



# UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO

División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades

**Novice English teachers' beliefs about the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language in public elementary schools**

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**Para obtener el grado de:**

**LICENCIADO EN LENGUA INGLESA**

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LICENCIADOS EN LENGUA INGLESA

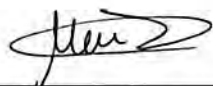
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## Table of contents

Introduction.....	6
Rationale.....	7
Objective .....	8
Research questions .....	8
CHAPTER I.....	9
Theoretical framework.....	9
1.1 The concept of belief.....	9
1.2 Research approaches .....	10
1.3 The concept of context.....	11
1.4 The concept of children’s English learning.....	12
1.5 The concept of teaching children.....	13
1.6 The concept of strategy.....	14
CHAPTER II.....	15
Review of literature .....	15
2.1 Studies that relate teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ practice.....	16
2.2 Studies about pre-service English teachers’ beliefs.....	19
2.3 Studies about the relationship between pre-service teachers’ and in-service teachers’ beliefs .....	23
2.4 Studies about factors that influence teacher’ beliefs and teachers’ practice .....	26
2.5 Studies about in-service teachers’ beliefs and context influence on teaching strategies.....	30
2.6 Mexican studies about teachers’ teaching beliefs.....	33
2.7 Mexican studies about students’ EFL teaching and learning beliefs.....	34
2.8 Research studies about the NPEES in the state of Quintana Roo .....	37
CHAPTER III.....	40
Method.....	40
3.1 Characteristics of an exploratory study from a qualitative perspective .....	40
3.2 Qualitative research method .....	40
3.3 Context .....	41
3.4 Participants .....	41
3.5 Instruments.....	41

3.6 Procedure .....	42
3.7 Data analysis .....	42
CHAPTER IV.....	44
Analysis and discussion of the findings .....	44
4.1 Description of the informants.....	44
4.1.1 Participants' profiles.....	44
4.2 Teaching Beliefs .....	46
4.2.1 Novice teachers' beliefs about EFL classes .....	46
4.2.2 English teaching children .....	47
4.2.3 Characteristics of a good English teacher .....	50
4.2.4 Factors that difficult teaching .....	52
4.3 Learning Beliefs.....	56
4.3.1 The concept of EFL learning .....	57
4.3.2 Children's EFL learning.....	57
4.3.3 Factors affecting children's learning.....	61
4.3.5 The influence of curriculum mandates in children's learning.....	64
4.4 EFL Teaching Strategies for Elementary Education .....	65
4.5 The origin and context of teaching and learning beliefs .....	67
4.6 Change of novice teachers' beliefs.....	71
4.6.1 Changes during teachers' training.....	71
4.6.2 Changes due to teaching experience.....	72
CHAPTER V.....	74
Conclusions.....	74
5.1 Implications for future practice .....	80
5.2 Limitations of the study .....	81
5.3 Direction for future studies .....	81
References.....	84
Appendix .....	89

## Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language to children is a common worldwide phenomena. The circumstances under which the teaching of a language may take place vary from place to place but also from one person to another. The literature (Pajares, 1992; Williams & Burden, 1999, quoted in Gómez, 2010; Inceçay, 2011) on this topic explains that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning determine the use of strategies and their teaching performance

In our country, recently, there has been an increasing need for hiring teachers in order to work in the program called 'Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica' (PNIEB) or National Program of English in Elementary Schools, (hereafter NPEES), which was officially constituted in 2009 even though the program had started in 2007 under the name of 'Programa de Inglés en Educación Básica' (PIEB) or Program of English in Elementary Schools, (hereafter PEES). The NPEES is a rather newborn program that has an increasing need of English teachers. The conditions of each of the Mexican states where this program has been conducted are quite different from each other. Thus, different outcomes may be expected. We have anecdotic evidence that in the Capital City of the state of Quintana Roo, most of the teachers that work or have worked in this program are usually hired right after being recently graduated of an English language major at the Universidad de Quintana Roo. In this sense, most teachers who are hired are novice teachers, some of which are hired while still in the last year of their formal studies. Nevertheless and as far as we know, the NPEES has undergone an important exodus of teachers who leave the program before three years. Unfortunately, there are not studies about the reasons why teachers do not continue working in this program. Among other reasons, we think that they probably are not prepared to face the challenge of teaching children. How these teachers undergo their teaching performance, what teachers think about it and how they deal with their problems inside the classroom, among other things, have not been studied.

We think that most of the teaching performance of these teachers, due to the fact that they are novice ones, is based on their past experiences or on what they have inferred they should not do. Probably there are many things they are not aware of regarding the teaching of a foreign language to children so we think most of their teaching practice is based on

empirical knowledge that may have supported the creation of certain beliefs about teaching and learning at this educational level.

Thus, the present research intends to examine novice English teachers' beliefs about the teaching-learning process of English as a Foreign Language (from now on, EFL) in public elementary schools. Given the scarcity of studies that focus on novice English teachers beliefs, it was decided to review studies who covered students and pre-service teachers beliefs since they share a similar amount of experience than novice teachers.

### Rationale

By reviewing the literature it was found a great variety of international studies who have focused on the study of English language students beliefs (Pajares, 1992; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006), while some others have focused on pre-service teachers beliefs (Yang, 2000; Shinde & Karekatti, 2012; Liao, 2007; Kocaman & Cansiz, 2012; Barrios, 2014).

More specifically, in the Mexican context, Cota (2013) researched about language beliefs and teaching skills in social service practitioners from a Foreign Language department; Narváez (2009) conducted a research on BA degree in English cohort students' beliefs about teaching English and English teachers; Reyes, Murrieta and Hernandez (2009) analyzed the beliefs of English language major students to improve EFL teaching and learning; Rojas and Reyes (2009) analyzed the language learning beliefs of first semester English Language Major students. Regarding teachers from the National Program of English in Elementary Schools (NPEES), some studies were identified as being carried out in the State of Quintana Roo. Their objectives were to examine program staff and parents opinion on the implementation of the program (Perales, Reyes & Murrieta, 2012) and analyze the trends and policies about EFL learning in Quintana Roo, Mexico (Reyes, Murrieta & Hernandez, 2011). The study of Reyes and Murrieta (2014) explained, from tenure teachers' point of view, the stances about their teaching performance in the program.

We think thus that carrying out a study about novice teachers working at the National Program of English in Elementary Schools (NPEES) is a relevant subject since it may contribute to future teachers to improve their teaching methods and strategies by finding out where those beliefs come from, how they influence their teaching and how they can be better



oriented to improve teaching strategies and students learning. Based on the results from this research, NPEES authorities might have a better understanding of what is going on about the teaching activity from the teachers' perspective.

This study is also important since the findings can contribute to a better, up-to-date understanding of Mexican novice teachers conceptualization of the teaching of a foreign language as well as to propose contents to be included in the English Language Bachelors program at the Universidad de Quintana Roo.

### Objective

The objective of this research study is to identify NPEES novice English teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching-learning to children in some schools in the capital city of the state, to determine where those beliefs come from and if they have any influence in their EFL teaching strategies. In order to fulfill this objective, the following questions are addressed:

### Research questions

1. What are the NPEES novice English teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching and learning to children in some schools in Chetumal?
2. Where do these novice English teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching and learning English to children come from?
3. Do novice teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching and learning to children have any influence on their teaching strategies?

## CHAPTER I

### Theoretical framework

In order to research about novice English teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning to children, first it is necessary to know how beliefs have been defined and how they impact the teaching and learning process. Also, definitions of teaching and learning English as a foreign language as well as about teaching strategies will be presented. Finally the theory that supports this study will be discussed.

According to Farrell (2012), there is no full agreement in relevant literature of when teachers cease to be considered novice. Farrell stated that for a teacher to be considered novice, their experience can range from "as little as one year to as many as five years" (p.437). For purposes of this research study, teachers with less than three years of teaching experience will be considered novice.

#### 1.1 The concept of belief

According to the literature reviewed by Barcelos (2006, p.20), she offers a concept of beliefs. She stated that "in its general sense, beliefs are usually considered as contextual, dynamic and social assumptions about a subject that are believed as true". As stated by Richardson (1996, p.103), quoted in Nikitina and Furuoka (2006, p.209) beliefs are "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true".

For purposes of this research study, we are interested on beliefs related to the teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language. In this sense, beliefs are considered "an area of individual learner differences that may have an influence on the processes and outcomes of English as a foreign language"(Barcelos, 2006, p.1). Thus, beliefs as they are understood in this study will be linked to the teaching and learning beliefs of English as a foreign language of novice English teachers working at a national teaching program in elementary public schools.

Barcelos (2006) summarizes the definitions of beliefs from different perspectives such as folk linguistic theories of learning (Miler & Ginsberg, 1995), learner representations (Holec, 1987), representations (Riley, 1994), learners' philosophy of language learning

(Abraham & Vann, 1987), metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1986, 1987), cultural beliefs (Gardner, 1988), learning culture (Riley, 1997), the culture of learning languages (Barcelos, 1995), and culture of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

Barcelos (2006) makes two general observations about the different definitions of beliefs. First, she states that all the definitions stress that beliefs about SLA refer to the nature of language and language learning, second that some definitions, among which it is hers, emphasize the social and cultural nature of beliefs (Barcelos, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, quoted in Barcelos, 2006, p.8). She states that all the definitions suggest that “beliefs do not have a cognitive dimension only, but a social dimension as well, because they are born out of our interactions with others and with our environment” (p.8). Thus, that would mean that there are social dimensions that may interfere in the beliefs of the novice teachers we are interested in researching. Regarding our research interest, we think there are social factors that may be interfering in the implementation of the NPEES, so we would like to know if those factors have anything to do with teachers’ beliefs and their teaching performance.

## 1.2 Research approaches

Barcelos (2006) differentiates three types of approaches from her research in 2003. These approaches can be applied to a research about language beliefs. They are the normative approach, the metacognitive approach and the contextual approach.

The normative approach according to Barcelos (2003) mainly described and classified the types of beliefs as preconceived notions, myths and misconceptions. This approach usually uses Likert-type questionnaires with answers of measurable scale, being the BALLI from Horowitz (1987) one of the most used, as Barcelos stated. Also the data analysis is carried out through descriptive statistics; due to this, this approach is often used in quantitative studies.

In the metacognitive approach, studies often focus on the metacognitive knowledge of students, that is, the knowledge that students have about teaching and learning itself and their learning and teaching processes. Wenden (1998, p.517), quoted in Barcelos (2006, p.16) argued that according to Alexander and Dochy (1995) beliefs are distinct from metacognitive knowledge. “Knowledge is viewed as factual, objective information, acquired through formal learning, beliefs are viewed as individual, subjective understandings, which are often value

related and characterized by a commitment not present in knowledge alone” (Wenden, 2006, quoted in Barcelos, 2006). The research tools used in this type of approach are semi-structured interviews and self-reports, and content analysis is used for data analysis.

According to Barcelos (2013, p.7), the contextual approach makes use of “diverse theoretical frameworks, different types of data collection instruments (such as ethnographic classrooms observations, metaphor analysis and discourse analysis) and varied data analysis procedures. In this approach beliefs are described as “embedded in students and teachers’ contexts and their emic perspectives are taken into account. The studies usually use methods that are grounded in students and teachers’ own interpretative meanings and perspectives. Context, understood as constructions of experiences, is crucial for this type of analysis” (Barcelos, 2013, p.7)

Taking into account our interest in identifying the context in which novice teachers work and the different conditions where they carry out their teaching, we ascribe to the definition of beliefs from a contextual approach in which beliefs are said to “be part of meaning making process and are co-constructed in interaction with others, helping us to make sense of world phenomena” Barcelos (2013, p.8). She stated that “beliefs are related to language, since language mediates all interactions and actions. They also express the accommodation of certain meanings and discursive practices in certain communities where we learn or use a language. They are part of a socialization process of becoming a members of a community (English teachers or learners, or language users or speakers in certain contexts in specific countries or imagined communities)” (2013, p.8).

### 1.3 The concept of context

Taking into account the type of approach we ascribed to, we find necessary to identify another concept which is context, to define it, so we can identify the elements that can be considered as contextual.

Within the contextual approach, Dufva (2003), quoted in Barcelos (2013 p.7) stated context is understood as “an integral element of cognition”. “Context is seen not as a static concept or a recipient for social interaction’ but a ‘socially constituted, interactively sustained, time-bound phenomenon’ where ‘each additional move within the interaction modifies the

existing context while creating a new arena for subsequent interaction' (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992, p.5-6). Thus, understanding beliefs within the contextual approach, means asking: How? Why? What for?" Barcelos (2013, p.8).

The conditions under which the NPEES has been are very different from school to school so we think it is of paramount importance to take into account those conditions so we can understand the context in which teachers' beliefs are immersed.

As Riley (1997) suggested, "researchers should look at the learning conditions in which learners find themselves" (p.141) in order to understand their beliefs about SLA. "Dufva (2003) mentions that 'it is a mistake to analyze beliefs without considering the social and cultural context (past and present) they occur in' (p.135)" Barcelos (2013, p.7). These suggestions make us think that it is necessary to identify the teaching conditions under which these teachers work and try to determine the relations among them and the beliefs of the novice teachers.

Barcelos (2013 p.8) also addressed the concept of "beliefs ascription" (Kramsch, 2003) in order to understand beliefs within the contextual approach. Kramsch states that "people produce and ascribe beliefs against a social background of expression, enactment and tacit assent (or dissent) of belief" (2003, p.113). Regarding the socialization process, we think that either the Bachelors program they studied or the philosophy and working conditions of the state teaching program they work in constitute an influence on their beliefs regarding the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language.

The fact of learning a foreign language seems to be a quite common activity; thus, it is usually surrounded by comments, ideas and beliefs that are not usually supported by arguments that is the reason why we think it is important to know how learning and teaching have been defined.

#### 1.4 The concept of children's English learning

Since our research project focus on teachers' beliefs about children's learning, we think it is necessary to identify those terms in order to acquire a better insight on the subject.

Regarding children's learning, within a contextual approach we will present different definitions. Pinter (2006) stated that since learning is an active process, "children learn

through their explorations and play, and through opportunities to talk things through with others, usually adults” (p.5). Piaget, quoted in Pinter (2006), suggested that “children construct knowledge for themselves by actively making sense of their environment. The child assimilates information to feed his or her own interpretation of the world and existing ways of thinking. After children assimilate knowledge, they accommodate it into categories in order to access easily to it. This is the process of accommodation. Without all these processes, learning would not take place” (Pinter, 2006, p.6).

Cameron (2001) provides a different definition on children’s learning. He states that children are more eager to learn than adults or adolescents. Children usually participate in activities even though they do not know what to do or understand the goal. This is usually due to their lack of inhibition which, in turn, helps them get a more native like accent. However, they also “lose interest more quickly and are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they found difficult. Children do not find it as easy to use language to talk about language as adults do” (p.1).

From both definitions we state that EFL children’s learning is a process that develops naturally and involves active participation from children in daily life activities. The interaction of the learner with the environment provides feedback and context for the children which is translated into knowledge allowing learning to happen.

### 1.5 The concept of teaching children

Regarding teaching EFL to children, Cameron (2006, p.xii) stated that “teaching languages to children needs all the skills of the good primary teacher in managing children and keeping them on task, plus a knowledge of the language, of language teaching and of language learning’”. He also states that even though children have a less complicated view of the world than adults, it does not mean that teaching children is straightforward. According to him, children have a huge learning potential and teachers need to understand how they learn. “They need skills of analyzing learning tasks and of using language to teach new ideas to groups and classes to children” and “children are interested, or can be interested, in topics that are complicated, difficult and abstract” (Cameron, 2001, p. xiii).

From Cameron's perspective we state that teaching children needs to be carried out taking into account how they learn a language. Teachers should encourage children's learning by applying meaningful activities and provide children's with knowledge that satisfy their curiosity and matches their eagerness to learn.

