

Beliefs about being an English Teacher: hopes and fears

Crenças sobre ser professor de inglês: esperanças e medos

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Abstract: *Language teacher education is a complex process with several challenges for the undergraduates and their educators. In this paper I make an option for the analysis of the future teachers' side (undergraduates). This is a qualitative inquiry carried out in an English language discipline with Letters undergraduates. Through activities with movies I discussed aspects of language teacher education based on students' beliefs, expectations, challenges and fears that these teachers-to-be idealize in the future profession. The data analysis shows that the future teachers are insecure, with some of their fears related to students (e.g., indifference and indiscipline), contextual factors and teacher proficiency, but at the same time positive beliefs about themselves as future professionals.*

Keywords: *beliefs; undergraduates; language teacher education; challenges; insecurity; English language teaching*

Resumo: *A formação de professores de línguas é um processo complexo repleto de desafios para os graduandos e seus formadores. Neste artigo opto pela análise do lado dos futuros professores (graduandos). Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo interpretativista realizado com alunos de Letras em uma disciplina de língua inglesa. Por meio de atividades com filme problematizei questões da formação de professores com base nas crenças, expectativas, desafios e medos que esses professores idealizam na futura profissão. Os resultados sugerem insegurança por parte dos futuros professores, alguns medos com relação aos alunos (e.g., indiferença e indisciplina), fatores contextuais, e proficiência do professor, mas ao mesmo tempo crenças positivas sobre si mesmo enquanto futuro profissional.*

Palavras-chave: *crenças; formação de professores; desafios; insegurança; Ensino de línguas.*

1 Introduction

"If living is seeing, I'm holding my breath...

In wonder, I wonder what happens next..." (Björk)

Studies in Brazil (BARCELOS, 1995; SILVA, 2005) have elicited and analyzed undergraduates' language learning beliefs. Barcelos (1995) used the term "culture of learning" to explore the beliefs of future English teachers, in a decade when these kind of studies were rare. A decade later, Silva (2005) elicited the beliefs of other future teachers in a period when inquiries regarding this topic were numerous in Brazil. When students come to licentiate courses they already bring their beliefs about language learning and teaching (PAJARES, 1992,

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JOHNSON, 1999). These subjective opinions are formed after years of learning experiences with different teachers, with different styles. Once in the university, the students have the opportunity to attribute new meaning to some beliefs and/or strengthen others. They can also reflect on the influence between the beliefs they hold and the decisions they make (RICHARDS, 1998). Along with the language teacher education process, students will no longer think just as learners, but as teachers, who will be responsible for the learning of others.

In this paper, I analyze earlier perspectives of future language teachers in a study where students were requested to write their personal impressions about themselves and their future. First, I discuss the theoretical background for this study, the relationship between beliefs and the language teacher education as well as the studies focused on future teachers (teachers-to-be). Then, I present the methodology and the participants' profile. After that, I present the data analysis based on excerpts from their written accounts. Finally, I conclude the study reflecting on the importance of considering undergraduates' earlier perspectives and beliefs and point out suggestions for future research in the field of Applied Linguistics.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Beliefs about language learning: focus on teachers' beliefs within language teacher education: some directions

Since the nineties the number of studies about language teacher education has increased. Some of them have considered the mental processes and ideas, images, idealizations, which here I adopt the term *beliefs* (BARCELOS, 2006). These studies with undergraduates (Letters course) outlined a profile on future teachers; they pointed out some beliefs which refer to themselves as learners but also as professionals. Other studies have considered the competences for language teaching (ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993; ALVARENGA, 1999; BASSO, 2001) in which beliefs are also part of the process and outcomes. Besides beliefs, there are also inquiries directed to teachers' expectations, conflicts and uncertainties (VIEIRA-ABRAHÃO, 1996, 2001, 2004a, 2004b). Therefore, Brazilian Applied Linguistics has shown a productive agenda when it comes to language teacher education.

