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje e involucrarlos en la negociación de ideas y decisiones. Algunos de ellos, sin embargo, ponían algunas restricciones a la negociación. Durante el curso, diferentes participantes subrayaron la necesidad de animar a los alumnos a reflexionar sobre su proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua y atender sus necesidades, intereses y habilidades individuales. Por último, algunos participantes estaban dispuestos a recabar información de los alumnos mediante cuestionarios, portafolios y entrevistas para comprender y mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje desde la perspectiva de estos.

La mayoría de estas ideas fueron llevadas a la práctica en los casos (véase la sección 6.7) donde, en general, los alumnos tuvieron un papel más activo en el aula y asumieron mayor responsabilidad en su aprendizaje (por ejemplo, evaluándose a sí mismos o a sus compañeros, supervisando su aprendizaje, generando sus propias soluciones a los problemas, etc.). Debe apuntarse, sin embargo, que los casos revelaron ciertas contradicciones entre las *teorías expuestas* y las *teorías en uso* (Argyris y Schön, 1974) de los participantes o, en otras palabras, entre lo que decían que harían en su

enseñanza y lo que realmente hicieron. Participantes como Anita, Carla, Leticia, Marcos y Pilar afirmaron durante el curso que diferenciarían en su práctica docente. Sin embargo, sólo Carla y Daniel atendieron a la diversidad en sus casos. Como se señaló anteriormente, varios participantes indicaron su deseo de involucrar a los alumnos en la negociación de ideas. Sin embargo, sólo Sabina promovió la negociación con los alumnos en el desarrollo de su caso. Esta falta de diferenciación y negociación reflejaba las dificultades de los participantes a la hora de atender a la diversidad del alumnado e involucrarlos en la toma de decisiones, especialmente en lo que respecta al contenido y a las actividades de aprendizaje.

El ejemplo más notable de contradicción entre teorías expuestas y teorías en uso se observó en el caso de Fátima. Durante el curso, ella expresó su intención de promover la autonomía del alumno y darles voz en lo que concierne al proceso de aprendizaje. También rechazó la promoción de la enseñanza tradicional y se veía como un agente de cambio educativo. Sin embargo, en su caso adoptó un enfoque tradicional, centrado en el profesor (véase la sección 6.7).

#### *Manejar las limitaciones locales con el objetivo de abrir nuevos márgenes de maniobra*

Como vimos en las secciones 6.7 y 6.8, implementar la pedagogía para la autonomía en sus casos no fue fácil para algunos participantes ya que se encontraron con diferentes obstáculos (por ejemplo, las restricciones de su supervisor escolar a su práctica docente, el pobre compromiso de los alumnos hacia la educación, su bajo nivel de competencia lingüística, o su falta de familiaridad con la pedagogía para la autonomía). A pesar de estos obstáculos, los participantes fueron capaces de encontrar espacios de maniobra para promover la autonomía, por ejemplo, ajustando su práctica docente a las características de los alumnos o adaptando las instrucciones de su supervisor a las necesidades e intereses de los alumnos.

En el contexto de educación secundaria, los participantes también tuvieron que desafiar las rutinas y convenciones escolares ya que la autonomía del alumno no era un objetivo educativo importante en el aula de lengua extranjera. En este sentido, cabe señalar que a lo largo de la investigación diferentes participantes (por ejemplo, Carla, Delfin, Lorena, Mar, Marcos y Tammy) sostuvieron que a pesar de los obstáculos y la falta de autonomía en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera es posible dar pequeños pasos

para implementar la pedagogía para la autonomía. Comenzaron a asumir que todo profesor puede hacer algo para promover dicha pedagogía y estaban convencidos de que, en mayor o menor medida, podrían dar forma a sus opciones pedagógicas para abrir mayores posibilidades para la autonomía del alumno.