#### 1.6 The concept of strategy

Since teaching to children involves paying special attention to how children learn it is important to define what are strategies. Herrell and Jordan (2004) defined the term strategies as "the approaches that can be used across curricular areas to support the learning of students. While techniques were defined as "the body of specialized procedures and methods used in any specific field", quoted in Thomson (2012, p.4). Nevertheless, the author claims that the line between strategies and techniques during on lesson observation is fussy which would mean that the two terms are interchangeable. From an educational view, it is of interest for this research to define strategies as the methods, approaches and techniques that teachers usually adopt when teaching.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of literature

In this chapter, a preliminary literature review will be discussed. The studies presented here used different methodologies and focused on different aspects of teaching and learning beliefs. This chapter is comprised of eight main sections: firstly, studies that relate teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice will be presented. After that, international quantitative studies about pre-service English teachers' beliefs and studies about the relationship between pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs will be analyzed. Then, international qualitative studies regarding factors that influence teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice and studies about the influence of in-service teachers' beliefs and context on teachers' strategies will be examined. Later, studies carried out in the Mexican context, in the state of Quintana Roo, will be presented. Finally, literature regarding the National Program of English in Elementary Schools in Quintana Roo will be reviewed.

The first beliefs studies had the goal of determining students' beliefs about learning English. Pioneering researchers conducted quantitative studies on language beliefs by means of the instrument designed by Elaine Horwitz in 1980, the BALLI (Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory). This instrument consists of a model questionnaire that initially measured and categorized the beliefs of students and teachers of ESL (English as a Foreign Language) and commonly taught languages (CTL) in the U.S., i. e., French, German and Spanish, about foreign language learning comprised of four themes: foreign language aptitude, difficulty of language learning, nature of language learning and language learning strategies (Horwitz, 1981). Then, Horwitz modified the fourth theme to "learning and communication strategies" and a fifth theme, "motivation and expectation", was added (Horwitz, 1987) as mentioned by (Kurtz, 1996a) quoted in Nikitina and Furuoka (2006, p.210-211)

Nikitina and Furuoka (2006) described some of the pioneering studies which used Horwitz's BALLI (1988) in their research studies. Nikitina and Furuoka used the BALLI as well, aiming to investigate students' beliefs about language learning in a Malaysian context. Unlike Horwitz, Nikitina and Furuoka employed factor analysis besides descriptive statistics for the data analysis. The research was carried out at the University of Malaysia Sabah (UMS),



among 107 Russian language learning students. The findings showed that language learning beliefs are systematic. The BALLI items representing “motivation”, “aptitude”, “strategy” and “language difficulty” formed statistically independent factors based on the students’ answers to the questionnaire (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006, p.216)

The first studies in the field of language learning beliefs were thus developed taking language students as subjects, those studies sought to explore the language learning beliefs their participants hold. They collected their data by using Horwitz’s instrument (BALLI) to measure and categorize the beliefs of students and teachers of ESL and CTL about several topics regarding education. The previous studies helped us to broaden our knowledge on language beliefs and to have a better understanding of what those beliefs are, how they work and where they possibly come from.

As described in Nikitina and Furuoka (2006) the very first studies were carried out from a quantitative perspective and basically based on a predetermined questionnaire, which means that in a way all of them would conclude around the same dimensions. In a way this is an advantage for novice researchers like us since the results constitute a strong well known topic since it has been repetitively analyzed and discussed around the same dimensions. The previous studies coincided on the fact that teachers’ beliefs about how a language is acquired define the teaching methods and the approach that a teacher adopts even though they are mostly conceived upon pure assumptions. These findings confirm that we could aim to identify teachers’ beliefs as a way to know more about how people think a foreign language is learnt and that this fact is widely related to teaching methods.

## 2.1 Studies that relate teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ practice

The following studies focus on the relation between teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ practice. Some of these studies stated there is a relation between teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ performance in class, whereas some others do not confirm the relation. Pajares (1992), for example, wrote an article to examine the meaning relevant researchers give to beliefs and how this meaning differs from that of knowledge, provides a definition of belief consistent with the best work in this area, explores the nature of belief structures, and offers a synthesis of findings about the nature of beliefs. The article also argues that teachers’ beliefs can and should become an important focus of educational inquiry. According to some of the studies’

examined by the author there is a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practice. Pajares stated that “educational beliefs of pre-service teachers play a pivotal role in their acquisition and interpretation of knowledge and subsequent teaching behavior and that unexplored entering beliefs may be responsible for the perpetuation of antiquated and ineffectual teaching practice” (1992, p.328).

Another author that reviewed relevant literature about teacher beliefs and practices, particularly in the field of language teaching was Gao (2014). The author introduced various definitions of teacher beliefs and summarized the features of teacher beliefs and analyzed these studies on this topic from the 1960s to 2000s. Gao reported that the time from 1960s to 1980s was an emerging stage when researchers such as Brown (1968), Jackson (1968), Lortie (1975), McDonald and Elias (1976), Schulman (1986a) reached “consensus on a unidirectional relationship between teacher behaviors and student achievements” ( 2014, p.41). The author presented a synopsis on the literature from 1990s to 2000s, which was regarded as a developing stage when scholars held two competing themes on teacher beliefs and practices. Johnson (1992, 1994), Kinzer (1988), Kinzer and Carrick (1986), Konopak et al., (1994), Leu and Kinzer (1991) and Mitchell (1991), quoted in Gao (2014), proposed that “there is a consistent relationship between teacher beliefs and practices” (p. 41). On the other hand, Ng and Farrell (2003), Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd (1991), van de Schaff et al., (2008), quoted in Gao (2014) stated that “connection between teachers’ beliefs and instruction is inconsistent” (p.41).

Gao (2014), for is part, concluded that there are relatively few studies about language teachers’ beliefs and practices on speaking, listening, writing and vocabulary because even within the larger portion of researchers on grammar and reading, “the correlation between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom actions still need to be researched further due to the newly emergent and interdisciplinary theories” (p.51). The author suggests that “instead of belief inventory and case studies, more reflection and interpretative approaches should be examined in order to address the issues in the field of teachers’ beliefs and practices” (p.52).

Although from a different perspective, Xu (2012) examined the relation between teachers’ beliefs and practice. The author reviewed some previous studies on teachers’ beliefs,

and analyzed the role of three teachers' beliefs in the language teaching-learning process. It was found that teacher's beliefs strongly influence teaching behavior and finally learner development. In this study, Davis and Andrzejewski (2009), cited in Xu (2012) concluded that teachers' beliefs influence teacher consciousness, teaching attitude, teaching methods and teaching policy. Xu emphasized that teachers who does not "examine their beliefs set aside valuable curriculum, overlook or marginalize students who need them, misinterpret students' motives or behavior, and limit their potential as professionals; nevertheless, teachers who explore their beliefs and their relationships with their practice will promote students' intellectual growth, autonomy and reciprocity, and equity in the classrooms" (2012, p.1401). Moreover, the author suggested that "the formation of a teacher educational beliefs in the language teaching learning process will influence on forming active language-teaching methods and will bring about an improvement in study language abilities" (p.1401).

Another study that states the relation between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice is the cross-cultural study done by OECD (2009). OECD examined a variety of beliefs, practices and attitudes that previous studies have shown to be relevant to the improvement and effectiveness of schools, it used representative data from 23 countries. Data about teaching beliefs was collected by using surveys and those beliefs were assessed on a four-point Likert scale. This study found that "teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes are closely related to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in the daily professional life and to the general well-being, and they shape students' learning environment and influence students motivation and achievement " (p.89).

In this section, it was presented literature that relate teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice and according to Pajares (1992), Gao (2014), OECD (2009) and Xu (2012) there is a relation between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice. They concluded that teachers' beliefs influence their consciousness, their behavior, their instructional decision, their teaching methods and strategies. Nevertheless, some authors (Ng & Farrell, 2003; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991; Van de Schaff et al., 2008) cited in Gao (2014), stated that connection between teacher's beliefs and instruction is inconsistent. As far as we know, the relation between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice has not been study thoroughly and research about this topic can provide information to help teachers how to examine their beliefs and the relationship those beliefs have with their practice.

Xu (2012) stated that “the formation of a teacher educational beliefs in the language teaching learning process will influence on forming active language-teaching methods and will bring about an improvement in study language abilities” (p.1421). Therefore, introducing this topic to teachers will make them aware of their teaching and learning beliefs, it may also offer an explanation of the way they teach, help them to reinforce functional learning and teaching beliefs and improve their teaching practice.

## 2.2 Studies about pre-service English teachers’ beliefs

International quantitative studies about pre service teachers’ beliefs will be examined. The first three studies that will be presented focused on children learning and teaching beliefs hold by elementary English teachers, followed by others two studies that had the purpose of researching if teaching training programs may foster changes on teacher’s beliefs. Moreover, at the end of this section it will be also presented a study centered on examine how teachers learn and discover if there is a relationship between teachers’ language learning strategies and their teaching beliefs.

Yang (2000) carried out a research regarding beliefs about language learning and teaching held by prospective Taiwanese primary English teachers since English was going to be included in the curriculum of Taiwan’s Elementary schools the year after the survey. For this reason, a better understanding of the prospective elementary school English teachers was needed. A survey was administered to 68 Taiwanese from a primary school English teachers training program. The questionnaire developed by Yang was adapted from the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) but only some items from the Horwitz’s instrument were used for Yang’s questionnaire. Yang divided the questionnaire into five areas: (1) Child development, (2) Teaching English to children, (3) Teaching strategies and techniques, (4) The nature of language learning and (5) Self- efficacy and expectations. Yang compared the similarities of their participants’ beliefs with those Horwitz’s (1985) and Kern’s (1995) participants’ beliefs. For example, Horwitz (1985) found that the prospective foreign language teachers in her method class believed that learning a foreign language is easier for children than for adults, a similar result was revealed in Yang’s study; the majority of Taiwanese primary school English teachers did not believe children learn English as adults do and they think that younger is better in learning English. Also, most participants believed that people acquire

language knowledge by repeating expressions in the target language a little beyond their current level of competence and should not be taught spelling and grammar as first subjects. Nearly all the participants felt necessary to teach a foreign culture, as well.

Shinde and Karekatti (2012) conducted a study in an Indian context as part of an ongoing doctoral research. They intended to analyze the beliefs of 100 Marathi and English medium Diploma in Education pre-service teachers regarding teaching English to children with the goal of exploring whether medium of instruction, Marathi language or English language, affect the beliefs of the teachers. Information was gathered by using the Questionnaire of Primary School Pre-service English Teachers' Teaching Beliefs developed by the researchers who based on the questionnaire items from Horwitz, (1987), Hsieh and Chang (2002), Oxford (1990), Yang (2000). The findings reported that most subject teachers think it is very important to know about how children learnt a language and agreed on the statement that even though children may learn in different ways a language must be taught since early years.

Regarding the methods and teacher talk, Shinde and Karekatti found that teachers' beliefs about useful methods ranged from the Communicative Language Learning and Total Physical Response Methods to beliefs stating that technology could be applied to reinforce teaching. They also discovered that young learners should not be punished in any way but with the softest approach. It is important to note that the participants were pre-service teachers, meaning that they had close-to-none experience in actual teaching. Nevertheless, they were still asked about what they thought of their future teaching efficacy and it was discovered that they had a strong self-belief regarding their efficacy about teaching English in primary school.

Barrios (2014) conducted a study to investigate the beliefs about language learning that pre-service primary English teachers possess. The participants were 307 prospective primary English language teachers and the instrument applied was a version of the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) by Horwitz (1987), which was updated and modified according to the European context. The results of the study showed that participants hold some erroneous beliefs that teaching education programs should address and confront with conceptions coherent with the current state of the art in the field of language learning

research and professional knowledge. According to the author, it is important to carry out those actions during training programs to prevent that pre-service teachers keep misconceived or erroneous beliefs that may influence negatively on their teaching and consequently affect their students learning, as well.

Another study that researched about pre-service teachers was Peacock (2001). He carried out a study to investigate changes in beliefs about second language learning of 146 trainee ESL teachers over their three year program. The participants were all full-time undergraduates in different years on the Teaching English as a Second Language program (BA TESL) in the Department of English at the City University of Hong Kong. The instruments used in this study for collecting data were a learner self-report questionnaire, the BALLI (the pre-service students completed it at different times and stages), ESL proficiency scores, an instruction package, and class observations. The results of the study showed that participants had three key beliefs about language learning: learning a second language means learning a lot of vocabulary and grammar rules and people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent; those beliefs differed from experienced ESL teachers' beliefs. These beliefs changed very little during their 3 years of study of TESL methodology and according to the information obtained from the instruction package the participants had positive reactions. The authors suggested that it is significant for program instructors or trainers to consider work on changing mistaken trainees' beliefs about language learning because may negatively affect their future students' learning.

Busch (2010) researched the effects of the introductory second language acquisition (SLA) course on the beliefs of pre-service teachers with the purpose of determining what beliefs about second language learning and teaching the participants held at the beginning of the SLA course, whether those beliefs had changed by the end of the course and, if so, what contributed to the change. The participants were 381 pre-service teachers enrolled in a three year SLA course at a state university in California. The instruments used in this study was the beliefs about language learning inventory for teachers (TBALLI) by Horwitz, (1988) and open-ended questions. The author applied surveys pre-and post-course and asked participants to compare their answers and to reflect on the course readings, discussions, language analysis activities, and their tutoring or other language learning experience by writing a short paragraph. The comparison between the information obtained from the surveys applied to

the participants before and after the course revealed that there were significant changes in the pre-service teachers' beliefs; the topics that generated the most changes were the length of time for acquisition, difficulty of language acquisition, the role of culture, the role of error correction, the importance of grammar, and the efficacy of audio-lingual learning strategies. The findings of this study showed that the pre-service teachers attributed their pre-course beliefs to language learning experience in high school and the post-course caused changes in their beliefs, the SLA course content and experiential activities, most notably tutoring an ESL student that was the first contact for some pre-service teachers.

Chen (2005) conducted a research to explore about non-English speaking EFL pre-service teachers' English language learning strategies and beliefs toward EFL teaching methodologies, as well as the relationship between them. 321 pre-service teachers were part of this study, they were addressed during their first semester of the teacher education programs. The data was gathered by using a self-report questionnaire that consisted of three measures: the Individual background, the strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Version 7.0 for ESL/EFL, Oxford, 1990), and Beliefs toward English Teaching Methodologies (the Audio-lingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching). Also the ANOVAs, t-tests, Pearson's correlations, and non-parametric tests were used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that "these pre-service teachers used language learning strategies to learn English almost high frequently and they preferred the Communicative Language Teaching to the Audio-lingual Method. However, these pre service teachers would mix methodologies to help students reach communicative competence" (Chen, 2005, p.iii). The results showed a low correlation with the relationship between language learning strategies and teaching beliefs.

The studies in the previous section had the purpose of analyzing the beliefs of English teachers about teaching and learning. Unlike pioneering researchers whose main purpose was to investigate beliefs held by young and adult learners, the researchers in this last section mostly focused on children' beliefs about education, which means that the focus of study has moved to other subjects such as children, i.e., the area of study regarding beliefs has broaden as time goes by. This can be taken as an example of the importance this area of study has reached.

In conclusion, most of these studies modified Horwitz's BALLI in order to better suit the purposes in their own studies and used it along with different tools such as the inclusion of learner self-report questionnaires, observations and open-ended questions to aid with the verification of the results. Their participants believe that children do not learn English as adults do and think children should learn a language as earlier as possible. The studies also found that teachers' beliefs can change or being modified during their training. For this reason, some of these researchers suggested that it is significant that teachers trainers or instructors address, challenge and confront the prospective teachers' beliefs during teaching education programs with the purpose of modifying ineffective or mistaken beliefs about language learning and teaching because if this action is not carry out during teachers' training programs they may negatively affect their future students' learning.