The importance of studying beliefs, especially from the ones who are learning to teach is that "teacher's knowledge and beliefs have a tremendous impact on how teachers view themselves as teachers, what they learn from their professional course work, how they reason about their teaching, and how and why they teach the way they do" (JOHNSON, 1999, p.43). The undergraduates come to the university with previous beliefs that are often strengthened by direct experiences (PAJARES, 1992), they saw and/or felt. And there, they are supposed to learn the first steps for being a teacher and improve themselves along the years of new

experiences. First, they are *observers*, they have already had years of experience by observing² all the teachers they had and when these students get to the university, they bring “ideas about what it takes to be an effective teacher and how students ought to behave (...)” (PAJARES, *ibid*, p. 322). These ideas are defined by Johnson (1999, p.51) as “*idealized views*”. Teachers-to-be tend to feel enthusiastic to start teaching and wish everything will be alright, mainly students’ behavior.

Most of the undergraduates come to Letters course with expectations to learn how to prepare a class, how to deal with indiscipline, just to mention some examples. At the same time there is also the tradition pointed out by Johnson & Freeman (2001) which is *knowledge-transmission perspective*. This is a tendency to work with language teacher education by *transmission* “usually in the form of theoretical readings, university-based lectures, and/or professional development workshops which often take place outside the walls of education” (op cit, p. 54).

Along the years, these students may change some beliefs and attribute new meaning to others. Sometimes, this process can be so implicit and subjective that it may be even hard for the student to realize there was a change. Some disciplines they have may be fundamental to provide chances for these reflections, where students can share their perspectives, understand and question their own beliefs if possible or desired.

These *idealized views* may seem too naive, and probably raise questions about the relevance of studying such theme. Johnson (1999) suggests these perspectives can go on a *reconstruction* process so its relevance is that they show early perceptions and can also provide embryonic symptoms of change (or reconstruction). Assessing students’ beliefs during the first stages allow teachers to define what has to be done. It may be useful to define the priorities, outline a profile regarding the students and understand their expectations and fears about the future profession. Considering these assumptions, in this paper I analyze earlier perspectives of future English teachers. The impressions reveal enthusiastic people; some of them already show traits of a professional identity in progress. But they also reveal fears, expectations, conflicts and uncertainties (VIEIRA ABRAHÃO, 1996, 2001, 2004a).

The concept for beliefs I adopt in this paper comes from Barcelos (2006, p.18) who defines them as “ a way of thinking, as reality constructions, ways to see and perceive the world and its phenomena, co-constructed in our experiences and resultant from an interactive process of interpretation and (res)signification”. As future teachers, I try to understand their ways to perceive the world, to perceive themselves as future professionals, inferring some beliefs from written accounts. In the next section, I present the study and the participants.

² Lortie (apud Pajares, 1992) defines this period as *the apprenticeship of observation*

3 Methodology

3.1 The study

The students' perspectives I analyze in this paper are part of an activity proposed to a class of eighteen (18) students during the academic discipline called English Language IV. Bearing in mind the idea that language teaching education should permeate all the disciplines along the licentiate course, I also used English language classes as an environment for discussions related to their future profession. In approximately 10 classes we discussed and developed activities related to the main question: *Do you feel prepared to be an English teacher?* and *Do you realize you will be an English teacher?*

I started the activity with a simple group discussion to warm up the topic which was developed in the previous classes. The students shared some of their perspectives, the reason why they chose the course, the surprises and challenges and disappointments they have had since they started³. Then, I proposed three main questions which resulted in their written accounts. The questions were simple and wide, in order to allow the future teachers to express themselves as freely as possible.

Tab.1 – Questions for Reflection

THINK IT OVER...	
1	Do you think you are prepared to be an English teacher? Why?
2	What are the things you're most afraid of (as a future teacher)? Point out some topics and make comments about them.
3	What strong points do you think you have that will help you in your future teaching experiences? What about your weak ones? Make comments.