#### *Interactuar con otros miembros de la comunidad profesional*

El desarrollo de esta competencia profesional se observó principalmente en los casos de los participantes. Un ejemplo fue el caso implementado por Guillermo y Marcos, quienes invitaron a sus alumnos y a un compañero a ayudarles a mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje mediante la observación y la retroalimentación. Esta competencia también se desarrolló mediante el trabajo por parejas en el proceso de construcción del caso. Como se pudo observar en la sección 6.7, la mitad de los participantes decidieron desarrollar su caso en parejas por lo que tuvieron la oportunidad de trabajar en el desarrollo de la pedagogía para la autonomía de forma colaborativa, compartiendo sus ideas y preocupaciones pedagógicas con sus compañeros. Finalmente, en los casos los participantes también pudieron interactuar con sus supervisores, cuya orientación y colaboración fue esencial para el desarrollo de la práctica docente de algunos participantes (véase Daniel, Julia y Tania en la sección 6.8). Hubo, sin embargo, otros casos en los que los participantes recibieron poco apoyo de su supervisor (véase Lola y Silvia).

Las cuatro dimensiones de competencia profesional también se pueden medir por la disposición, habilidad y oportunidad de los participantes para desarrollar la autonomía en su práctica docente. En general, los participantes estaban dispuestos a implementar la pedagogía para la autonomía en su futura enseñanza y pensaban que tendrían la oportunidad de hacerlo. A este respecto, se señaló que la escuela, los profesores, los padres y los alumnos pueden ejercer una gran influencia en el desarrollo de la pedagogía para la autonomía, pero que su promoción depende principalmente de la voluntad y el compromiso del profesor. Los participantes, sin embargo, tenían más dudas sobre su habilidad para implementar dicha pedagogía. Su principal preocupación era su miedo al fracaso y su falta de confianza. Esta preocupación estaba ocasionada por factores como la falta de experiencia previa en lo que respecta al desarrollo de la

pedagogía para la autonomía, la falta de un modelo a seguir, el ‘problema de la puesta en práctica’ (Kennedy, 1999) y su falta de experiencia docente.

### **3. ¿La iniciativa de formación inicial de profesorado estudiada facilita el desarrollo de la cognición y la competencia profesional de los participantes hacia la autonomía del alumno y del profesor?**

En general, se puede afirmar que el curso facilitó el desarrollo de la cognición y competencia profesional de los participantes hacia la autonomía del alumno y del profesor. Por una parte, les permitió familiarizarse con la noción de autonomía del alumno, integrarla en su visión de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera y adquirir conocimiento sobre cómo puede ser promovida en el aula. Por medio de los casos (tanto el análisis de casos como la construcción de su propio caso), los participantes también tuvieron la oportunidad de desarrollar su competencia profesional para promover la pedagogía para la autonomía, aunque como hemos visto en la pregunta de investigación 2 tenían algunas dudas sobre ésta. Por esta razón, en el futuro sería necesario facilitarles más formación en la pedagogía para la autonomía para mejorar su habilidad para implementar este enfoque en su enseñanza. Por otro lado, el curso permitió a los participantes llegar a ser más conscientes de su propia autonomía (véase Galiniené, 1999) y más reflexivos (véase Brown *et al.*, 2007; Smith y Erdoğan, 2008; Ushioda *et al.*, 2011; Vieira y Moreira, 2008). También estaban más preparados para tomar la iniciativa en su desarrollo profesional (véase Camilleri Grima, 1997) y decididos a afrontar obstáculos.

### **4. ¿Qué implicaciones pedagógicas pueden derivarse de esta investigación para la formación inicial del profesorado de lenguas extranjeras para la autonomía?**

Incorporar la noción de autonomía del alumno a su visión de la enseñanza de lenguas requiere que los futuros docentes cuestionen y abandonen sus creencias más tradicionales sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lengua extranjera. Una de las implicaciones pedagógicas que se pueden extraer de esta investigación es el hecho de que un enfoque críticamente reflexivo hacia la formación de profesores puede ser un poderoso medio para promover el cambio de creencias hacia la autonomía del alumno. Como hemos visto, el fomento de la reflexión crítica dentro de un curso dirigido a la

autonomía del alumno puede ayudar a los futuros docentes a tomar conciencia de sus creencias educativas y reformularlas de acuerdo con un enfoque hacia la enseñanza de lengua extranjera más centrado en el alumno. La reflexión y la indagación pueden también contribuir a la promoción de la autonomía del profesor, confirmando lo que se señaló en la sección 4.8.1. En este sentido, el uso de herramientas reflexivas (ya sean portafolios y casos como en esta investigación o diarios) en la formación inicial docente para la autonomía puede ser una importante vía para que los futuros docentes tomen el control de su proceso de aprendizaje, participen en un desarrollo profesional autodirigido, adquieran una mayor conciencia de sí mismos como alumnos y futuros docentes, y construyan su identidad profesional.