It is important to mention that Chen's findings (2005) revealed that their participants language learning beliefs have a low correlation with their teaching beliefs. These findings are similar to the ones in Gao (2014). This study was presented previously, several authors cited in Gao's stated that the connection between teacher's beliefs and instruction is inconsistent. Thus, according to Gao and Chen, teachers' learning beliefs seem no to be related with teachers' teaching beliefs and their instruction or practice.

### 2.3 Studies about the relationship between pre-service teachers' and in-service teachers' beliefs

Unlike the previous section which examined international quantitative studies about pre-service teachers' beliefs, in this section will we focused too on pre-service teachers but in relation to in- service teachers' beliefs. The studies mentioned here aimed to discover if there are similarities or differences on beliefs between pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. In the first study the in-service teachers teach English at university level while in the other two the in-service teachers instruct children.

Chatouphonexay and Intaraprasert (2014) conducted a research to explore the similarities and differences of beliefs about English learning held by EFL pre-service and in-service teachers in Lao People's Democratic Republic. The participants were 962 pre-service teachers (480 were English major) and 129 in-service teachers (all in-service teachers were non-native English speakers) of three universities and eight Teachers' Training College. The



instrument of the study was a questionnaire, the main items of beliefs were based on Horwitz' BALLI (1978b), Cotterall (1995), Chatouphonexay and Intaraprasert (2004) and the instrument used to determine the significant variation patterns in learners' and teachers' beliefs was the Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test. The findings of the study revealed that there were more similarities than differences of beliefs between pre-service and in-service teachers. The author remarked that it is significant that teachers be aware of their students' needs, capabilities, potentials, expectations and preferences in order to achieve effective language teaching and learning.

Liao (2007) carried out a study with 99 English language teachers, 21 in-service teachers who teach in various elementary schools around Taiwan and 78 pre-service teachers taking training credit-based courses at a Teachers College in northern Taiwan who some of them were already teaching English at private schools. The purpose of this study was to have a deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs regarding teaching English to children and discover what similar and different beliefs might be held by in-service and pre-service teachers to compare the belief systems of in-service teachers with those of their pre-service peers as well. The data was collected by using the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987), but the instrument was divide in three major areas: (1) The nature of children's English development, (2) Teaching methods and techniques, and (3) Self-efficacy as an English teacher. Liao also included an open-ended question in order to cover any gap of information that subject teachers may had left. The findings in Liao's study showed that "both in-service and pre-service elementary school English teachers in Taiwan, shared a similar and consistent set of beliefs. Most of them have common beliefs about: (1) The nature of children's English development, which is in accord with the research literature on foreign language learning, (2) English teaching methods and techniques employed in the classroom, which are basically in tune with the teaching principles of CLT, and (3) A strong sense of self-efficacy as English teachers in terms of doing their work, which may have a positive impact on their performance based on the research findings of educational psychology" (2007, p.63). Moreover, it was found that successful elementary school English teachers are generally thought to have specific characteristics which are "a pleasant personality and an optimistic attitude towards teaching, the ability to effectively use various classroom teaching and management skills, and a good command of the English language" (Liao, 2007, p.63). It is also of great

importance to comment that in Liao's study it is stated that it is generally agreed that teaching is greatly affected by the belief systems of its practitioners. According to the author, all teachers possess certain teaching beliefs and those beliefs are based on their earlier learning experiences, teacher training courses taken at school, and their cultural backgrounds. Liao (2007) affirmed that teachers' beliefs affect their teaching. This is why, the author suggested that "teachers' beliefs need to be explored before they can critically reflect on their teaching practices or facilitate changes to teach more effectively" (p.63).

Kocaman and Cansiz (2012) compared the beliefs of 192 non-native in-service teachers that work at private elementary schools and pre-service English language teachers that study at private universities in Istanbul with the goal of having a better comprehension of language beliefs and help teachers reflect on their beliefs, so teacher training institutions could take the necessary steps to improve teacher practice. These authors made use of Liao's instrument and open-ended question along with observations. The results showed that both groups supported Communicative Language teaching Methodology (CLT) mainly addressing children's educational and emotional needs yet the agreement rates were rather diverse in some aspects. For example, most teachers believed that it is necessary to teach listening and speaking skills to children. About a 73% of the teachers believed that oral conversation was the most important element when teaching children. The study also revealed that "in-service and pre-service teachers differed considerably in the extent of their beliefs" (Kocaman & Cansiz, 2012, p.807)

It is relevant to notice that the studies presented in the previous section were from different countries and their participants taught students ranging from different ages. Despite of these contextual differences, Liao (2007) and Chatouphonexay and Intaraprasert (2014) found that there are more similarities than differences between pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs; However, in Kocaman's and Cansiz's study (2012) it was revealed that in-service and pre-service teachers' beliefs differed to a great extent.

Liao (2007) concluded that teachers' beliefs are based on their earlier learning experiences, teacher training courses taken at school, and their cultural backgrounds, which is very important to take into account because it may explain the origin of beliefs. This author affirmed that teachers' beliefs affect their teaching, which is consistent with Barrios'

statement when she stated that teachers' beliefs influence teachers' performance (2014). In the previous sections, Liao (2007) and Chatouphonexay and Intaraprasert (2014) also remarked that it is significant to explore teachers' beliefs, make teachers conscious of their language teaching and learning beliefs in order to enhance functional beliefs and develop effective teaching strategies.

#### 2.4 Studies about factors that influence teacher' beliefs and teachers' practice

In the following section some international qualitative studies about pre- service and in-service teachers will be analyzed. These studies researched about teachers' beliefs and possible factors that influence pre-service teachers' beliefs and their teaching.

Inceçay (2011) carried out a qualitative study to explore the effects of pre-service teachers' language learning beliefs on their teaching practice. This study can contribute to improve teacher education programs that may enhance beliefs that are supportive to teaching approaches of education. The participants were two pre-service teachers, one male and one female. Data was collected by using a structured interview, philosophy statements, an observation checklist and the reflective journals of the participants during the second term when they started doing their practice teaching. The results of the study indicated that "pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning showed their effects on instructional practice in the aspects of creating language learning environment, roles of teacher and learner within the language classroom and providing learners with necessary strategies when they have difficulty" (p.132). The study also reported that there were other factors that affected the participants' teaching practice such as the level of education they taught, the theories they received during their training program, the amount of students they taught and the competences they needed to cover.

According to the Inceçay, "considering the amount and level of the thinking that pre-service teachers have to do in their practice teaching, the experience they gained from their practice teaching may be influential to the adjustment of their beliefs, compared to the learning experience in the regular classes in teacher education program at their faculties" (2011, p.129). In Inceçay's study it is concluded and emphasized that learning beliefs of pre-service teachers should be analyzed and that make teachers conscious of the beliefs they held might be helpful to direct their current teaching techniques and methodologies.

Debreli (2012) conducted a qualitative study to know what sort of beliefs about learning and teaching EFL pre-service teachers have when they start teacher training programs and how their beliefs could develop or change throughout their training. The participants were three senior year pre-service teachers from the English Language Teaching Department that assisted to a nine-month training program divided in two terms; in the first term, they attended to methodology courses and later they went to public schools to do observations for six hours to different teachers teaching different learner groups. In the second term they went to public schools to teach for a total of four hours to different learner groups. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews at three-month intervals and through contemporaneous diary writing activity throughout the training program.

The results revealed that during the first term of the teacher training program the pre-service teachers' beliefs were confirmed by the methodology courses they attended. However, in the second term, when they experienced teaching in a real classroom with real learners changes on their beliefs occurred. Debreli (2012) found that at the end of their training, the pre-service teachers still had some of the beliefs about teaching and learning they had at the beginning of the training program but they developed more awareness of the beliefs they already had. The findings showed participants noticed that theoretically gained beliefs they held about teaching and learning at the beginning of the training program were sometimes not applicable in real classrooms; thus, they developed and modified their beliefs according to the personal teaching experiences they had within the training program. Despite the fact that the length of the teaching sessions were short, changes on the pre-service teachers' beliefs occurred in the second term of the training program.

Borg (2006) and Farrell (1999), quoted in Debreli (2012), pointed out that language teaching and learning beliefs teachers “developed during their schooling experience persist as filters, and they guide the way that pre-service teachers perceive and interpret the new information presented to them” (p.368). Furthermore, Pajares (1992), quoted in Debreli (2012), emphasized that “there is evidence indicating that the early-established beliefs pre-service teachers have could become resistant to change over time and constant use even if their beliefs are proved to be incorrect or inappropriate during their teacher training”(p. 368). For this reason , these authors suggested to modify non-functional beliefs; they remarked that

in order to change those kind of beliefs, those beliefs should be proved as unsatisfactory, and in order to prove them as unsatisfactory, they should be challenged.

Erkmen (2010) aimed to investigate the beliefs about teaching and learning of non-native novice English language teachers, and any change and development in their beliefs throughout their first year of teaching. The participants were nine teachers ranged from one year or less to no teaching experience at all, all of them were in their early 20's and graduated from the same university. Data was collected over an academic year of nine months by means of semi-structured interviews, credos, classroom observations, post-lesson reflection forms, stimulated-recall interviews, diaries and a metaphor-elicitation task. The findings in this study showed that novice teachers' prior learning experiences were influential in shaping their initial beliefs, they also indicated that several factors stimulated change in beliefs such as differences in individual experiences and becoming aware of their beliefs and practices. It was also found that contextual factors such as the syllabus, dissatisfaction with student behavior and students' expectations modify teachers' beliefs. The study found that novice teachers' beliefs were not always reflected in their teaching due to differences in individual experiences and the restriction of the syllabus. Based on the findings, the study argued that novice teachers are involved in a learning period in their first year of teaching and that their beliefs are susceptible to change.

The quantitative studies from Liao (2007), Shinde and Karekatti (2012) as well as Barrios (2014) presented in the previous section, concurred on some of Inceçay's (2011), Debreli's (2012) and Erkmen's (2010) findings. They coincided on the fact that teachers' beliefs can be influenced by certain factors and might have an effect on their teaching practice. Due to this, some of these authors suggested that teacher educators should work on teachers' beliefs, make their students aware of them and try to modify non-functional beliefs, so they can have a better performance in their future teaching classes.

In Liao's (2007) it is concluded that teachers' beliefs are based on their earlier learning experiences, on their teacher training courses taken at school, and on their cultural background; these findings are similar to the ones in Barrios's (2014) and Shinde and Karekatti's (2012) studies. Barrios found that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning English dependent on the cultural context in which they emerge and come from their previous

English educational experiences as students; so when students start their training programs, they bring those beliefs with them to the classroom. Shinde and Karekatti's study also concurs on the finding that teacher's own experience as learners has a great impact on their beliefs. Inceçay's (2011), Debreli's (2011) and Erkmen's (2010) findings also concluded that teachers' prior learning experiences were influential in shaping their initial beliefs.

Inceçay (2011), Debreli (2011) and Erkmen (2010) coincide on that there are other contextual factors besides teacher's prior learning experience that influence teachers' beliefs such as practice teaching experience in real classrooms and teachers' personal learning experiences during their training program. Moreover, Erkmen found that the length of practice teaching sessions, the syllabus, dissatisfaction with student's behavior, and students' expectations are other contextual factors that have an effect on teachers' beliefs.

In addition, Inceçay (2011) stated that there are factors that influence teachers' teaching practice; for example, teachers' beliefs, the level of education and the amount of students they taught, the theories they learn during their training program, and the competences they needed to cover. Regarding teachers' beliefs and according to literature presented here, if teachers hold misconceived ideas about how to teach and learn English and they may put them into practice, thus their teaching would be negatively affected and therefore, their students' learning too. For these reasons, it is recommended to address teachers' beliefs during training programs in order to confront or prevent misconceived or erroneous teaching beliefs that can influence negatively on teachers' future teaching classes and consequently affect their students learning (Liao, 2007; Barrios, 2014; Inceçay, 2011; Debreli, 2011).

We conclude that teachers' prior learning experience is the main factor that influence teachers' beliefs and these beliefs along with other contextual factors, already mentioned, modify teachers' performance. It is necessary to remark despite the fact that all the studies presented in this section were conducted in different countries, some of their findings are similar. Our research sought to analyze teachers' beliefs since it could be beneficial to have a better understanding of the topic and it could lead to an improvement of English teaching techniques and methodologies.

## 2.5 Studies about in-service teachers' beliefs and context influence on teaching strategies

International qualitative studies about in-service teachers' beliefs will be presented. The majority of these studies focused on researching if in-service teachers' beliefs are congruent with the strategies they use in class. Also it will be addressed studies that aimed to know if context and teachers' beliefs are related with teachers' teaching strategies.

Uztosun (2014) conducted a qualitative study with the purpose of profiling whether Turkish in-service EFL teachers' espoused beliefs are congruent with their classroom practices. The author attempted to understand the role of teachers' beliefs in providing particular kind of teaching procedure. Six elementary English teachers working at state schools in a town located in the Northwest part of Turkey participated in this study. An interview and observations were used in this study as means to collect data, observations were carried out to understand whether teachers address their beliefs while teaching English. The study revealed that the participants agreed on using the target language communicatively should be the main objective of foreign language learning which showed that teachers are in line with curriculum designers. However, the results also indicated that teachers' practices were not congruent with their beliefs because their opinions about ideal teaching did not match their teaching practices. Teachers confirmed that they only focus on structural forms of the target language, but this is because there are factors that do not allow them to teach as they believe is better for their students. The lack of importance of the language in Turkey, time constraints, overload syllabus, preparing for the exam, the lack of resources, large classes, course book, and the status of English also obstructed teachers to follow a communicative teaching environment.

Thomson (2012) carried out a research to solve the problem of how to teach the Primary Years Program (PYP) workshop to children who do not speak English or the language of instruction. The aimed of the study was to raise teacher awareness of the strategies and techniques that could be used to support the language development of young learners. The participants were ten teachers, eight women and two men, nine were working in the European region and one in the Pacific region. All participants worked in schools which were implementing the PYP and the language of instruction at each school was English. The data was collected by mean of lesson observations, teacher interviews, PYP Coordinator

interviews and field notes. The finding revealed that during lesson observations all participants used different types of language (asking open and closed questions, responding to and repeating student answers, giving instructions, etc.). Furthermore, important language teaching strategies and techniques were also used during participants' lessons (vocabulary checks, eliciting, modeling of target language, modeling of activities, error correction, elaborate input, etc.). The author concluded that, although participants are working from the same framework there are certain contextual factors that will influence the way they carry out the program. The aspects that might contribute to the types of language teachers use and the strategies and techniques they apply in the classroom are the individual teacher's beliefs, their education and experience of teaching and language teaching, the language levels of students and the types of interaction in the classroom that take place between the teacher and student.

Chiang (2003) conducted a research to examine how context and teachers' beliefs contribute to Taiwanese English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers' practices at the elementary school level. The participants were four EFL teachers, three experienced teachers and a novice teacher. The data was collected on an ongoing daily basis during data-gathering in order to stay current with data emerging from interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, informal and email conversations, and informants' stimulated recalls from watching their videotaped classroom instruction. The results revealed that the "four English teachers conceptualized practice in concert with their personal beliefs about English learning, teaching, their teacher role, and unique context factors; besides, it was found that teachers offered highly similar classroom practices because the constraints of current elementary English teaching did not allow them to put their beliefs into practice." (Chiang, 2003, p.60).

Childs (2011) conducted a research to explore the nature of second language teacher learning and development from a sociocultural perspective as it occurred with teachers engaged in the activity of teaching. The participants in this study were three males, two of them were Ph.D. candidates and the other one was a novice second language teacher with a master degree. These SL teachers were exposed to a sociocultural theory in both their preparation experiences and their graduate program coursework. The data sources comprised of reflective journals, qualitative interviews, stimulated recall reports, email correspondence,



lesson plans, weekly meetings with the supervising professor, and classroom observations. The results showed the existence of differences in what and how teachers learned even though they participated in the same professional development program. According to the author, those differences in teachers' learning were "mediated by time, their individual language learning and instructional histories, the support systems that were part of their professional development experiences, and the agency each teacher chose to exert on the activity systems mediating his learning experiences" (Childs, 2011, p.145).