In the following class, students brought their papers and shared their perspectives with other colleagues. They talked about their own expectations and also questioned other classmates' beliefs. After that, the students read a biography⁴ and an informative text⁵ which anticipated their next activity: a movie. The movie I chose was an attempt to relate and motivate

³ They mention for example the belief that in Letters course they will become grammar experts (both in Portuguese or English language) and then the first discussions from the trends in sociolinguistics and the notions of 'linguistic prejudice' (cf. BAGNO, 2002), the idea of language teaching as a wider concept, which doesn't mean only the grammar structures, represents an example of disappointment for some students and as a surprise for others.

⁴ Biography available at: <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad_Cohen>> retrieved on 10/20/2010

⁵ Tourette Syndrome – available at <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourette_syndrome>> retrieved on 10/20/2010

further discussions about the challenges, expectations and also beliefs of teachers in their first year of teaching, a familiar topic studied in Applied Linguistics (cf. RICHARDS & PENNINGTON, 1998).

Front of the Class is a movie released in 2008. It aired on TV in the United States and later was available on DVD. It is based on the book *Front of the Class: How Tourette syndrome made me the teacher I never had* written by Brad Cohen and Lysa Wysocky. The book portrays the story of Brad Cohen, an American teacher with Tourette Syndrome who was diagnosed when he was a kid. Even with this condition, he decided to be a teacher, graduated from university and started to look for a job. The movie focuses on Mr. Cohen's challenges in his first year of teaching, the expectations about the new students, and how to teach them to accept his condition and encourage a more tolerant environment. He struggled with his job interviews until he found a school who decided to give him a chance. The story portrays many episodes of Mr. Cohen's hard times and how he found his strength in bad experiences to become the kind of teacher he never had when he was a student struggling with something he had no idea about. My motivation with this movie was the idea of discussing language teacher education topics as: beliefs, expectations and uncertainties teachers have. These aspects have been regarded in some studies, as it is possible to see in Vieira-Abrahão (1996, 2001).

3.2 The Participants

The students are undergraduates from Letters course. They are attending classes at a Federal University in the state of Minas Gerais and I was the teacher of the group who studied English Language IV in 2010. From the eighteen students who participated in this study, I chose three among the greater number of students, the ones who had never had teaching experiences in formal contexts (public or private schools, private language courses, etc). The classroom has specific cases, for example, a student who has lived in another country and now teaches English in private language schools and also about five students who have good fluency and teach English in the Language Center of the university (CELIN), an extension course available for students from several courses which is provided by the Department of Letters and Arts.

In the same year, the whole classroom also had an academic discipline entitled *Introduction to Applied Linguistics* where they discussed teaching theories, research trends and language teacher education topics. After that term, they are supposed to take higher levels of English Language subjects (from five to eight) as well as specific disciplines related to teaching practices and then the final internship. The three students are Flávio, Ellen and Nathany.

Flávio came to Letters course transferred from another university. He had never had formal teaching experiences before, but he works in a public school as member of the administrative staff, so he says he is familiar with the school environment and the reality that

teachers face on a regular basis. He chose the course due to his interest in learning languages and really likes the English language. Ellen and Nathany have studied together since the beginning of their course in 2009. Just like Flávio, they have never had teaching experiences, but recently joined an extension program where both have the chance to experience the daily routine of an English teacher in a public school.

Even if they had never taught English before, they already hold specific beliefs to learning and teaching this language, that comes from their personal experiences as students, their contact with teachers and society in general, and also from discussions and theoretical readings they have been taking in Letters course. As Pajares (1992) points out, the beliefs “can be formed by chance, an intense experience, or a succession of events, and they include beliefs about what oneself and others are like”. Thus, these future teachers already have in mind what are the possible challenges they are going to find in the contexts where they will probably work. These challenges and expectations are also related to contextual factors, beliefs about their students and possible stereotypes they may have about them (cf. BUCHANAN et al, 1990) as well as their own selves, which I understand as their personal challenges (fluency, accent, creativity for new classes and activities, the way students will perceive their identity as teachers and human beings, among others). Then, this seems to be a relevant issue for inquiry, understanding some beliefs of future teachers, who, as most of undergraduates in Letter courses have never been inside a classroom as the teacher, the one who makes the decisions.