Esta investigación también ha puesto de relieve el valor de la pedagogía de casos en la formación inicial del profesor de lengua para la autonomía. Por una parte, la discusión de casos basados en la autonomía del alumno permite a los futuros docentes adquirir conocimiento sobre esta noción y cómo puede promoverse en el aula. Por otra parte, la construcción de su propio caso les proporciona la oportunidad de explorar el espacio de lo posible entre la dependencia y la autonomía en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera. Los futuros docentes pueden experimentar formas de promover la pedagogía para la autonomía en el aula y, al mismo tiempo, pueden desarrollar su propia autonomía. A medida que implementan su caso, toman el control de su enseñanza, son agentes activos en la construcción de su propio conocimiento, y son completamente responsables de dar sentido a su práctica docente mediante la reflexión y la indagación en su experiencia. Además, el trabajar en parejas (o grupos) para construir su caso puede ayudar a los futuros docentes a entender el desarrollo de la autonomía como un esfuerzo colectivo. Sostengo, sin embargo, que estas experiencias docentes deberían ser más extensas en términos de duración. En la presente investigación, por ejemplo, participantes como Lola y Silvia enfatizaron la necesidad de tener más tiempo para trabajar en la pedagogía para la autonomía durante sus prácticas ya que consideraban que su experiencia no había sido suficiente para explorar cómo dicha pedagogía puede ponerse en práctica en el aula.

Por último, quisiera subrayar que la duración de la iniciativa de formación docente es crucial a la hora de preparar a los futuros profesores para la autonomía en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera. Aunque el curso estudiado ha contribuido de forma significativa al desarrollo profesional de los participantes hacia la autonomía del alumno

y del profesor, considero que debería ser más extenso para tener un impacto más profundo sobre los futuros docentes. Extender la duración del curso permitiría discutir más casos, ayudándoles así a superar el ‘problema de la puesta en práctica’ (Kennedy, 1999) y mejorar su habilidad para implementar la pedagogía para la autonomía en su enseñanza.

## **Conclusión**

El principal objetivo del presente estudio ha sido analizar el impacto de una iniciativa de formación inicial para la autonomía sobre las creencias y competencias profesionales de un grupo de futuros docentes en lo que respecta al desarrollo de la pedagogía para la autonomía en el aula de lengua extranjera. Las creencias iniciales de los participantes sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lengua extranjera daban poca importancia a la promoción de la autonomía del alumno, basándose en un enfoque comunicativo y un enfoque tradicional, centrado en el profesor. Los participantes consideraban que el profesor debe tener un papel dominante en el aula (él/ella debe asumir toda la responsabilidad de determinar y controlar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje), mientras que los alumnos tenían poca voz en la toma de decisiones y eran completamente dependientes del profesor. En este sentido, el estudio ha puesto de manifiesto que esta concepción de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera era el resultado de la influencia de la experiencia de aprendizaje previa de los participantes sobre sus creencias educativas.

Durante el transcurso del curso, la defensa que hicieron los participantes de un enfoque comunicativo se fortaleció, mientras que su adherencia a un enfoque tradicional se debilitó, siendo reemplazada por un enfoque hacia la enseñanza de lenguas más centrado en el alumno. Los participantes comenzaron a poner a los alumnos en el centro del proceso educativo. Mostraron su disposición a dar a los alumnos un mayor nivel de responsabilidad en su aprendizaje y ayudarles a jugar un papel más activo. Estaban decididos a crear un ámbito más democrático en el aula donde los alumnos pudieran tener voz. También desarrollaron una mayor sensibilidad hacia la diversidad del alumnado. En resumen, después del curso los participantes mostraron una mayor

preocupación por la autonomía del alumno y tenían una disposición más favorable hacia el desarrollo de la pedagogía para la autonomía en el aula de lengua extranjera.