Mostly all the participants of these studies were teachers who teach English to elementary students. Uztosun (2014) pointed out that teachers' practices were not congruent with their beliefs. This is similar to the findings in Gao's study (2014). This author stated that connection between teacher's beliefs and instruction is inconsistent. According to Uztosun the reason why their participants' beliefs about ideal teaching did not match their teaching practices is because there are factors that do not allow them to teach the way they think it should be. Thomson's findings (2012) agreed with the fact that there are factors that have an influence on deciding what type of language and teaching strategies teachers used. In Chiang's study (2003, p.vii) it was found that their participants 'conceptualized practice in concert with their personal beliefs about English learning, English teaching, their teacher's role, and some unique contextual factors in their class'. However, Chiang also found that teachers do not perform according to those beliefs because of the constraints on current Elementary English teaching in southern Taiwan.

In this section, we also examined a study related to the development of SL teachers' learning that occurred when they engaged in the activity of teaching. Child's findings (2011) revealed differences in what and how the teachers learned even though they participated in the same professional development program. The author remarked that "teacher learning is a process that is unique to each individual teacher mediated by time, by the significance of prior language learning and teaching experiences, and by the individual agency of teachers as they engage in particular contexts" (Child, 2011, p.145). This statement makes reference to how teachers develop their teaching learning during their training and remarks that their prior learning and teaching experiences are part of their learning process. It may be of importance to take into consideration this information because understanding teacher's learning process before and during his/her training would lead to a better comprehension of

his/her performance in class. Therefore, teaching training programs should give relevance to this topic because if teachers reach a successful learning this may conduct to an effective and appropriate teaching.

In addition, Uztoşun (2014) pointed out that some of the factors that obstruct teachers to follow a communicative teaching environment are the lack of importance of the English language in a country, time constraints, overload syllabus, preparing for the exam, the lack of resources, large classes, course book, and the status of English. Some contextual factors mentioned in Thomson' study (2012) are the individual teachers' beliefs, their education and experience of teaching a language, the language levels of students and the types of interaction in the classroom that take place between the teacher and student. According to the literature in this section, we conclude that there are some factors that limit teachers to put into practice their teaching belief and possibly contribute to the decision of the strategies and techniques they apply in the classroom.

## 2.6 Mexican studies about teachers' teaching beliefs

In this section we will present two Mexican qualitative studies about EFL in-service teachers' beliefs. They focused on exploring teachers' teaching and learning beliefs as well as their professional development. These studies could help to identify what variables affect the context in which language beliefs are developed.

Peña (2007) explored the perceptions of five EFL tutors in a Mexican University about language teaching, learning and their professional development. A hybrid instrument was used from a qualitative approach: a questionnaire and email-based interview. In her findings, the author found that teachers believe a teacher is a source of knowledge and "that a central characteristic of good language teaching and good language teachers is the fact that they place a great importance on students' needs, interests, likes and dislikes" (Peña, 2007, p.22). It was discovered that even though teachers use textbooks and the program syllabus, they also use their own criteria for the lesson planning and agree that lesson planning can be adapted mid-class. Regarding evaluation, participants stated relying on what they observed from their students in order to adapt the class and self-evaluate themselves as teachers. It was also found that attending conferences, seminars and courses were the most popular ways to improve professional development. Apart from that, teachers gave conferences,

experimented in class, improved their language and learned from peers in order to improve their performance.

Cota (2013) developed a research about EFL teaching and learning beliefs of eight social service practitioners from the Foreign Language Department at the Universidad de Sonora, Mexico. It aimed to identify the skills learned and developed by the teachers after one semester of practice. For the data collection, it was used a twelve-statement questionnaire from Lightbown and Spada (1999). Also individual interviews were used with the goal of expanding and verifying the information on the questionnaires. The findings from the questionnaires showed that practitioners believe learning a language as soon as possible was important in order to succeed, grammar should be considered a linear process and that learners' motivation is important. The data collected from the interviews confirmed most of these but also added new beliefs such as the importance of being responsible at learning and that teachers should use the right methodology based on the different learning styles. Regarding the performance, it was found that some teachers managed to gain more insight into their teaching and put into practice their ideas, however the author did not elaborate into this.

From these authors it can be concluded that teachers think a good teacher is the one who is interested on his students and cares about their learning (Peña, 2007; Cota, 2013). These authors also found that teachers sought to improve their performance by giving and attending conferences, practicing their language outside the classroom, learning from peers and students, and sometimes experimenting in class. Finally, it was discovered that teachers believe English should be learnt as soon as possible and that learners are also responsible for their learning (Cota, 2013).

## 2.7 Mexican studies about students' EFL teaching and learning beliefs

It was decided to include studies on pre-service teachers' beliefs because research studies focused on novice teachers beliefs in a Mexican context are scarce. This studies will be of help because the participants of these studies graduated from the same program ours did. Thus that would help to understand the context in which our subjects were trained.

Narváez (2009) conducted a mixed approach research on approximately 75 BA degree in English cohort students beliefs about teaching English and English teachers in the state of Quintana Roo. A voiced research approach was used (Narváez, 2006). The study sought to create an understanding from the perspective of the informants' frame of reference. The study aimed to know which factors influenced students' learning. The study was conducted for eight months in which four different methods of data collection were used: Purposeful conversations, Diary Analysis, In-depth conversations and Involvement and Participation from the author in students circles in order to obtain experiential data. After the eight months, the findings showed that according to students; teachers are central figures for students and as such, they must promote learning. Also it was found that motivation and the attendance of students to classes depend on teachers' passion towards their job and their ability to teach students in a meaningful, interesting way rather than the class topic itself. According to the author, students are greatly influenced by the way a teacher treats them and the way the class is taught. However, such beliefs often come from the prior-learning experience of students, affecting what students believe to be "the right way to teach" (p.203).

Rojas and Reyes (2009) analyzed the beliefs of 107 students in an English class from English Language major at the Universidad de Quintana Roo about Learning English as a Foreign language in order to raise teachers' awareness towards the beliefs their students might hold about language learning. The research was conducted within a normative approach by means of a quantitative approach. A modified, Spanish-translated version of BALLI questionnaire was applied for the data collection. The results showed that most students think of English as a language of medium difficulty to learn and it was easier for children to learn the language, although the majority of the participants believed they possessed the ability to learn the language, as well. Many of the participants stated that learning English was a matter of learning vocabulary, grammar and translating from one language to another. They also supported the importance of repetition and practice the language outside the classroom. Most of the students remained neutral at the statement that it was necessary to learn the culture in order to properly learn the language while most of them agreed on the statement that it was necessary to do extra exercises and consult sources other than their books and teacher to improve their learning. Regarding the gender as a factor

affecting beliefs it was discovered that there was no significant difference between beliefs of men and women.

Reyes, Murrieta and Hernandez (2009) investigated about English Learning beliefs of 175 English Language major students from the Universidad de Quintana Roo, under a normative approach with the goal of having empirical data that contributed to improve EFL teaching and learning. From a quantitative approach, a questionnaire based on the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt, 1998) was applied in order to range the students beliefs about English learning in 5 typologies: Transmission, Learning, Development, Formation and Radical Change. In their findings, the authors discovered that some of the most accepted theories in each typology among students are that English should be practiced, spoken correctly and seen not only as something that must be learnt but to seek how to improve society by it. Most of the subjects believe learners should be self-confident on their learning skills in order to learn English and that language is learnt mostly by achieving objectives. Learners previous knowledge of the language was considered as very important, as well. The participants also stated teachers should be able to have a high level of proficiency on English, use class activities that reflect real-world context and supports his students. Almost all students stated they often translate the language from their mother tongue.

Reyes and Reyes (2010) carried out a qualitative study to analyze the beliefs and expectations that ten freshmen of the English language major at the Universidad de Quintana Roo held about the major. In this research a phenomenological approach was used. For three months, drawings and recorded interviews were used to make a deep analysis of the beliefs of the participants. The result of the study allowed the construction of nine categories or dimensions according to the students answers: (1) Learn English means that you will find a well-paid job, (2) Nowadays, it is important to learn many languages, (3) You can achieve everything if you put enough effort, (4) Everyone can learn a language, (5) Learning a language takes time, (6) Strategies are important in order to learn a language, (7) Beliefs can develop and change, (8) A good English teacher should be strict and make use of mother tongue along with English to teach, (9) U.S. culture is not appealing. The interviews also revealed that the students' experience to learn English has been difficult; however, they hold the belief that if they work hard to better their English, they can improve in time.

In conclusion, the studies carried out in Mexico showed that English is seen as important in order to be successful in life and as such is must be learnt as soon as possible. Regarding students' beliefs about English teaching and learning, subjects seem to think that the responsibility about learners' motivation and interest on English falls mostly on the teacher's performance (Narváez, 2007) who is expected to have a sufficient amount of proficiency on English (Reyes et al., 2009). Reyes and Reyes (2010) found as well, that students expect teachers to use their mother tongue along with English Language to teach them and that their subjects beliefs that with enough effort, they could learn English. Narváez (2007) found that students' beliefs have about their teacher often come from their prior-learning experience of the students. Rojas and Reyes (2009) and Reyes and Reyes (2010) found that most students do not consider learning the culture of English speaking countries as useful in order to learn the language. Rojas and Reyes (2009), Reyes et al. (2009) and Reyes and Reyes (2010) found that the language should be practiced a lot and put sufficient effort in order to learn it.

## 2.8 Research studies about the NPEES in the state of Quintana Roo

In the state, some studies have studied the development of the National Program of English in Elementary Schools (NPEES) since its creation in the state (Polanco & Valdez, 2006; Perales, Reyes & Murrieta, 2012; Reyes, Murrieta & Hernández, 2012, Reyes & Murrieta, 2014). These studies have sought to keep track of the program in order to know about its development through the years since its creation.

In 2006, Polanco and Valdez analyzed the benefits the Program of English in Elementary Schools (PEES) would bring to the state. They explained that this program was established in order to “guarantee an effective children's learning of English that matched the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, (CEFR) standards” (2006, p.201). The authors stated that the PEES sought to provide teachers with the necessary, training, tools and thus knowledge to ensure children receive an EFL education of quality. The program was divided into six stages; the first stage started in 2007 with only 20 public elementary schools, while the last stage was expected to include 180 schools within the program in 2013. The PEES was later integrated into the NPEES.

In 2012, Perales, Reyes and Murrieta conducted a qualitative exploratory study of the NPEES in Quintana Roo in an attempt to identify instances of power struggle and ideology that would yield an initial description and data for further research (2012, p.1) The study had an ethnographic, critical approach and used interviews as a research tool applied to the administrator of the program, to five teachers and three parents in order to have multiple perspectives. The results were divided into four main categories: a) Funding issues, b) curriculum and pedagogical issues, c) Negotiation of English entry in schools, and d) ideologies about English. The authors found the NPEES was facing some problems such as operating with minimal funding and negotiating the entry of English in elementary schools. Regarding curriculum issues it was revealed NPEES curriculum and teacher training was “largely controlled by an international ELT publishing company” resulting in a poor teacher training and teacher supervisors with little academic -training (Perales et al., 2012, p.7) . It was also found NPEES administration was the site of power struggle. Despite these problems, interviewed parents saw English as an advantage for their children and supported the program.

Reyes, Murrieta and Hernandez (2012) explored the context of the English language programs in elementary schools in Mexico, looked into the origins of this tendency, the kind of international and national linguistic policies that have an influence on the integration of the English language into the basic education curriculum, and the implications this action entails. The findings of this study were scarce revealing very few studies had addressed the topic. The authors found that, before NPEES was officially established, there were combined efforts from different states of the country and some organizations to establish a homogenous English program in the country. From their findings, the authors concluded that the program was experiencing problems such as unrealistic language policies, funding and expectations for a successful children’s learning of English. It was also revealed most elementary English teachers working in the program were not proficiently enough in English.

Reyes and Murrieta (2014) conducted a qualitative, exploratory study about the problems that primary English teachers faced in classrooms. The study was conducted by means of interviewing six men and six women three times each. The interviews lasted for around five hours each and the findings were analyzed with the help of the Atlas.ti program. Among their findings, it was found that teachers were not provided with sufficient training

and equipment to teach. Regarding problems due to students, they often came from families of poor economic solvency and this made difficult for the students to acquire the material suggested by the school worsening the situation for teachers since they have to adapt to the already struggling lack of material. Also, in the school where those teachers worked English was not included as a main subject in the schools' curricula and it was taught outside the schedule. Therefore, many students were not keen to attend classes since it meant staying even more time at schools. All of these problems, along with poor job benefits and the rejection from the teachers of the main subjects towards English teachers discouraged them.

As can be seen, even though it is almost a decade since the NPEES started in the State of Quintana Roo few research studies have been carried out. This may mean we do not have enough information so as to determine how well the program has been run during all these years, its effectiveness and impact among administrators, teachers, students and parents. However it is shown that the program has experienced some problems due to their relatively recent creation at the time the previous studies were conducted. These problems ranged from unrealistic language policies, curriculum issues and insufficient funding (Perales et al., 2012; Reyes et al., 2012) to power struggles (Perales et al., 2012) and unrealistic expectations about children's learning (Reyes et al., 2012).



## CHAPTER III

### Method

In this chapter the methodology and research design of this study will be presented. It contains the description of the participants, the instrument, the procedure and the type of analysis used for this research.

#### 3.1 Characteristics of an exploratory study from a qualitative perspective

The exploratory research investigates a problem that has not been clearly defined. Creswell (2007) states that qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning of individuals and groups. This is, it first explores the context in which the research study is set. By doing this, a closer interaction with the participants is reached. Since a deep understanding of the topic is the aim of this kind of studies, the number of the participants tend to be a small one.

According to Barcelos (2003), in the contextual approach, and from a qualitative design context, a crucial and one of the best tools to allow in-depth data collection is an interview since, according to Maxwell (2005, p.23), “the goal of the qualitative researcher is to find out how  $x$  plays a role in causing  $y$  and what process connects them rather than finding out whether and to what extent variance  $x$  causes variance in  $y$ ”.

#### 3.2 Qualitative research method

As far as we know, EFL teaching and learning beliefs of novice teachers have not been addressed in a Mexican context, thus there is no much information about it. Given this situation, it was decided to approach the topic from an exploratory qualitative design.

The approach to the topic we chose required first the review of literature related to the topic so as to try to understand more about the topic that is being searched and to try to relate it to any existing theory (Kowalczyk, 2015). Then interviews were carried out with each of the participants of this study. To guide our analysis of the data we followed the steps proposed by Reyes, Hernández and Yeladaqui (2011) who propose the following steps for

the analysis of the data: first, an open coding, then axial coding, and in the end the selective coding (Reyes, Hernández & Yeladaqui, 2011).

### 3.3 Context

This study was carried out with some of the teachers working at the National Program of English in Elementary Schools in the State of Quintana Roo, specifically in the Capital City of the Mexican State, Chetumal. The main office of the NPEES in the state of Quintana Roo is located in the City of Chetumal. The capital city of State of Quintana Roo is mainly a governmental city. The government secretariats and a campus of one of the State Universities, are the main sources of jobs opportunities. Chetumal, Quintana Roo is not a touristic place so English is not a language that may be commonly used in the streets.

### 3.4 Participants

The informants of this research were four novice EFL teachers that were working in the National English Program in Elementary Schools (NPEES) at the time this research project started. The participants were one woman and three men. All of them were teaching at public elementary schools with less than two years of teaching experience. Their age ranged between 23 and 27 years old. While two of them graduated of an English Language major at the Universidad de Quintana Roo, the other two are still in the major.