4 Data Analysis

For this analysis, I divided their perspectives in three topics. The first one is related to their opinion about their future profession and how prepared they feel to be. The second has their perspectives on the challenges and conflicts they believe they will have in the contexts for work. The challenges are not only referred to the contexts per se, but also about their identity as teachers and the image that students will have about them. The final third part has personal reflections about their potentials and limitations as future language teachers. As they have never worked before, these perspectives can be seen as a daydream, or a little unrealistic, but I argue the importance of these moments for reflection with future teachers due to the complexity of beliefs that are formed, specially the ones which are related to the self, the identity (cf. BARCELOS, 2007) as human beings and professionals. I will present the excerpt of each participant and analyze its specificity and also their similarities and differences. It will be possible to observe topics in which they share similar ideas and also different priorities when they reflect on specific aspects (the students, the school, their competences, etc.).

4.1 Being an English Teacher: Are you ready?

*“Something I wasn’t sure of...
But I was in the middle of” (Keane)*

Sometimes it is common to hear from undergraduates, in licentiateship courses, that they do not see themselves as teachers. In their second year when I asked students this question, they paused, they thought, they paused again and started to share their hopes and fears about being a teacher. Excerpt group (1) presents some answers.

Excerpt 1 – Are you ready to be an English teacher?

Nathany: *“I don’t know if I am prepared to be an English teacher yet. Because teachers need to know abilities and get confident about the things they teach. I need to prepare myself a little more”*

Ellen: *“Sometimes yes, sometimes no. I think nowadays I can teach students from level one or two if I had to teach English, but speaking most of the time in Portuguese. I’m sure that everything is going to be fine; however, if I had to talk all the time in English, I would probably get nervous and embarrassed at first..”*

Flávio: *It depends, because I think I’m only prepared to teach beginners. I think I need to learn more about the particularities of the English language (culture, regional characteristics)*

Nathany’s excerpt shows that she is uncertain whether she is ready or not to become an English teacher. She believes in some key aspects for being a teacher which she refers to as *abilities*. Even Nathany not being familiar with the concept, I understand that her interpretation of *abilities* is not related to the famous four (reading, speaking, writing and listening) but with the notion of competence. In Brazil, Almeida Filho (1993), Alvarenga (1999) and Basso (2001, 2007) have carried out studies and published papers within this theoretical framework in Brazilian Applied Linguistics. According to Almeida Filho (1993, p.20) “the most basic competence is the *implicit*⁶ made up by intuitions, beliefs and experiences”. Basso (2001)

⁶ For further readings about the other competences and wider view on this topic I suggest chapter 2 (*A operação global do ensino de línguas*) of his book and also Basso (2001).

proposes a study in which she argues about the necessary competences for teaching English considering the relationship of what is real and what is ideal in licentiate courses. The student here may not be too familiar with the concept of competence but her implicit knowledge, beliefs and experiences allows her to perceive that in order to be a good teacher there are some requisites, needs, or in other words, competences to reach. The teacher's confidence is also another mentioned aspect, as something she needs to work on. The affective factors are important here to observe how crucial her experiences along the course will be, considering that the impact of these experiences may strengthen or weaken (or even traumatize) a professional identity, in which beliefs play an important role (cf. Pajares, 1992 for the role of beliefs in pre-service teachers).

Ellen and Flávio seem to be in doubt too. Both think that at the moment they may be able to teach English for beginners, probably because they believe that their proficiency may be suitable for this level. Ellen goes further and explains she would feel embarrassed and get nervous with the idea of having to speak English during the whole class. For someone who has never done that before, the fear of the unknown is understandable, and these affective factors need to be considered, especially in the last stage of the course – the internship – when they are supposed to experience their future profession for a short period of time.