El curso tuvo un impacto significativo no sólo sobre las creencias de los participantes sino también sobre su competencia profesional para la pedagogía para la autonomía ya que desarrollaron importantes ‘herramientas’ y ‘disposiciones’ (Darling-Hammond y Baratz-Snowden, 2005) para el desarrollo de este enfoque. Por una parte, si comparamos la práctica docente de los participantes al principio (i. e. en sus lecciones ideales) y al final del curso (i. e. en sus casos), podemos observar que su enseñanza se orientó más hacia el aprendizaje y la figura del alumno. Ahora eran capaces de crear oportunidades para promover la responsabilidad, la elección, la motivación intrínseca, la reflexión y el aprender a aprender en el aula. Por otra parte, se observó que después de terminar el curso los participantes eran más reflexivos, más conscientes de su identidad profesional, y más críticos hacia los contextos docentes. Ellos estaban más preparados para dirigir su desarrollo profesional y estaban más decididos a afrontar las limitaciones existentes en la enseñanza. También mostraban una mayor disposición a impulsar el cambio educativo en la educación de lenguas.

Aunque los resultados obtenidos no pueden extrapolarse a un grupo más grande de futuros docentes de lengua extranjera o a un contexto más amplio de formación de profesores que aquél directamente estudiado, varias conclusiones pueden extraerse de este estudio sobre la formación de profesores y, de forma más específica, sobre la formación de profesores de lengua para la autonomía. En primer lugar, la presente investigación ha resaltado la importancia de cambiar las creencias de los (futuros) docentes sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lengua extranjera. Si las iniciativas de formación de profesores no abordan de forma explícita estas creencias, los (futuros) docentes probablemente enseñarán como ellos fueron enseñados, manteniendo, en lugar de cambiar, el *status quo* pedagógico. En este sentido, la promoción de la reflexión crítica (por ejemplo, a través de etapas basadas en la ‘consciencia’, ‘confrontación’ y ‘transformación’ [Manzano Vázquez, 2014]) puede ayudar a los futuros docentes a articular sus creencias educativas y cuestionarlas a la luz de un enfoque hacia la enseñanza de lengua extranjera más centrado en el alumno.

Como vimos en el capítulo 6, integrar la autonomía del alumno en su visión de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera no fue fácil para los participantes ya que era una idea desafiante y desconocida para ellos. Este hecho enfatiza la importancia de la formación

de profesores a la hora de ayudar a los (futuros) docentes a superar sus ‘resistencias internas’ (Jiménez Raya, 2017b) hacia la autonomía del alumno y proporcionarles conocimiento sobre qué implica dicha autonomía y cómo puede promoverse en el aula. En este sentido, la pedagogía de casos puede ser un enfoque efectivo para mediar en la cognición del profesor sobre la pedagogía para la autonomía. Al analizar casos en los que se desarrolla la autonomía del alumno, los (futuros) docentes pueden ver lo que otros profesores han hecho para promoverla y cómo han afrontado los problemas que ellos mismos pueden encontrar en su aula. De esta forma, pueden desarrollar la confianza para fomentar la autonomía del alumno en su práctica docente.

En tercer lugar, el estudio destaca la importancia de explorar el desarrollo de la pedagogía para la autonomía mediante la construcción de casos. Tener la oportunidad de implementar dicha pedagogía durante sus prácticas permite a los futuros docentes poner en práctica su nuevo conocimiento (y su nueva visión de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera). También pueden desarrollar la indagación pedagógica por la cual analizan, reflexionan y aprenden de su propia experiencia docente. Por último, implementar la pedagogía para la autonomía en el aula permite a los futuros docentes explorar, por una parte, su papel a la hora de promover el cambio educativo y, por otra parte, su propia autonomía profesional y cómo pueden hacer uso de ella para empoderar a sus alumnos.

En definitiva, el reto para la formación de profesores para la autonomía es convertirse en un espacio para mejorar tanto el desarrollo de los profesores como el de los alumnos en la educación (de lenguas). Las iniciativas de formación docente deben permitir a los (futuros) profesores desarrollar la capacidad de revisar y reinventar su práctica docente en respuesta a las cambiantes necesidades de sus alumnos, prepararlos para la vida y el aprendizaje permanente y ayudarles a adquirir habilidades como la iniciativa personal, el pensamiento crítico y la creatividad. También necesitan desarrollar la capacidad para involucrarse en la investigación pedagógica, hacer frente a las limitaciones existentes en su enseñanza, supervisar su propio desarrollo profesional y ser más críticos e independientes como profesionales.