### 3.5 Instruments

Since the objective of the research was to explore EFL teaching and learning beliefs from a qualitative, contextual approach, it was decided to use semi-structured interviews as an instrument to identify the EFL teaching and learning beliefs of the participants. A guide was used for the interviews, this questionnaire was reviewed by our coordinator.

The validation of the instrument was conducted by means of two piloting interviews under the supervision of the thesis director. At the end of each interview, the director provided feedback on the interviews and they were modified accordingly. The results of these interviews helped us to have a better notion of how an interview should be conducted, with the information learned from these experiences we modified the questions for the interview

since we realized that some of them were too specific and repetitive; therefore, some of the questions were rewritten and we widened each section of the interview to have a better structure. The director revised the changes done afterwards. The piloting interviews were conducted between May 29th and June 1<sup>st</sup> at the facilities of the Universidad de Quintana Roo (UQROO). These interviews also helped to practice, gain confidence, improve our interview skills and the questionnaire designed for it. The volunteered interviewees were two young female English teachers who have almost two years of pre-school teaching experience in the PNIEB program, and were new graduate students of the UQROO Bachelor English Language Degree. There were three people during the piloting interviews: the thesis director, and two interviewers. One of the interviewers carried out the interviews and the other one recorded the conversations, took notes and assisted with the interviews when required.

During the interviews we identified information about the five interview sections. For instance, we found about how a language is learned, it should be taught and what a good English teacher's profile should be, this is according to the interviewees' beliefs.

The new modified questionnaire was reviewed once more time and approved by our director. After that, we proceeded with the interviews. All participants were interviewed once and each interview lasted around 50 minutes, the interviews were conducted during the months of June and July.

### 3.6 Procedure

The participants were informed about the research and invited to participate in an interview. They signed a consent in order to be involved in the research study but each of them was given an alias in order to ensure their anonymity. Each informant was interviewed and recorded once at Universidad de Quintana Roo facilities. Then it was proceeded to analyze the data.

### 3.7 Data analysis

Transcribing interviews was used as the first stage of data analysis since Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1989), cited in Creswell (2003, p.205), contend that data collection

and data analysis must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. The interviews were transcribed into Spanish and the extracts for the interviews were then translated to English.

For the analysis there were followed some of coding strategies above mentioned and proposed by Reyes, Hernández and Yeladaqui (2011): open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Since there were too many codes, we reduced them to themes and then to families, in the end, we tried to relate them to the theoretical framework that supports this research (Madison, 2005 and Wolcott, 2001). The data from the transcribed interviews were coded and grouped into families in order to identify the main beliefs of our participants and their context. Then the findings were compared with those in the reviewed literature for further insight. It is important to remark that the data were continuously coded during almost the entire duration of the data analysis process so as to validate the reliability of the data, as suggested by Merriam (1988). Finally, each code family was addressed separately from one another and then altogether in order to find patterns. We then tried an interpretation of the data and drew conclusions about teachers' beliefs individually but also as a group when it was possible.

The theory or general pattern of understanding emerges as it begins with initial codes, develops into broad themes, and coalesces into a broad interpretation. Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative. This includes developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning personally and theoretically, stating the lessons learned, and offering further questions to be asked (Wolcott, 1995). It also means that we, as the researchers, filter the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment. One cannot escape the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis and discussion of the findings

#### 4.1 Description of the informants

For this research, four novice teachers of English as a foreign language were interviewed. All four teachers teach English in primary schools as part of the National Program of English in Elementary Schools (NPEES). NPEES teachers' teaching experience ranges from one to two years. Some of the teachers that participated in this study had not finished their major at the moment of conducting this research, but some of them studied English Language Major in the Universidad de Quintana Roo in Mexico. The names of the teachers have been changed in order to ensure their privacy: Hazel, Tavo, Angel and Mike.

##### 4.1.1 Participants' profiles

Hazel is a 23-year-old woman. She was born in the state of Veracruz, a Mexican state in the center of the country. She moved to the state of Quintana Roo and has been living with her parents in the capital city of the state, Chetumal, for twenty-one years. Her mother tongue is Spanish but she also speaks English, French and Italian as foreign languages. She is the only participant in this research that took private English classes before deciding to study an English major. She graduated one year before this study was conducted of the English Language B.A. of the Universidad de Quintana Roo. She has IELTS and TKTYL certifications, the courses for those certificates were given by the NPEES. By the time this research study began, Hazel was working as an English teacher in two different public elementary schools which are part of the NPEES, she had one year of teaching experience at the NPEES. She was in charge of nine groups, she teaches English to around 300 elementary students weekly. Besides, she gave private English classes to teenagers and adults. She thinks of herself as a responsible and serious teacher. Since very young, she wanted to be a teacher, she pointed out that her interest in being a teacher may be have been influenced by the fact that she came from a family of teachers.

Tavo was born in Tabasco, a southern state of Mexico but he has been living in the state of Quintana Roo for more than 12 years. He is a 23-year-old man whose mother tongue

is Spanish but also speaks English. Alike Hazel, he graduated a year before this study was conducted from the English Language B.A. of the Universidad de Quintana Roo. He recently obtained an IELTS's certification. He has worked as an English teacher in two different public elementary schools that are part of the NPEES, and is in charge of nine groups, he teaches English to around 300 elementary students weekly. Tavo thinks of himself as a good English teacher who enjoys giving classes to elementary learners, but who also believes that he needs to broaden his teaching knowledge and enhance his teaching strategies to improve his English classes. He did not mention in the interview the reason that motivated him to study the English Language major and work as an English teacher. However, it is known from external conversations that he did not want to be an English teacher. He did mention in the interview that he likes the English language since middle school.

Mike is a 24-year-old male. He was born in the southern state of Quintana Roo, Mexico. The mother tongue of his parents is Maya while he speaks Spanish as his mother tongue. He has been working for one year in the NPEES although he has not finished studying the English Language major. He teaches to approximately 300 students ranging from nine to thirteen years old weekly. He teaches to five groups. He decided to enter the NPEES because he needed a job, he chose the NPEES out of curiosity. Before enrolling on the English Language major, he started in a major in Engineering. After some time, he realized that major was not something he wanted to study and he switched to the English Language Major. He does not consider English as something important and he does not seem to be widely convinced of being studying the English language major. He is the only one in his family that continued his studies after high school.

Angel is a 26-year-old male, who lives in Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico. He was born in the town of Umay, in the southern state of Quintana Roo, Mexico. He is married and has a daughter. He also has four sisters and one brother. The mother tongue of his family is Maya as well as his. He learned Spanish in elementary school and once he started middle school he learned English as a third language. He has been working in the NPEES for a year. There he teaches around 200 students that range from first to fourth grade. He is in charge of seven groups. He is still studying English language major in the Universidad de Quintana Roo. He decided to enter the NPEES due to economic problems. He also teaches Maya and

English courses at the Universidad de Quintana Roo. Angel thinks that learn English language is something important, this is why he decided to study English Language major.

Our participants are all young teachers whose first job was working as a teacher in the NPEES. Even though they do not foreseen this program as a future and permanent job they all coincide with the fact that working as a teacher in this program has helped them to first: realized how much they like being a teacher, put into practice the knowledge they learned during their formal training and, most important, identify the areas the need to be trained on so as to improve their teaching performance.

Following, the analysis and the discussion of the data regarding four novice English teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning will be presented. The participants were Angel, Tavo, Mike and Hazel. They work as English language teachers at different public elementary schools which are part of the NPEES.

The findings will be addressed under five dimensions based on our research questions: a) Beliefs about English language teaching, b) Beliefs about English language learning, c) English teaching strategies, d) Origin of EFL teaching and learning beliefs and e) Changes in EFL teaching and learning beliefs.

## 4.2 Teaching Beliefs

In this dimension, we will discuss novice EFL teachers' beliefs about EFL classes, what EFL teaching to children means for them, EFL teachers' characteristics, and the factors that may have an effect on EFL teaching.

### 4.2.1 Novice teachers' beliefs about EFL classes

Regarding the meaning of teaching a foreign language, Mike explains teaching English is a complex activity that is taught differently from other subjects and should follow a specific order.

When I started college, I had no idea about the structure of an English class. So I noticed it [teaching a language] was kind of different to other classes because it should include different stages. First something comes, then something else; thus, there is an order. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

I start the class with a warm-up; a song. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

Third graders are capable of reading and writing already; I use music or dictation for warm-up. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

In our participants' opinion, apart from following a sequence, an EFL class should include game-related activities, as well as a variety of visual materials. For our participants, an EFL class' order is an essential characteristic of a language class. For them, an English class should have a structure based on three stages; all of them said that a warm-up is needed as an opening activity followed by the development of the class and a wrap-up stage. However, only Hazel and Mike mentioned wrap-up as the final stage.

Well, I teach as I learnt; teaching is based on three stages and also include some games and visual activities. [...] Warm-up, activities and a wrap-up where they can practice what they just learnt. (Mike, personal communication, June 1, 2015)

I start my classes with a warm-up: a song or game to allow students to connect with me as teacher. [...] I finish my classes with a song or a wrap-up from the subject seen in class. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

It is important to take into account that our participants study in the same English Language major, therefore a possible reason of the coincidence in their teaching strategies could mean they may have been instructed in a similar way. Even though they expressed they started to teach based on their personal schooling experience, as time went by, they explained their beliefs became complex as a result of their formal training.

#### 4.2.2 English teaching children

None of the four participants provided a straightforward explanation of what teaching children means. Nevertheless, their beliefs about what teaching children means seem to be quite different among them. For them, EFL teaching is based on commitment, discipline and practice and these aspects influence the way they conduct their teaching.

It is great to teach children because they give you love and tenderness and that motivates you as a teacher, it motivates you to give your best in your job. [...] I have to leave an imprint on



them and I have noticed that I have achieved it thanks to my teaching. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Angel expresses full commitment to his students because he is worried about their learning and therefore his own teaching. He has the strong belief that being kind towards students helps to keep them motivated to learn. These findings are in accord with those in Chiang's study (2003) and Horwitz (1985) and Yang (2000) quoted by Chiang. Their participants saw that "motivating students to learn is a primary goal for the beginning elementary level" Chiang (2003, p.251). This reinforces Angel's idea that motivation is important when teaching children.

Hazel and Tavo believe teaching is strongly related to discipline and to a successful teaching environment.

Discipline [is important in teaching]. Because when they are quiet and calm, they pay attention to what you tell them and teach them. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

There are children that misbehave, thus you need to be very strict in order to make them listen to you. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

Hazel and Tavo think children should behave at all times in order to allow teaching. To achieve this, it is necessary to be strict with children so as to be able to discipline them. These findings are somewhat similar to the ones in Shinde and Karekatti (2012). Half of their teacher participants from two different languages agreed with the belief that primary teachers should be very strict in order to maintain discipline in the classroom. Shinde and Karekatti stated that teachers who are firm and scold students in order to maintain the control of large classes are, at some extent, right because it helps to keep them disciplined.

It seems that having a large class as well as the age of the students affect discipline. Just like in Shinde and Karekatti's study our participants are primary teachers and their students' age ranged from six to eleven years old. Thus, since Hazel and Tavo manage large groups of young students they seem to think they need to be strict in order to make children behave and learn, however, this is contrary to what Piaget stated about children's learning. Piaget, as cited in Cameron (2001) and Pinter (2006), stated that children need to interact

with environment and take action into activities in order to assimilate the information and successfully learn. In this sense, playing and moving around are important aspects of children's learning and, as such, teachers should know how to include playing in their teaching instead of trying to teach children as adults and expect them to be quiet at all times.

Practicing is another important element in teaching, as Tavo and Mike pointed out.

If you are going to teach a language, it means practicing the language. Make your students practice the language with the teacher. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

A child learning a foreign language only has the chance to practice it inside the classroom [...] The teacher arrives at the classroom, teaches the lesson; but then they have a 50-minute class and after that, the child does not practice. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

For these two teachers, successful teaching means students should practice a lot. They believe that if their students do not practice they will not learn the language. These findings concur with those in Yang's study (2000) and Kern's (1995) cited by Yang. Both authors found that their participants' beliefs coincided that it is important to practice because one cannot learn without practicing. This means teachers coincide on their beliefs regarding the need for practice to learn a language, even if they are from very different contexts.

We consider that Tavo and Mike base their teaching on the previous belief. According to the literature reviewed, it seems language teachers around the world also believed that it is important to practice the target language in order to learn it. Tavo, Mike and the participants in Yang's study (2000) and Kern's study (1995) cited in Yang share this belief despite the fact they come from different contexts.

Another belief our novice EFL teachers hold is that teaching children is not easy.

Teaching children is really tiring and stressful. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

Fourth grade is a little difficult because children misbehave sometimes. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

The most difficult part of teaching practice is lesson planning and designing material. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Teaching children is very demanding. It takes a lot of time and demands a lot from us as teachers. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

You think teaching children is easy but then you do it and you realize it is not. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

All our participants agreed that teaching children is not easy, they claim it is a tiring, demanding and stressful job. In the interviews, teachers also commented that they lack the knowledge about how to teach children and this made their jobs difficult. According to the participants, the training they received did not give them the necessary knowledge to teach children, causing them to struggle at work. Consequently they claim the need to make some improvements to the English language major curricula, such as providing students with more and better teaching strategies and discipline techniques for children, the preparation of didactic material for all ages and more teaching practice in real contexts. According to them, these changes could help future EFL teacher to be better trained to teach children.

#### 4.2.3 Characteristics of a good English teacher

This section presents characteristics that our participants believe a good EFL teacher should have in order to teach children properly. In general, they believe an EFL teacher should be tolerant, patient, strict and energetic, as well as creative, kind and passionate about his or her job. Besides, they also think a teacher should be well-trained to perform a good job, be able to create a good atmosphere where students feel comfortable while learning, be really committed to teach English to children and enjoy doing it. Despite the fact they believe those should be the characteristics of an EFL teacher they did not describe themselves as such.

You need to be quite tolerant of children, you need to be patient and have a strong character to be able to discipline them, without being harsh. [...] Also someone [an EFL teacher should be someone] who has a lot of energy to be cheerful all the time, keep the tone of voice strong enough and stay active for the children. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

Someone patient that has a real interest in teaching. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

You need to be skilled enough to make the classroom and the class fun, where children feel comfortable, free, have no worries and enjoy learning. Teachers that are qualified, patient and who love teaching. Also, they must be creative and capable of transmitting their confidence and motivation to children. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

If teachers like their job, then they can do it well. Any teacher who has the motivation to work with children is capable of teaching, but they need to be passionate about it, otherwise it can be difficult. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

Similar to teachers from Kocaman's and Cansiz's (2012), Chen's (2005) and Erkmen (2010) studies, our four novice teachers claimed holding different beliefs about what the characteristics of an EFL teacher should be but, at the same time, shared the belief that an EFL teacher should be patient and very interested in performing a good job. The participants in Kocaman and Cansiz's study hold too the belief that being patient is one of the most important personal traits a successful EFL teacher of children possess. In Reyes and Reyes' study (2010), the participants hold this same belief. In this research it was found that their participants, who were freshman from the English language major, also believed that a good English teacher should be patient and approachable.

Three of the interviewed teachers defined their roles as language teachers according to different aspects of their lives and to what they believe in. Hazel sees herself as an independent teacher which seems to be related to the way she learned and she was as a learner. Angel sees himself as a committed teacher who really wants to transmit his knowledge to his students which is aligned to his teaching and learning beliefs. In the case of Tavo, he thinks being a teacher means playing many different roles at the same time; for him a teachers must be a guide, a model, a teacher and even a psychologist. Tavo's way of thinking may be related to his passion for teaching and for being able to address his different students' needs. Tavo's belief teachers having to play the role of a psychologist is shared by Chen's research participants (2005). Chen's research participants believe teachers should have a psychological counselor function, just as Tavo said. Being a psychologist is necessary so as to reduce students' fear or rejection towards learning English, strengthen students' intention in learning English and keep students' motivation to learn English.