It is possible to notice that these students reveal insecurity in their accounts. They justify this uncertainty mainly with affective factors as insecurity and embarrassment (for Ellen). The other two seem to be aware that they have things to work on; Nathany mentions the need to feel secure about the subject and the things she will teach, while Flávio is interested in learning the particularities of the language (in his own words).

4.2 Being an English teacher: What are you afraid of?

“Is this the place that I've been dreaming of?” (Keane)

The students have already mentioned – briefly – some uncertainties that explain their caution to answer the previous question. This section presents their fears, the challenges they expect, and the problems they believe they will have to face. The students have similar concerns related to their students and to themselves as teachers (a good proficiency level to conduct the whole class in English, creativity to create different activities). One of the students also expresses concerns related to school conditions and social problems that are common in the context as it may be seen in the group of excerpts (2).

Excerpt Group 2- Challenges and Fears

Nathany: *“I think one thing I am afraid of being a teacher is not being able to teach in a way the students like to learn. So, I need to be flexible and learn different ways of teaching. I am afraid of being a teacher that can’t involve the students and not being able to help the students who don’t like the English classes.”*

Ellen: *“I am afraid about my fluency. I think a good English teacher has to be safe about her English; the class can be more interesting and real for the students. I’m afraid of my knowledge about the culture of the language I teach. I consider knowledge about the American culture very important, not only knowledge about grammar. When teachers know about the culture they can bring a context for students.”*

Flávio: *“Nowadays there is a general concern regarding violence at school among students and staff. I’m also afraid of the lack of motivation that students have to learn and practice learning. Also the prejudice among students and work colleagues. The lack of family interaction in school activities, support for students in their difficulties and lack of material resources and education support for my work.”*

Nathany’s worries and insecurities are related more to herself as a teacher than other factors. She is afraid of not being able to reach her students and motivate them with her classes. She emphasizes the *flexibility* as something relevant which probably means for her an alternative to deal with another fear she has, not being able to help the students who are not interested in the subject. Lima and Basso (2009) have considered the *disinterest factor* especially in classrooms with adolescents and argue that the use of activities with music and songs⁷ may be an alternative to motivate and draw their attention to learning. They conceive the use of music in language classes as a way to compete with the many types of interest they have, especially when formal learning does not seem to be one of their priorities or interests.

Ellen, on the other hand, seems to be more concerned with her proficiency, so her linguistic competence plays an important role in her fears. She holds a belief in which proficiency is important as a safety factor, so the language teacher must have a good proficiency level in order to feel protected during the class, which means, avoiding embarrassing situations, when words fail or the teacher does not know how to say something in the target language. She strengthens this belief by justifying that the safe use of the language is something which creates a more interesting environment for the students. She also refers to extra knowledge, i.e., the

⁷ These authors propose these activities based on sociocultural assumptions, from readings of the soviet psychologist Lev Vygostky and readings from applied linguists.

cultural knowledge about the language she will teach. Ellen is afraid she may not know enough about it and believes classes can be more interesting when the teacher has and shares this extra knowledge. It is also important to point out that she has the American culture as standard for extra knowledge in mind. This similar perspective is also recurrent in studies about accent which shows that foreign language learners have a tendency to see the native speaker as the standard, which is understood as the right way to speak English. Due to ideologies and economic factors, students tend to associate The United States with the standard English and do not consider that other countries like England or Canada have English as a native language and have their cultural aspects as well, which are present in the idioms, slang, proverbs, and others.