Para concluir, me gustaría sugerir posibles vías para futura investigación en el campo de la formación de profesores de lengua para la autonomía:

- a) Como apunta Özmen (2012: 12), “comprender la influencia real del cambio o desarrollo de creencias en la formación inicial del docente requiere una



observación de los profesores desde su educación inicial hasta sus contextos de enseñanza profesional”. Así, el siguiente paso en la presente investigación sería evaluar los efectos a largo plazo de la iniciativa de formación inicial de profesores estudiada, es decir, investigar si los participantes continúan trabajando hacia la implementación de la pedagogía para la autonomía en su futura práctica docente o si su interés sobre ésta disminuye una vez que terminan su formación y se socializan en la cultura escolar dominante. Por otro lado, sería necesario explorar el desarrollo de las creencias de los participantes después del curso para ver si continúan desarrollándose en línea con un enfoque hacia la enseñanza de lengua extranjera más centrado en el alumno.

- b) Como vimos en la sección 6.9, los participantes tenían dudas sobre su habilidad para implementar la pedagogía para la autonomía en su futura práctica docente. La formación inicial es una etapa importante en el desarrollo profesional de los futuros docentes hacia la pedagogía para la autonomía, pero la formación continua puede jugar un papel más crucial a la hora de potenciar este desarrollo. Por esta razón, en España es necesario desarrollar programas de formación continua dirigidos a fomentar la autonomía del profesor y del alumno.
- c) Iniciativas que introduzcan el uso de casos en la formación del profesor para la autonomía son todavía escasas (las iniciativas de formación inicial y continua desarrolladas por Jiménez Raya en España y Vieira en Portugal [Jiménez Raya, 2009, 2011b, 2013, 2017a; Jiménez Raya y Vieira, 2015; Vieira, 2007b, 2007c, 2010]). Por ello, es necesario llevar a cabo más investigación sobre cómo la pedagogía de casos puede contribuir al desarrollo profesional de los (futuros) docentes hacia la autonomía del alumno y del profesor. Una de estas vías de investigación, por ejemplo, podría examinar el potencial de los casos para sostener una comunidad de práctica en las escuelas donde los profesores intercambien experiencias, estén dispuestos a trabajar de forma colaborativa, y creen un foro de discusión y reflexión sobre cómo puede promoverse la pedagogía para la autonomía en el aula de lengua extranjera.

- d) De especial importancia en la formación para la autonomía es el papel del formador, cuestión que se encontraba fuera del ámbito de estudio de la presente investigación. Es evidente que los formadores que tienen responsabilidad en la formación para la autonomía no pueden ser simplemente meros transmisores de conocimiento sino que necesitan redefinir su papel para actuar como facilitadores, consejeros o co-aprendices (Manzano Vázquez, en prensa). Investigar el papel del formador en la formación de profesores para la autonomía debería ser un campo de estudio en el futuro.

Cabe decir que hay todavía un gran camino por delante para hacer que la autonomía sea un objetivo educativo importante en la práctica de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera. En este sentido, la presente tesis puede proporcionar a los formadores y a los investigadores educativos información de utilidad sobre el tema y algunas direcciones para futura acción en el campo de la formación del profesor de lengua para la autonomía.

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# APPENDICES

# Appendix 1

## Background Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a research project conducted for a PhD on teacher education focused on the implementation of pedagogy for autonomy (PA) in the context of FLT. The research will analyse the impact of a pre-service teacher education initiative on student teachers' cognition regarding FLT and PA. The information provided will be exclusively used for the research and pseudonyms will be required in order to preserve the participants' anonymity. For that reason, we encourage you to fill in the questionnaire with total sincerity. The questionnaire can be completed in English or Spanish, as you prefer. Thank you for your collaboration.

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### A) Personal Information

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1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What degree do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you previously enrolled on/ attended a teacher education programme?

Yes    No

What teacher education programme did you enrol on? and Where?

\_\_\_\_\_

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### B) Teaching Experience

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8. Do you have any previous teaching experience?