Despite the fact that not all of our participants seem to match the characteristics they believe a good EFL teacher should have, they still think of themselves good EFL teachers. This contradiction supports Xu's statement when he explains that even though teachers hold inconsistent, conflicting and even contradictory beliefs, they still see themselves as good teachers (2012, p.1398).

All our interviewees remarked they were not well-trained in their bachelor degree, so they lack knowledge about how to teach children and thus have to deal with discipline issues. According to Cameron (2001, p.xii), "primary teachers need to understand how children make sense of the world and how they learn; they need skills of analyzing learning tasks and of using language to teach new ideas to groups and classes to children". The author also emphasizes that a good primary teacher needs specific skills to teach children, skills such as being able to manage children and keep them on task, plus language teaching and learning knowledge (2001). This means our teachers' beliefs about the characteristics a good language teacher should have are confirmed by Cameron.

Korthagen, quoted in Xu (2012, p.1398), stated that "teachers are likely to be the most effective when their beliefs are aligned with each other and with the field". Therefore, this may imply that our participants lack effectiveness because their beliefs about the characteristics of a good EFL teacher are not aligned with their personal characteristics.

#### 4.2.4 Factors that difficult teaching

In this section we will analyze and discuss factors that may have an influence on teachers' performance. These factors are categorized in five main topics: a) lack of proper training, b) disciplinary problems with children, c) low salary, d) unrealistic curriculum mandates and e) lack of status of English teachers in Mexico.

##### Lack of proper teaching training

Tavo and Hazel admitted having problems mostly due to a lack of proper training.

Well, I have had problems with routine. But also, children get bored and I have to look for new activities; games, in order to keep them interested in the class. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

As any new teacher [...] I have experienced a lot of problems with everything: planning, material design and keeping up with the NPEES objectives. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

As hinted before, Tavo and Hazel seem not to have had an extensive teacher training and this makes it difficult for them to know what strategy to use and when. According to Thompson (2012), if teachers participate in language teacher training program, the knowledge acquired from the training will have a significant influence on teachers' decisions on what type of approach and strategies teachers should use in their classes. Thus, this would mean that the training our participants went through was not meaningful or sufficient, and that is why teachers may fail to develop the proper skills and confidence to face the problems they encounter in teaching. Our teachers' beliefs may then reflect a clear lack of knowledge and training among our EFL novice teachers even after having finished a bachelors' program.

#### Disciplinary problems with children

According to the participants of this study, lack of discipline with children is a common factor that affects daily teaching. Tavo was very emphatic when relating this problem to children's behavior while being at school, "I started teaching in the morning class and I realized students behave differently, they do obey".

There are groups that lose control of themselves. I did not know what activity to use with them to keep them under control. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

It is really tiring to keep talking and be aware of the bad behavior. It is necessary to constantly scold them. When you teach to 90 children a day, if five children misbehave and in another classroom there are more children that misbehave as well, it's chaos; it is not easy. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

When teaching children you need to deal with discipline a lot. You spend half of the class managing discipline and the other half giving the class. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

The amount of time our participants have to spend on scolding and dealing with students concurs with the findings in OECD (2009). In that study it was found that one in four teachers in most countries spend from 30% to 50% of the lesson time in disruptions.

Regarding Tavo's belief that discipline is influenced by the time-period they attend school (morning class or afternoon class), we may explain this by the well-known fact that, in Mexico, students who have low grades are not usually allowed to register before those with better grades, thus they register last and end up attending afternoon-class which in our opinion is a segregating measure that impacts children's learning and teachers' performance. We think that this registration practice influences the belief that students in afternoon-classes are worse behaved than those in the morning class.

#### Low salary

All four teachers stated receiving very low salary for their teaching job in this program. This forces teachers to teach many groups, thus a teacher may have to teach around a hundred children a day. The high amount of students that teachers have to deal with causes a heavy workload for teachers.

As the English teacher, you have to deal with 40 students in each group. I teach nine different groups, thus, daily you have to deal with around 90 students. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

The groups are huge, they have 30 or 35 children each. They are too many and the work is demanding. The length of a class is only 50 minutes or one hour and 15 minutes. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

It is very stressful. You need to have many groups so you can make a decent salary and that is stressful in terms of workload. Being in front of the group is not that complicated but grading 300 exams, homework and taking care of all your classes is strenuous. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

As noted, the low salary forces teachers to teach several classes in order to have a sufficient income. However, the high amount of students saturates the teachers' workload and causes discipline problems, as well. This situation drains teachers' motivation, discourages them and affects their teaching performance. Similar factors emerged in Uztosun's (2014), Reyes et al. (2012), Reyes and Murrieta's (2014) studies where it was found that workload, the amount of students, and low salary are factors that influence teachers performance.

## Unrealistic curriculum mandates

Teachers also mentioned that the incongruence between NPEES curriculum mandates and the English education context in Mexico makes their teaching performance difficult.

The entire course is designed to learn English as a foreign language [...] But we as teachers need to adapt it to suit our classes needs. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

The planning comes from the syllabus; in there we have the entire teaching program; the objectives and what the children need to learn and be able to do. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

As our interviewees stated, they have to maintain NPEES syllabus even though it has been designed based on International English language standards and accounts English learning in a context of a Second Language Acquisition instead of a Foreign Language since in Mexico English is a foreign but not a second language. This is a problem because children are expected to be highly knowledgeable in English and teachers need to keep up with such, in our opinion, unrealistic objectives. The city (south in the state of Quintana Roo) where our novice teachers work is not a tourist one thus children will not get any chance to listen to English being spoken outside the classroom. Even though this is a border town with an English speaking country (Belize), people from this Mexican state are not knowledgeable in English. Uztosun (2014) and OECD (2009) identified a similar situation where English teaching curriculum may have caused problems for the teachers' performance in classes since the curriculum was unrealistically designed according to the English language context in the country. In our opinion, this is the case of the English requirements of the NPEES program. A similar situation was found in a study by Castro (2012) conducted in the state of Quintana Roo, where the textbook that teachers were supposed to use according to the program was not well designed for children, and they usually found the classes boring because of this.

## Current English Teachers' status in Mexico

In Mexico, EFL teachers are not part of the National Education Workers Union (NEWU) and as a consequence, English teachers do not have a recognized and official status within schools. This issue affects how teachers are seen by students, parents and colleagues and how



teachers consider themselves as well, this fact would ultimately negatively impact their teaching performance.

We are not seen as teachers by the program, we are seen as English tutors. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

We do not get any recognition from schools. It means that our grades are not in the final and official report cards, so parents and even children think of the language as irrelevant. Thus, when you mention there will be an exam, they either do not go to class or do not study, so this is another area that it would be great to improve. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

As Hazel and Tavo stated, the lack of importance given to the status of English teachers in the country is also present in the NPEES since teachers are referred to as tutors which aggravates the problems teachers already face in classrooms every day. This does not help to build up their self-esteem as a teacher and therefore, improve their performance. Similar findings were revised in Richards and Lockhart (1996), they remarked that at that time English Teaching was not considered a profession. However, the authors stated that, despite this situation, some teachers regarded their profession as official and defended it as such, rising their self-esteem on their own. This was discovered as dependent of the teachers' sense of professionalism.

In this section several difficulties in English language teaching have been analyzed: lack of proper training, disciplinary problems with children, low salary, unrealistic curriculum mandates and the status of English teachers in Mexico. All these problems weaken teachers' authority, performance and profession, further increase the problems teachers have, diminishes their motivation to teach and lead to inadequate learning from students. It is thus necessary to promote strategies to help teachers build up a strong identity to achieve successful teaching.

#### 4.3 Learning Beliefs

This dimension will comprise novice teacher's beliefs about learning itself and how children learn a foreign language. Also the factors that have an effect on learning will be addressed and discussed.

#### 4.3.1 The concept of EFL learning

Regarding learning beliefs, Angel and Hazel hold different beliefs about the learning process itself and about children's learning as a continuous and updating activity.

We need to learn something every day. We always lack something. Sometimes problems arise. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

A person is always learning. Being a teacher does not mean that the learning process is over. Children change as well with the years and as a teacher you need to keep updated. You need to keep up with learning strategies and theories. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

According to the previous quotations, teachers believe it is important to keep their knowledge about language learning theories and techniques updated because they think there is always something useful and new to learn that can help them to improve their performance at their jobs. They believe learning is a continuous action that teachers should always take into account in order to prepare and improve their performance. Peña (2007) discovered that when teachers have the desire to learn more about their profession because they think knowledge a key element in their practice, it may be more likely that they will look for ways to further develop professionally. McGrath (2000) and Barfield et al., (2002) quoted in Peña (2007, p.23), stated that “willingness and a desire for continuous improvement have been considered as some of the characteristics of autonomous teachers”. Therefore, according to these authors, we can interpret that our participants' beliefs about their learning process is a positive perception that will lead them to improve their teaching performance and develop professionally.

#### 4.3.2 Children's EFL learning

With regard to beliefs about how children learn a language, Hazel thinks that children's language learning has certain characteristics such as being fast, easy and that they have an inner ability to learn. She also emphasizes learning changes according to the age of the learner.

Each level of education has a different way of learning. I know about this because I not only teach children but teenagers and adults as well. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

We have learnt that when you are young it is easier to remember and memorize things, it's easier to learn languages. [it is important] Starting to learn a language when you are young because when being an adult or teenager is not that useful. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

Hazel also emphasized that the younger you start learning, the better.

When they [children] are young, they learn everything faster. They have such an all-absorbing mind; you teach them anything and they learn it right at the moment. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26)

Our findings are similar to the ones other researchers found in different contexts such as in Taiwan (Yang, 2000; Chiang, 2003); in United States (Horwitz, 1985; Kern, 1995); in Turkey (Kocaman & Cansiz, 2012); in India (Shinde & Karekatti, 2012). Due to the fact that many studies showed the same findings, we dare to state that beliefs are cross-frontier type, it means that they may be shared by teachers despite the possible differences of context where foreign language learning is being taught. Regarding children's foreign language learning, Cameron (2001) states that in some studies (Harley & Swain, 1994; Lightbown & Spada, 1994; Harley, Howard & Hard, 1995) there was found that children have some advantages above adults in listening and speaking skills, but they learn rather slower than adults on writhing skills. These findings should be noticed by teacher since, despite the general beliefs that children learn faster than adults, children only learn in some areas and teachers should take more time teaching the skills from where children are slower than adults.

When talking about how children learn, all the teachers mentioned they thought children mainly learn through games and listening activities as well as visual materials. Hazel described it in a more precise manner.

They [children] like visuals a lot. [...] [It is necessary] to have a lot of appealing material according to their age and related to the subject. It really catches their attention. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

There is a common teachers' belief that having colorful material in the class favor learning. With regard to this belief, Ramírez (2012) examined several studies (Snow, 2001; Paivio, 1991; Bamford, 2003; Arif and Hashim, 2006; Anglin, Vaez and Cunningham, 2004) that concur with the statement that "visuals help to enhance the language teaching, as well as students' comprehension of the new input. Visual aids also clarify the meaning of words and messages, help in memorizing new vocabulary, and in gaining students attention" (Ramírez, 2012, p.46). Ramírez' study revealed that her participants also use different types of visual aids because they help to improve students' learning, and their classroom dynamics as well as helping teachers to obtain students' attention and increase their motivation. Porter and G. Margaret (1992) cited in Kaçauni (2013) stated that using visual materials express what teachers want to say or teach, these are interesting strategy to help young learners. These authors also explained that "most of what we learn we get through visual medium, so that is why the use of visual materials is very important in teaching English as they commit information to long-term memory". Therefore, according to these authors our participants' belief regarding visual material is a functional belief because it is an effective teaching strategy that enhance children and young students' learning.

This is the kind of belief that would have to be discussed and reflected on while being trained to be teachers at the university. The participants share beliefs about how children learn a language which is easily understood by the fact that the four of them were trained to be teachers in the same English language major.

Almost all the teachers have a strong belief related to the use of songs and games in class. They think those activities allow them to better conduct their classes.

Children learn through games, songs; anything that is not related to school itself. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

Sometimes I teach my class indoors and sometimes outdoors. Outside since an activity or game requires it. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

Mike, however, is the only one who does not relate games to learning because he does not believe those are effective strategies to promote children's learning.

When a teacher of a foreign language enters the classroom, children expect him/her to use games as a learning activity. Then teachers do what children want and it becomes a circle. Only games but nothing of learning. They only learn the vocabulary within the game but they don't really understand it. For children it is just a word. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

Mike teaches English to children from the age of six to eleven years old. He thinks game-related activities are not significant for learning because he believes that children learn vocabulary without understanding the meaning, however, despite the fact that Mike does not believe games are good for children to learn English he uses them to teach. This shows that Mike holds contradictory beliefs between what he thinks and what he actually does.

In Cameron (2001, p.1) it is pointed out that "children will have a go at an activity even when they don't quite understand why or how". According to Cameron's statement, we interpret that when children are in an English game-activity they do not have to understand completely the target topic and that this is a common children language learning process. The context in which children learn does not mean they do not learn during game-activities, as Mike believes. Pinter (2006, p.5) also stated that "children learn through exploration and play" meaning that, contrary to what Mike believes, playing is an important part of children's learning process. Thus, according to these authors, Mike possess a non-functional belief.

Mike's contradiction may be due to many factors. One could be that he is not completely convinced about he becoming a teacher and he may not aware of the value of using game-related activities. In relation to this contradiction we think that Xu's (2012) comment may explain Mike's belief contradiction. The author explains that teachers may simultaneously hold beliefs that are inconsistent, in conflict and even contradictory and still see themselves as a teacher; that is Mike's case, he is not sure about his knowledge and his profession but still thinks of himself as a good teacher. We have already pointed out that Mike claimed he lacks knowledge about how to teach children and that he would like to be better trained. His lack of knowledge about this topic may be due to the fact that he has not finished his major, so he has not completed his formal training.

According to Cameron (2001, p.xii), "primary teachers need to understand how children make sense of the world and how they learn; they need skills of analyzing learning tasks and of using language to teach new ideas to groups and classes to children". The author

also emphasizes that a good primary teacher needs specific skills to teach children, skills such as being able to manage children and keep them on task, plus language teaching and learning knowledge (2001). Therefore, a primary teacher like Mike must possess specific teaching skills and knowledge to teach children.

Apparently, Mike is not a very successful teacher, something that became clear since he did not mention any progress on his students' learning. In fact, he displayed an indifferent attitude during his interview, showing no interest as the other teachers did by talking a lot about their students, their teaching and learning strategies. Moreover, Mike seems not to be aligned with his beliefs which, as stated by Korthagen (2004) cited in Xu (2012) may portray an ineffective teacher. Barcelos (2013, p.7) examined some studies and explained that beliefs are seen as "dynamic and social" and that the context is a paramount aspect that should be considered to understand teachers' beliefs (Riley, 2007; Dufva, 2003) cited in Barcelos (2013). For this, we interpret that since beliefs are not static, Mike's beliefs are possibly changing because he is still a student, he is in the process of acquiring new teaching information and the context where he is learning is in constant change. According to Johnson (2009), Larsen-Freeman (2008), Feryok (2010) cited in Barcelos (2013, p.10-11), "beliefs are fluctuating, i.e., they fluctuate and have a complex trajectory about different aspects at different times. Thus, a teacher or a student may have different beliefs which involve during different times in their teaching and learning process".

#### 4.3.3 Factors affecting children's learning

Diverse factors have an influence on children's learning such as a family environment, economic factors, discipline, motivation and curriculum mandates.