Flávio, on the other hand, is more worried about contextual factors and social problems that are common in schools. First, he talks about violence and lack of motivation regarding the students. In English language classes, several studies report the problem of indifferent students (LAMB, 2004) especially teenagers (BASSO, 2008) which reinforce his concern. Other recurrent factors in his statement are the prejudice among students and school staff. He is also concerned about the lack of interaction between parents and school as well as the lack of materials an educational support provided for the teachers. He basically sums up most of the contextual factors which are currently reported in inquiries carried out in Brazilian schools. Flávio's concerns are less related to himself as a teacher as shown in the other two perspectives. This down-to-earth perspective focused on contextual factors comes from his experiences as a member of a school staff, as mentioned before. Outside the classroom but integrated in the context, it is possible for him to perceive the reality of schools, then his opinions are based mostly in direct experiences he has lived while working in that school. Thus, these experiences provide more evidence for the beliefs he already holds and reinforce his fears, which are more related to students' attitudes and support conditions for teachers.

4.3 Being an English teacher: Strengths and Weaknesses

"Once I know who I am not, then I know who I am" (Alanis)

Before entering a classroom for the first time, it is common for teachers to create images about the kind of students they will have and things they can do to have the perfect environment. According to Johnson (1999) they have a tendency to feel *surprised* when students do not correspond to the things that are proposed, which happens, for example, when the teacher proposes something he or she enjoyed to do as a language learner but now, for his or her students it will not be as interesting. In the previous section, I analyzed excerpts in which future teachers wrote about their fears and possible challenges for their profession. In the third part, they were requested to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Their qualities and

limitations which will also be useful, with their beliefs and knowledge in their decision making and reasoning (JOHNSON, 1999).

Excerpt group 3 – Strengths and Weaknesses

Nathany: *“I haven’t taught yet, but I think my strong point is the desire to see people learning and I am patient enough to explain as many times as necessary. One of my weak points is that I am not a creative person and it’s important to be a good teacher, who brings news to the classroom and different things for the students, involving them in the class.”*

Ellen: *“I think I am very optimist, I believe in people and in their capacity to learn. I think I’m nice and kind with people who deserve that. I believe students like to be important to their teachers, they can notice when the teacher is worried about them. My weak point is that I am not patient with messy students. I think they don’t have to like the subject but they must respect the teacher. Nowadays, students talk and treat their teachers as friends, in my opinion it cannot happen inside a classroom, because the teacher loses the respect”*

Flávio: *“I keep my patience in several occasions with poise and persistence to teach. I’m always available; I try to treat everyone with equal attention and to keep harmony in the workplace and study. I make a serious work about elaboration and correction of exams and homework. Sometimes I am embarrassed by some doubts of questions that I cannot answer at the time. I’m not very creative to produce materials or more dynamic classes, with games, jokes and varied exercises.”*

Nathany sees herself as a patient person and adds she would not worry to explain more than once. This is the first positive feature she mentions that will probably help her in the future. It would be interesting to have the chance to interview her a few years from now, especially after her internship period to check if this earlier perspective is still the same or if it is likely to change somehow. She demonstrates positive beliefs towards the language learning process which she refers to as “the desire to see people learning”. As one of her weaknesses, she does not see herself as a very creative person, but has in mind that creativity plays an important role for her profession. She concludes her point by saying she has to bring new things for her classes (materials, activities, etc) which demonstrates she cares about her choices.

A fine word to define Ellen would be *believer*, according to her definition of someone who believes in people and their potential to learn languages. She is also very careful when implies that she is *nice* and *kind* but only with people who can reciprocate. Unlike Nathany, she is not very patient and does not necessarily see that as a weakness. She supports the idea of the

teacher as the authority who must have a serious relationship with the students based on respect. Her positive description suggests the idea of a future strict teacher, who respects students and believes in their capacity but does not want to mix up the concepts of being a teacher and being a classmate. She demonstrates to be concerned to respect, something she believes that teachers are losing nowadays.

Flávio pictures himself as persistent and also patient, just like Nathany. In his idealization he sees himself as available, harmonious and professional, when it comes to his pedagogical work. As I mentioned previously, novice teachers tend to direct their concerns toward students, their attitudes and classroom discipline. Johnson (1999, p. 51) reinforces a perspective pointed out by Kagan (1992) who claims the importance of considering these earlier perceptions, images and idealizations because it creates possibilities for them to “reconstruct their idealized images”. This is also relevant and corroborates the idea that beliefs are not static (BARCELOS, 2006) and highly related to experiences (PAJARES, 1992; RICHARDS, 1998).