Yes    No

**9. What kind of previous teaching experience do you have?**

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***C) Máster Universitario de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de Idiomas***

**10. Why are you enrolled on this master's degree?**

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**11. What are your expectations for this module (*Aprendizaje y Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera*)? (What do you expect to learn from this module?)**

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**12. How do you rate your readiness (i.e. feeling ready and qualified) to be a teacher?**  
(Choose one option from 1-*very poor* to 5-*very good*)

Very poor	1	2	3	4	5	Very good
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**Why?**

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**13. How do you define your degree of motivation to become a teacher? (Choose one option)**

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

Name:	Age:
Qualifications:	
Professional experience:	

***1. Why do I want to become a teacher of English?***

***2. What kind of teacher do I want to be?***

***3. What aspects of ELT in Spain do I support? Why?***

***4. What aspects of ELT in Spain do I reject/criticise? Why?***

***5. What aspects are important for students to learn?***

***6. How do I feel now about the possibility of becoming a teacher of English?***

***7. What dilemmas, problems, obstacles affect the teaching of English in schools?***

***8. What do teachers need to know and be able to do in their work?***

## Appendix 3

### Revision of the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...”

Name:

Look at the answers you provided in the Questionnaire “Reflecting on Language Teaching in Spain...” you filled in at the beginning of the module (10<sup>th</sup> January). Is there anything you would like to change in or add to those answers? Write these changes or new comments in this new questionnaire.

***1. Why do I want to become a teacher of English?***

***2. What kind of teacher do I want to be?***

***3. What aspects of ELT in Spain do I support? Why?***

***4. What aspects of ELT in Spain do I reject/criticise? Why?***

***5. What aspects are important for students to learn?***

***6. How do I feel now about the possibility of becoming a teacher of English?***

***7. What dilemmas, problems, obstacles affect the teaching of English in schools?***

***8. What do teachers need to know and be able to do in their work?***

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## Appendix 4

### Final Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (To contact you for the interview)

**1. Previous to this module, were you familiar with the notion of learner autonomy in foreign language learning?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**What did you know about it? And how did you know about it?**

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**2. What benefits do you see in implementing pedagogy for autonomy in the foreign language classroom?**

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**3. What is your degree of conviction about the need to help learners develop autonomy in foreign language learning?** (Choose one option from 1 [i.e. Not really convinced] to 5 [i.e. Very convinced]) (Be honest!)



<b>Not really convinced</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Very convinced</b>
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**4. Are you willing to implement pedagogy for autonomy in your teaching?**

<b>Not really willing</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Very willing</b>
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**Why?**

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**5. Do you think you have the ability/are able to implement pedagogy for autonomy in your teaching?**

<b>Not really sure</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Quite Sure</b>
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**Why?**

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**6. Do you think you will have the opportunity to implement pedagogy for autonomy in your teaching?**

<b>Not really sure</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Quite sure</b>
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**Why?**

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**7. What difficulties, constraints, challenges, or fears do you envision you will face when trying to implement pedagogy for autonomy?**

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**8. Has this module helped you reconsider or change your beliefs about the teaching and learning of a foreign language?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**If your answer is 'yes', in what sense?**

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# Appendix 5

## Interview

1. What is your ideal vision (or exciting vision) of the teaching of English as a FL?
  
2. Is this vision the same you had at the beginning of the module? If it is not, in what sense has it changed?
  
3. What are the major challenges that FL teachers face in their teaching practice (both inside and outside the classroom)?
  
4. During the *practicum*, have you fostered LA?

If the answer is YES	If the answer is NO
<p><b>What did you do to promote it?</b></p> <p>Personally, how do you value the experience?</p> <p>Did you encounter any difficulty, limitation, or obstacle when promoting LA in the FL classroom?</p>	<p><b>Why not?</b></p> <p>Personally, how do you value the experience?</p>

5. After completing the *practicum* and having been in a school context,
  - Are you willing to implement PA in your teaching? Why (not)?
  - Do you think you are able to implement PA in your teaching? What do you think you still need to master in order to implement it?
  - Do you think you will have the opportunity to implement PA in your teaching? Why (not)?
  