##### Family environment, economy and discipline affecting children's learning

To Tavo, learning is strongly related to emotional and economic situations children are going through at home:

As I said before, children are fast learners, but their learning also depends on their family and availability of resources. There are children who do not have enough money. They come

hungry to school, they are sad or have problems at home. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

The previous results are somewhat similar to Chiang's (2003), Yang's (2000), Berk (1997) and Dunn (1983) as cited in Yang's (2000). This author remarked that parents play an important role in their children's language learning and that they should be involved in their children's English tasks in order to help them with their learning process.

According to our four participant, students from public schools where they teach belong to different social status between medium and low. Family problems and a difficult economic situation seem to be related to students who attend the afternoon class, as Tavo stated. All these problems significantly affect teachers' performance in class. The topic about the afternoon classes was also related to the problems discussed in the Teaching Beliefs dimension.

One of these problems, that is present in learning as well, is related to discipline. According to Hazel, learning is also influenced by the lack of discipline.

Discipline [is a factor that affects children's learning]. Because if they are quiet they pay attention in class. When they misbehave they do not learn. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

Hazel was the only teacher who stated that learning is not possible without discipline. We infer that this belief is related to her lack of effective discipline strategies to manage her classroom properly. Nevertheless, in some cases there are children that misbehave possibly due to external factors such as having problems at home, coming from a violent environment and not caring about their education. Discipline problems were also found in Chiang's (2003). Chiang's participants saw discipline as their top concern in regard to classroom arrangement and program implementation. In the OECD study (2009), which based its information on the PISA database, explained too that when teachers struggle to keep their students quiet, it indicates a low level of classroom discipline.

Problems with classroom discipline are present in schools from different countries even though the context may vary. From the literature presented in this study, it is inferred

that discipline is a constant and widely spread aspect teachers have to deal with since it affects teacher's performance and consequently interfere with students' learning process.

#### 4.3.4 Learning and motivation

Another belief that our teachers related to learning is motivation. However, they did not emphasize it as Angel did; his interview was characterized by the belief that motivation is a significant and predominant part in children's learning and he also relates motivation to students being comfortable during the English lesson. He is very motivated about working as an English teacher, however, it is unknown if that motivation came from his experience as a teacher or if it is inspired by the children he is teaching.

Motivation aids children to learn. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Children feel great and they have told me that. When I get to the school, they look really excited and they run towards me and hug me. They feel really motivated. There are some who do not like English, but then if you are tender and loving to them and they get motivated, comforted and then they give their best to learn. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

According to Parsons, Hinson and Brown (2001, p.28) and Gardner (1982), cited in Wimolmas (2012, p.908), motivation has been a constant factor in the learning process. This helped us to have a better understanding of the reason why Angel relates motivation to learning; he strongly believes that without motivation learning does not occur. Therefore, he usually tries to keep a motivated learning environment in his classes. Parsons, Hinson and Brown (2001, p.28), quoted in Wimolmas (2012, p.908), "learning and motivation have the same importance since learning helps get new knowledge and skills and motivation encourage us to go through the learning process". Wimolmas' study revealed that "relevant and useful motivational learning implications are recommended to enhance and improve students' motivation"(2012, p.904).

Angel believes teachers should create a comfortable environment during the English classes in order to help students feel confident, secure and motivated to learn.



As a teacher, one needs to be able to make a comfortable classroom for children, where they feel free and without worries. A place where they enjoy learning. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Angel believes that a pleasant and supportive environment not just motivates their students to learn English but also makes it enjoyable while they are doing it. So, according to Pine and Boy (1977), cited in Xu (2012), a teacher who creates a supportive learning environment is an effective teacher. Pine and Boy (1977), quoted in Xu (2012, p.1401), stated that “effective teachers create learning atmospheres which are cognitively effective and enable the learner to become a more adequate and knowledgeable person”. These findings are quite similar to the ones reported by Spolsky (1990, p.157), quoted in Wimolmas (2012). Spolsky found out that motivated students will participate actively and pay more attention to a certain learning task or activity; the same way, they are also more likely to learn faster than students who are less motivated.

From our findings and the review of literature, we can assume that motivation is a significant and influential factor in children’s learning. Therefore, teachers should consider it during their classes.

#### 4.3.5 The influence of curriculum mandates in children’s learning

English classes are not part of the national official basic school curricula. English is taught as an extra no compulsory course which means this class does not give any credits to children’s education. The lack of status of this class in the official curricula demotivate English teachers; they claimed many teachers from other classes as well as some parents do not value their effort for children to learn English and that make them feel demotivated.

Hazel and Angel stated English grades are not included in students’ report cards. This discourages parents and learner’s interest to learn the language because they think English is not an official subject and thus, unimportant.

English grades are not included in children’s report cards. Parents and children do not give much importance to English; children do not take exams or do not study since English does not affect their school grades. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

We, as teachers, cannot fail children. We can only grade them from six to 10 in the report card. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Hazel and Angel claimed that English is not an official subject at primary public schools. Nevertheless, official documents for example the NDP 2007-2012 promotes a comprehensive education which means that English is supposed to be taught at primary public schools. However, as far as we know, the grades students get in English are not included in the final report cards. Interviewees seem not to be informed of the policies related to the teaching of English in elementary education. The absence of information on teachers about EFL status demonstrates a lack of communication between EFL teachers and the NPEES and the lack of initiative and time from teachers to inform themselves about these topics. These issues along with other factors such as insufficient funding and an inadequate curriculum design (Perales, Reyes & Murrieta, 2012) obstruct the process of establishing English in schools. NPEES Teachers Instruction on Education policies and a better communication between NPEES and teachers, could lead to a better understanding of their role in elementary education.

#### 4.4 EFL Teaching Strategies for Elementary Education

This dimension is about the teaching strategies that the four novice EFL teachers use in their classes to teach English children. Our participants believe that using games, songs, drawings and visuals are good strategies to teach English. This belief is apparently related to the belief that children learn by listening, watching, drawing, playing and thus practicing the language. In this regard, our participants' beliefs about teaching and learning influence the way they conduct their classes.

I teach according to the techniques I have learnt. I divide the class in three stages, I include games and something visual material for children. [...] A game, maybe. Sometimes [we teach] outdoors and sometime indoors. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

I teach children by using flashcards, singing a lot, coloring, and drawing and sometimes I teach them grammar; nevertheless, children learn by listening and watching.(Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

You have to use different tools, maybe drawings. [...] Language was made to communicate; if you plan to teach a language then you must practice it. Children, youngsters and adults speak the language, practice it with their teachers. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

Children learn a lot and quickly by means of games, songs. [...] There are some games that you can adapt to different topics. Maybe playing hangman or decipher the code, this way you can teach them vocabulary without making them write a text. They do it because it is fun for them that way. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

Images help children to learn. Children like visuals a lot. [...] Having diverse eye-catching material, related to the topic and according to their ages helps teaching. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

I start the class with a song for warm-up. [...] Sometimes I tell children that we are about to sing but they do not want to sing and then I have to look for something else that catches their attention. A game such as Bingo maybe. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

All the participants emphasized that they use game-related activities and eye-catching material as EFL teaching strategies; teaching activities such as outdoor games, singing, oral conversations, coloring and drawing, and material such as short texts, flash cards and attractive visuals. These findings concur with the ones in Kocaman and Cansiz's study (2012) and Shinde and Karekatti's study (2012). These authors found out that their participants included games, songs and oral conversations as part of their teaching strategies. Thompson (2012) participants' strategies also coincided with some strategies Hazel, Mike and Tavo claimed to use. They use eliciting activities (conversations), modeling of target language activities (language structure and outside activities) and modeling of activities (live demonstrations or visual examples) because they believe such activities are useful for their classes.

The issue of how to teach the PYP to children who did not speak English or the language of instruction was a common problem identified by many. Based on this issue a research investigation with the aim of raising teacher awareness of the strategies and techniques that could be used to support the language development of young learners was conducted.

Thomson (2012) carried out a study to identify the best strategies to use when teaching children. His review of literature (Wells, 1986; Fisher, 2005; Hill & Flynn, 2006; Dörnyei, 2001; Cameron, 2001) revealed a wide use of strategies (using games, songs, drawings and visuals are good strategies to teach English) that coincided with our participants' teaching strategies. For the previous authors the use of these strategies is effective because they help to develop students' knowledge in English and their learning skills. Moreover, our findings indicated that there is a relationship between the teachers' language teaching and learning beliefs and their teaching strategies because what they believe is what they use in class. This is in accord with Chen's findings (2005). Chen stated that "there were significant correlations between the overall strategy use" for the participants of the study and their "teaching beliefs toward the two methodologies" (p.138) they were using.

Our findings also demonstrated that teachers' beliefs influenced their teaching performance as stated by Williams and Burden (1999), cited in Gómez' study (2010). Williams and Burden stated that teachers' beliefs guide their behavior in class and the decision of what teaching strategies and materials are the most suitable to teach English to children. From all this, it can be inferred that most of the beliefs our participants have about children's teaching and learning are functional beliefs, such as class structure, how children learn and should be taught and the characteristics of a good English teacher. Those beliefs seem to be aligned with their teaching and, according to the literature reviewed, their teaching strategies are effective, as well. However, there are some others like the contradictory beliefs in Mike, that are dysfunctional such as not relating games to effective learning.

#### 4.5 The origin and context of teaching and learning beliefs

In this section, a possible explanation of when and where language teaching and learning beliefs originated will be presented.

Every person faces diverse experiences and contexts during their childhood and puberty that usually mark them and shape their character, their ideas, personality traits and even beliefs. To better understand teachers' beliefs the context where their learning process started was taken into account because (Dufva, 2003, quoted in Barcelos, 2007, p.7), stated that "the social and cultural context (past and present) are essential to comprehend teachers' beliefs".

In the case of our four participants apparently there were different contexts that underpinned their language teaching and learning beliefs, such as living in a multilingual family (Mayan-Spanish for Angel), coming from a family of teachers (Hazel) and having received a traditional education (Tavo and Mike). In Hazel, the strongest source of her beliefs was her family context. For Angel, it was his multilingual context which underpinned his beliefs, whereas an educational and family context in Tavo and Mike possibly was where, in our opinion, their beliefs originated.

Coming from a family of teachers influenced Hazel's personality and beliefs as an English teacher. However, she did not have the support from her parents to conduct her learning. Hazel's learning process at the primary school was characterized by how she managed to carry out her education on her own. She described herself as a very independent and disciplined student during her life as a student.

My learning process was very independent. I was a very independent student. I used to do my own research. From a young age, every time I had homework I used to do it all by myself. I did not get much aid from my parents because they both work. My mother is a teacher, my father is a member of Brigade. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

Hazel's learning process, which originated in a disciplined family ambiance, seems to have greatly influenced her language teaching and learning beliefs and how she thought they should be. In the long term, these beliefs defined the conception she had about how English language is learnt, how children learn it and thus how it should be taught, as she stated before.

In the case of Angel, the context where his language beliefs originated was a multilingual one. English was the third language he learned when he was young which means that he had already gone through the experience of learning Spanish as a second language, Maya being his mother tongue. Learning three languages since a young age probably shaped his language teaching and learning beliefs.

During primary school, I did not take English classes. It was difficult for me to learn because as I said, my mother tongue is Maya and I also had problems when learning Spanish. In junior high, I took English from my first year. I liked it a lot. In high school, we also took English for three years and I was very interested in it. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Learning a second language (Spanish) at a very young age was an experience that undoubtedly honed his language learning process of a third language (English) as he demonstrated by stating he had received good grades in English. Such input from learning two languages at a young age and the complications he admitted experiencing when learning those languages probably shaped the way he believes a language is learnt and should be taught.

In the case of Mike, he grew up in a Maya speaking context but he did not learn it. Besides, he expressed having received a traditional education at school, [traditional referring to the way education is conducted in Chetumal, the capital of the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico], based on the common teaching practices, as he states below:

The belief I had about an English class was the widespread one. [...] In my classes in junior high and high school, the teacher came to the classroom and wrote on the board, then we just copy what was on the board and that was it. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

According to Mike, receiving traditional education, before enrolling in his major, made him believe that is the way a language should be taught. His family does not seem to have had a strong influence on his learning process or professional orientation and even though he did not succeed in his first career he managed to get further in the English language major which seems to have made him very proud. Despite the fact he had an adverse learning experience, he persisted in achieving his goal as an English teacher. Mike stated that some of his beliefs have changed because of his professional training and his teaching experience. For example, he commented that he used to believe a class should be taught in a traditional way as he experienced during his childhood, however his professional training made him aware how an effective class should be conducted. He was the only one who was able to reach the bachelors level in his family; this nurtured his interest in the teaching profession since he was proud of having reached this academic level.

Similar to Mike, Tavo comes from a numerous family, he is the youngest child and the only one who achieved a bachelor degree. That achievement may have made him feel proud of himself, besides he did not remark no having a particularly difficult time during his general and EFL learning stages when he was a child.

Tavo's experience during high school apparently developed his interest for learning English which eventually motivated him to study the English language major.

Well, I did not take English classes at elementary school. In high school I did take English classes but we did not learn a lot. In high school I learnt some more because I started to like English and I participated a lot. (Tavo, personal communication, July 26, 2015)

Tavo's English learning process was probably developed in a pleasant common learning context. He used to participate a lot during his English language classes in high school, which made us think that he enjoyed learning English; besides, he believed he was good at learning it. His positive language learning experience during high school and his confidence to learn English were probably the beginning of his interest in teaching and learning a foreign language. For all those reasons, we assume that his schooling experience as well as coming from a family who supported him to study a profession, formed his initial learning and teaching beliefs.

Our findings allow us to state that our novice English teachers' learning beliefs originated from their general education process as well as from their English language learning experience during their youth. These findings are consistent with those in Barrios (2014), Liao (2007), Shinde and Karekatti (2012), Yang (2000), Debrelı (2012) and Inceçay (2011). These authors found that their participants' teaching and learning beliefs were developed by their experiences as learners in both general and language education classrooms. Moreover, it was found that our participants' beliefs were also influenced by the context they grew up in, which is also supported by Barcelos (2006, p.8) who stated that "beliefs have a social dimension because they are born out of our interactions with others and with our environment".

We determined that the different family, multilingual and educational contexts they were involved in during their learning process widely shaped their learning beliefs. Something similar was found out by Barrios (2014), who pointed out in her study that some language learning beliefs held by their participants depend upon the cultural context of the subjects.

## 4.6 Change of novice teachers' beliefs

This section will address the change of beliefs that our participants experienced due to their teaching training and teaching experience. Some of their beliefs were challenged, modified, replaced or diversified. Others remained and either strengthened or weakened. Their training and teaching experience modified and restructured their initial language teaching and language learning beliefs, but also new beliefs may have formed. Nevertheless, we would not suggest that all changes were positive.

### 4.6.1 Changes during teachers' training

About the changes teachers may have undergone regarding beliefs about how children learn and how to teach we state that those beliefs were modified due to their teaching training. In this vein, Mike, Hazel and Angel stated that they underwent a process of reshaping their beliefs while they were training to become teachers.

At first, when I had no idea of what an English class consisted of, with its different parts and all that, I noticed it was different. First this section, then this other section, there must be an order, right? It was later, at university, when I realized how a proper English class should be; then I noticed that the classes I took at junior high and at high school were totally different. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

[College] was pretty nice, it was a stage of a lot of changes. Changes in perspectives. I changed my perspective about English learning in every aspect when I started college. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

[My teaching and learning beliefs] have changed a lot. I was not well trained when I started teaching; I did not know how children learnt, I did not know any learning and teaching theory. [...] Now, I realize that I have changed my conception of how children learn and how to use technology in class. (Angel, personal communication, July 3, 2015)

As teachers revealed, they brought their beliefs about what teaching and learning a language consists of into their teaching training process, this coincides with the ones in Busch's (2010), Erkmen's (2010), Shinde and Karekatti's (2012), Debreli's (2012), and Barrios's (2014) studies. Our participants stated to have improved their knowledge about the



appropriate structure of a language class, teaching and learning strategies and how English is learnt showing that their beliefs became more functional due to the training they received.