Teachers who learned to evaluate and think about his or her choices and beliefs from the beginning of their language education process may be more tolerant or flexible to change and innovation. The notion of change may comprise many aspects, such as: redefinitions of attitudes, choices and beliefs (about the teaching process, the students and context).

5 Conclusion: What about now?

“A new world... a new day to see...” (Björk)

Several studies in Brazil (ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993; ALVARENGA, 1999; BARCELOS, 1995, VIEIRA-ABRAHÃO, 1996, 2001, 2004; BASSO, 2001) and abroad (FREEMAN, 1996; JOHNSON 1999, 2006; JOHNSON & FREEMAN, 2001; RICHARDS & PENNINGTON, 1998, RICHARDS, 1998) have considered the complexity of language teacher education and the role of beliefs that these teachers have and their choices and actions. In this paper I made the option of studying beliefs about challenges, fears, weaknesses and strengths that future teachers consider to have. Three students who have never worked as teachers were requested to write their perspectives about three major aspects: (I) whether they felt ready or not to become English teachers, (II) their fears and expectations about what they are likely to find in their teaching, and (III) good and bad characteristics they think will be useful in their careers.

The three undergraduates feel insecure about being an English teacher (I). Two of them also believe they would be able to teach beginners due to their proficiency level. Affective factors played an important role in their accounts, for example, insecurity, and embarrassment. Nathany mentioned the necessity of abilities that a good teacher must have, while Flávio demonstrated interest to learn particularities of the language he will teach. As already mentioned in literature (JOHNSON, 1999), inexperienced teachers tend to worry initially with students and

classroom discipline. Both Nathany and Flávio demonstrated to be concerned about involving their students with their classes (II), Flávio also mentioned his concerns regarding contextual factors (i.e., lack of motivation, violence, teacher support, etc). Ellen, on the other hand, is worried about her proficiency, because she believes that with a good level she will be able to create an interesting environment for learning opportunities and may also be safe about what she is going to teach. Finally, (III) they outlined their idealized images of themselves as future teachers, pointing out some good and some bad characteristics. Patience was selected by two students as a necessary characteristic, while the other undergraduate recognizes she is not very patient as her colleagues. Two other students described themselves as people who are not very creative and suggest they need to work on it.

Despite the limited data, the study raises some questions concerning the language teacher education. First, these kinds of activities seem to be an alternative to discuss these issues, rather than the traditional ones (cf. JOHNSON & FREEMAN, 2001), for example, reading papers, seminars, etc. I do not reject the value of these activities, on the contrary, but I also see the use of films and group dynamics as alternatives to stimulate discussions and reflections related to language teaching.

Second, this activity was carried out during a regular English Language class and not during a specific academic discipline such as *Introduction to Applied Linguistics* or *Supervised Internship*, for instance. Every academic discipline can embrace the language teacher education perspective, so students could feel integration among disciplines and get used to the idea of becoming teachers as early as possible. There is a tendency among students to feel that they are going to be teachers when they are close to the end, starting discussions earlier may help them to develop this idea “*I am here and I am going to be a teacher*”.

Third, these perspectives represent early stages of *teachers-to-be* and early developments regarding their beliefs and expectations, once they stop thinking only as learners (as they used to be a few years ago) and also as teachers. Assessing undergraduates’ beliefs is a way to understand the choices they are making (PAJARES, 1992) – and will make – but also offer some time to reflect when the belief becomes an obstacle, but also when it can be a tool for developing a potential. Future studies could go further, especially longitudinal ones, which could assess undergraduates’ early stages of *idealized views* and later compare them, in their first year of teaching, for example. A moment when they will have to deal with all their hopes and fears.

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