6. According to what you have seen in the classroom during the *practicum*, is LA a relevant educational goal in FLT?

## Appendix 6

### Grids for analysing the ideal English lesson plans

#### A) The classroom as a controlled learning environment

<b>Image of the teacher role</b>	
Transmitter of knowledge	
Authority who shoulders the responsibility for the teaching-learning process (e.g. setting the learning objectives and how they are realised through specific activities, determining the learning content, directing the way in which the learners engage with the activity, etc.)	
<b>Image of the learner role</b>	
Passive consumer of knowledge	
Passive participant in FLL (working on the TL according to the teacher's instructions)	
<b>Image of the teaching-learning process</b>	
Transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learners	
Learner dependence upon the teacher (e.g. controlling the learning activities in which the learners engage, organising the learners' interaction, defining the learning method and learning procedures, etc.)	
Close control by the teacher of the samples of the TL to which the learners are exposed and they produce	
A unified model of learning is imposed	

**B) The classroom as a school of autonomy**

<b>Image of the teacher role</b>	
Facilitator	
Counsellor	
Resource	
Mediator	
<b>Image of the learner role</b>	
Critical consumer and creative producer of knowledge	
Active agent in and co-author of his/her language learning	
<b>Image of the teaching-learning process<sup>80</sup></b>	
Encouraging responsibility, choice, and flexible control	
Providing opportunities for learning to learn and self-regulation	
Creating opportunities for cognitive autonomy support	
Creating opportunities for integration and explicitness	
Developing intrinsic motivation	
Accepting and providing for learner differentiation	
Encouraging action-orientedness	
Fostering conversational interaction	
Promoting reflective inquiry	

<sup>80</sup> In this category, the parameters used were the principles of PA proposed by Jiménez Raya *et al.* (2007).

**C) The communicative classroom**

<b>Image of the teacher role</b>	
Facilitator of opportunities for authentic/ meaningful communication	
<b>Image of the learner role</b>	
User of the TL for communication	
<b>Image of the teaching-learning process</b>	
Communicative language teaching: Communicative use of the TL as a means of learning	
Communicatively-oriented learning goals: Meaningful preparation for real-life communication/ situations	
Collaborative modes of learning for communicative purposes (pair or group work)	

## Appendix 7

### Dimensions of professional competence towards TA/LA (Jiménez Raya *et al.*, 2007: 53-54)

#### A) Centring teaching on learning

Foster the learners' self-esteem and willingness to assume responsibility for learning?
Involve learners in reflection about language and the language learning process?
Foster knowledge of and experimentation with language learning strategies (in and outside class)?
Foster the self/co-management of language learning activities (planning, monitoring, and evaluation)?
Foster the negotiation of ideas and decisions with and among learners?
Encourage co-operation and team work among learners?
Find ways to enhance the formative role of [self-]evaluation and [self-]assessment (e.g. through self-evaluation and negotiation of assessment)?
Collect and analyse learner data so as to understand and improve teaching and learning (e.g. through observation, questionnaires, checklists, diaries, portfolios, interviews, etc.)?
Encourage learners to learn how to collect and analyse data on their own learning in order to understand their strengths and weaknesses?

#### B) Developing a critical view of (language) education

Understand myself and my students as agents of educational and social change?
See teaching as an inquiry-oriented activity (as situations are often unique, uncertain and problematic)?
keep informed about approaches to language education and how they can promote learner autonomy?
Realise the role of language education in promoting plurilingual/cultural competence?
Be open and encourage learners' openness to linguistic and cultural diversity?
Take a critical stance towards values and ends of language education in school curricula?
Take a critical stance towards educational value of syllabi, textbooks or other instructional materials?
Encourage learners to be critical towards social and educational values and practices?

#### C) Managing local constraints so as to open up spaces for manoeuvre

Uncover constraints to autonomy (my own and the learners') and face dilemmas as integral to teaching?
Challenge school routines and conventions (be subversive if necessary)?
Compromise between tradition and innovation without losing my ideals?
Shape pedagogical choices so as to open up possibilities for greater learner autonomy?
Share my pedagogical beliefs and concerns with learners?
Involve learners in finding creative solutions to problems that affect their learning?
Accept disagreement and conflict as dimensions of classroom communication and decision-making?

Articulate the personal aspects of learning (individual expectations, needs and interests) with the social/interactive nature of the classroom/ school culture?
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**D) Interacting with others in the professional community**

Share my theories, practices and concerns with significant members in the professional community?
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Invite others (learners, peers, mentors, etc.) to help me improve teaching and learning (e.g. through observation and feedback, material production, analysis of students' work, etc.)?
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Disseminate experiences and confront my voice with other voices in the professional community?
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Participate in public debate on issues regarding schooling and education in general?
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