Chiang (2003), Yang (2000), Debreli (2010), Busch (2010), and Erkmen (2010) stated that teachers developed and modified their beliefs according to the personal teaching experiences they had within the training program, which supports our findings. Furthermore, our findings show that teachers' teaching experiences lead to changes in their beliefs.

#### 4.6.2 Changes due to teaching experience

Teachers come to the classroom with perceptions of what teaching and learning a language mean. Nevertheless, their beliefs were confronted when they had to teach a class on their own and had to deal with children. Some of those beliefs changed due to their teaching experience in a real context as Tavo, Hazel and Mike stated.

My belief that teaching children is easy has changed, but then you start teaching and you realize it is not that way. (Tavo, personal communication, June 26, 2015)

Before, the belief (of how to teach) that I had was a widespread belief. I get to the classroom and explain. The children are there quietly sitting and that's it. But now I see it is totally different. (Mike, personal communication, July 1, 2015)

I still believe that children learn through games and things like that. But what has changed is the way I apply activities and how to adapt them to the children's comprehension level. As I continued teaching I told myself that it was possible to find another way to give lessons. So, in this sense the way in which I design my activities and adapt them to their level has changed considerably. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

In the major, we are told that as soon as we finish college, we are able to teach to any level, primary, etc. but once you start teaching you realize it is difficult because classes are not handled the same way for every level. They should teach you at least for one class for each level, this way you can be ready and have a better idea about how to teach. (Hazel, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

As previously addressed, these novice teachers arrived in their classrooms with certain language teaching and learning beliefs that have already being reshaped during their

teaching training, but once they started working as teachers they realized that some of their beliefs were unrealistic and inapplicable to the context they teach in. Therefore, we can interpret that their teaching experience as well as the context they were teaching in modified their beliefs once again. Our findings are similar to Debreli's (2012), who found out that when her participants taught in a real classroom, as part of their training program, they discovered that the theories and the beliefs they held about teaching and learning at the beginning of their program were not applicable, this led to a change in their beliefs.

According to our findings we conclude that training programs, teaching experience and the context of language learning are possible, powerful aspects that may strengthen or weaken teachers' beliefs and may modify and restructure those beliefs. This concurs with Barcelos' statement (2006), this author states that beliefs are usually considered as contextual, dynamic and social assumptions about a subject that are believed as true. Therefore, it can be assumed that beliefs are not static and that they are attached to the context they are in, so if the context changes beliefs may also be modified as it happened with our participants' beliefs. Their beliefs changed because of their English Language major and their teaching experience in a real context. For this reason, it is important that during teachers' practice teachers' trainers consider the context where teachers will conduct their practice because that will be the context where they will formally work. If teachers do not practice in a real context with the real aspects that this is conformed, they will not be totally prepare for teaching.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions

In this chapter we will attempt to answer the research questions we stated at the beginning of this study. This is a conclusion derived from the analysis we have already done, the comparison we have made with the studies found during the review of literature and the interpretation we did based on the theories we chose.

Our four participants hold diverse, various and complex beliefs about what their teaching performance and how these young students learn the language. The performance in class of all teachers is guided by, what we call, a core belief about learning and teaching. In a way, these findings concur with Williams and Burden's statement (1999) quoted in Gómez (2010). They stated that teachers' beliefs guide their behavior in class and help them to choose the appropriate teaching strategies and materials to teach English to children. The core beliefs about teaching that our participants possess are divided in three aspects: beliefs about EFL classes, teaching English to children and characteristics of a good EFL teacher. Teachers also hold learning beliefs which are based on children's EFL learning.

Regarding our first research question, *what are the NPEES novice English teachers' beliefs about how English should be taught and how Children, from some schools in Chetumal, learn this Foreign language?*, we decided to divide the questions in two so as to better state our answer. Thus, the first question is:

*What are the NPEES novice English teachers' beliefs about how English should be taught to Children?*

Regarding teachers' teaching beliefs, teachers believe English is a complex activity that is taught differently from other subjects and should follow a specific order. A warm-up as an opening activity, followed by the development of the class and a wrap-up at the end of the lesson are the three stage-structure they believe a class should have. Teachers' previous schooling experience made them aware of how a general class was like, however, they had no idea about what an English class should be till they entered to the English language major.

About teaching children, our participants' performance in class is based on personal beliefs coming from their individual experience as learners. They structure their class based on core beliefs related to commitment, discipline and practice. Interestingly, these beliefs were different among them. Apparently, these core beliefs strongly influence the way they perform. For example, Angel is worried about his students' learning and his own performance, thus he shows full commitment to his teaching. He holds the strong belief that being kind towards students helps to keep them motivated to learn. Hazel and Tavo believe successful teaching is quite related to discipline and to having an appropriate teaching environment, thus for them children should well-behave at any time so as to allow good teaching. Thus, for them, teachers need to be strict with children to be able to discipline them. Tavo and Mike believe that a successful teaching means students should practice a lot, due to this they design many activities to make their students practice as much as they can. These classes should also include ludic activities, as well as a variety of visual materials and a motivated and comfortable class. Moreover, our participants believe that teaching children is not easy because it is a tiring, demanding and stressful job but at the same time rewarding.

In the same vein of teachers' beliefs about teaching to children, our participants concur when emphasizing the characteristics an EFL elementary teacher should have. They coincided when describing that a good EFL teacher should be tolerant, patient, strict and energetic, as well as creative, kind and passionate about his or her job. Besides, they also think a teacher should be well-trained to perform a good job, be able to create a good atmosphere where students feel comfortable, be really committed to teach English to children and enjoy doing it. Nevertheless, it was found that despite the fact they hold those beliefs they did not describe themselves as having those characteristics. For our participants learning is a continuous and updating activity and teachers should never stop learning if they want to improve their teaching performance.

The second part of the first research question: *What are the NPEES novice English teachers' beliefs about how Children learn English?*

Our novice teachers believe that the language learning process among children is faster and easier than when being an adult. Hazel remarked learning changes according to the age of the learner. They think children apparently possess an inner ability to learn a

language; for this reason, the participants think it is better children learn English during their childhood. The four participants believe that using songs and games in class helps to improve children' language learning and that those activities also allow them to conduct better their class. However, Mike hold contradictory beliefs about this, he strongly believes games are ineffective for learning since children learn the English vocabulary without understanding the meaning.

As we stated before, we infer that those beliefs are common ones among teachers despite of the possible differences of context where a foreign language learning is being taught, we come to this conclusion because the same findings appeared in several researchers from different countries we reviewed.

The second research question, the one regarding the origin of beliefs was stated as follow *Where do these novice English teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching and learning English to children come from?*

Based on our findings, we state that our participants' beliefs were originated from the general and language learning experiences a person had during the learning stage when young. Although EFL teaching and EFL learning are different from each other, they are intertwined. Both processes happen at the same time. On that regard both sets of beliefs may have originated at the same context, that is the learning stage.

Each of our participants revealed having experienced different contexts during their own learning stages as children, such as coming from a family of teachers or living in a multilingual family (Mayan-Spanish). The contexts where teachers developed their learning and their general and language learning experiences determined the kind of beliefs about EFL teaching and learning that each participant holds.

Following we will conclude on each of the different context we think had an influence and helped to originate teachers' beliefs.

**Family context.** One of the participants, Hazel, stated coming from a family of teachers. Her mother was a teacher herself. Because of this, she became a very independent person from a very young age since her parents were usually working and did not have the time to pay enough attention to her education at home. Her family background which surely influenced

how she regarded teaching, originating her beliefs about teaching children. But it was his own independent personality which made her become a much disciplined student, influencing the way she expects her students behave and ultimately learn.

**Multilingual context.** Another context which affected one of the participants' beliefs, Angel, is speaking two languages since a young age. This teacher affirmed Maya was his mother tongue and Spanish was his second language which he learnt when he was a child. He remarked that it was a difficult task for a child but in the end, he was able to speak the two languages fluently. He also stated learning English at school later on, and affirmed being an ace student on that subject which could hint that his language learning skills, and therefore his beliefs about how a language should be learnt were functional. Being able to speak two languages from a young age, with all the difficulties and experiences it carries out, undoubtedly helps to develop language learning skills and defines beliefs about children EFL learning. Then learning a third language at school while still at a young age further hones EFL learning beliefs and skills and develops EFL teaching beliefs, as demonstrated by this participant. It is important to mention that this participant has not finished his teacher training yet, which could mean that his beliefs are still in a process of rearrangement.

**The learning stage as a context.** As stated before, it is during the context present during the learning stage of a person where beliefs are usually developed. If no stronger context influences that person during this stage, it is the learning experience alone which defines and originates EFL and learning beliefs as found in one of the participants.

Tavo claimed he really liked the experience he had when learning English as a youngster. Furthermore, as he stated, this experience was so meaningful for him that he even stated being influenced towards his decision of choosing English language as a major and becoming a teacher. A joyful learning experience could hint his teacher did a really good job teaching him, thus influencing the way he thinks how EFL teaching and learning to children should be and originated beliefs, accordingly.

**Teacher training and teaching experience as contexts.** For Mike, apparently it was his teaching training and teaching experience which influence his beliefs. In the interview, he showed holding beliefs about teaching and learning just as the other participants,

nevertheless; he showed contradictions between these beliefs and what he actually does in class. This contradiction may be explained by the fact that he is teaching children although he has not finished his teacher training in the major yet, hinting that he is still under the process of rearranging his beliefs, similar to Angel. But, unlike Angel, Mike did not have a multilingual background that helped him develop his language learning skills and beliefs. For Mike it is the very teacher training process and his experience as teacher that seems to be developing his beliefs as demonstrated by the many contradictions he has. For him, both experiences modify and even originate teaching and learning beliefs.

As presented above, the beliefs our four novice teachers relate to the teaching and learning of a Foreign Language, in this case English, were originated within their family context, i.e. the circumstances under which they were raised, their teaching formation or taking into consideration the academic and social environment in which they are teaching to children. Also, beliefs are originated from the experience of learning a second language since children, i.e. a multilingual context. In the case of experiencing a good language learning context and enjoy learning surely originated effective language teaching and learning beliefs. Although different from one another, all these beliefs were originated at some point during the learning stage of each participant, demonstrating the key importance of this stage in the origin of beliefs. Language beliefs originated during the learning stage as a child are still present in each person as they grow up and define how they perform.

Our last research question is *Do novice teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching and learning to children have any influence on their teaching strategies?*

It was found that our participants' EFL teaching and learning beliefs do influence on their strategies. This finding is supported by Williams and Burden statement quoted in Gómez's study (2010). They stated teachers' beliefs determine and predict the way teachers perform in class, those beliefs have more influence in their way of conducting themselves than the mandatory teaching method they have to adopt or the text book they have to follow. Our findings indicated that there is a relationship between teachers' language teaching and learning beliefs and their teaching strategies because what they believe is what they apply even though in some cases they do not agree with those strategies they use. Most of the participants conduct their class guided by the belief that using games, songs, drawings and

visuals are good strategies to teach English, they relate this belief with the one that children learn by listening, watching, drawing, playing and practicing the language with playful and dynamic activities as well. For this, we can conclude that those beliefs have a great influence on teachers' decisions about how they should conduct their class, what approach, strategies and material they should use to teach children. In addition, it can be inferred that children teaching and learning beliefs our participants hold are mostly functional beliefs because they seem to be aligned with their teaching and according to the literatures review found their teaching strategies are effective as well.

It is relevant to remark that our participants' teaching and learning beliefs were reshaped during their formal instruction and the majority of children teaching strategies they know were acquired during their training. They emphasized that their bachelor degree did not offer them a complete formal instruction on teaching children, being this the main reason of their lack of knowledge about teaching strategies to young learners.

All of our interviewees commented they were not well-trained in their bachelor degree, so they think that they lack of knowledge about how to teach children and deal with different issues such as discipline. This is because the incomplete training they received at their bachelor degree.

Teachers' previous schooling experience made them aware of how a class was like, however, they had no idea about what an English class should be until they entered the English language major.



## 5.1 Implications for future practice

In the findings it was shown that teachers experienced some difficulties which discourage them and affect their teaching.

Teachers did not feel prepared to teach children and experienced some difficulties planning their lessons. According to them, although the English major where they studied provided the tools and knowledge to teach English, they felt this knowledge was insufficient regarding teaching English to children. This issue was stated by all four teachers who thought that the training they have received was not enough on that matter. Teachers suggested some improvements that could be done to the major such as teaching more specific subjects which focus on teaching practicum such as: child and youth psychology themes, children's behavior, context-based learning subjects and techniques to teach at different educational levels separately and provide more teaching strategies to teach according to students' age. As teachers stated, addressing these issues within the major's curricula will significantly help future teachers to be better prepared.

Teachers stated that the NPEES program provides them with teaching material, language certifications and training courses. This initially encouraged and motivated teachers to keep on their jobs. However, they also stated that not receiving enough benefits from their jobs, together with the heavy teaching load, has made them question their permanence in this program. They think the NPEES curricula is unrealistic; it is designed to teach English as a second language instead of as a foreign language and also demands that children learn a lot in little time, which places an additional burden on teachers. These situations demotivate teachers and make them think of the NPEES as a springboard only, one that helps them acquire experience but is not a rewarding, long-term job. Taking this into account, the NPEES administration should address these issues in order to help lighten the burden for English teachers and make them keep the job.

With regard to teaching practice, it was found that English language is not considered an important subject and English teachers lack the same status as teachers of other courses. According to teachers, one of the consequences of this is the low payment which forces teachers to extend their hours at work, increasing their workload, stress and discouragement. The fact that English classes are not given enough relevance also affects parents' opinion

about the language; in many cases, parents do not encourage their children's learning and this causes behavior problems among students, thus, further increasing teachers discouragement. Institutions should be aware of this situation and establish better communication between children's parents and teachers in order to give more relevance to English and teachers.

## 5.2 Limitations of the study

It should be mentioned that the study that during the creation of this research study there were a few limitations. First of all the participants were three males and one woman. It would had been a more accurate study to having interviewed an equal number of participants according to gender as to see if gender has an effect on beliefs.

Another factor is that although a qualitative approach requires class observations to support the data obtained from the interviews, however, due to a lack of time and experience from the authors, observations were not conducted. Observations could have helped us to understand better the real context where our participants teach and lead us to better conclusions. Also, two of the participants, both male, have not finished their bachelors' degree, which could mean that they are still under the process of rearranging their beliefs and therefore, such beliefs cannot be fully proven as functional or discarded.

Finally, it should be mentioned that beliefs about EFL teaching and learning are extensive and all the different kinds of beliefs are equally important, however, conducting an study which comprise all the different types of beliefs would have resulted on a paramount effort and the study would have taken much longer.

## 5.3 Direction for future studies

The present study has explored NPEES novice teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning to children in some elementary schools in the capital city of the state of Quintana Roo. It also sought to determine where those beliefs come from and if they have any influence in their EFL teaching strategies.

This study revealed that the current English teaching and learning' beliefs our participants hold mostly coincide due to the fact that they share a similar learning and teaching experience which is the context where their beliefs developed. According to the literature reviewed we found that teachers in international studies also possess the same or similar beliefs as our participants hold, despite the fact that those teachers developed their beliefs from different contexts. To conduct further research about this topic would help to understand why teachers that are from different countries possess similar beliefs.

In addition, this study also showed that there is a relation between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice. More studies with regard to this relationship are needed because they might help to better understand teachers' beliefs and their class performance. For this reason, we think that it would be significant to research about this relationship because according to our findings, teachers' beliefs guide and influence teachers' performance. Further research on this relationship could also lead to the creation or improvement of functional teaching and learning strategies as well as to revalue language teachers' role at primary public schools. .

Another topic that future research may focus on would be to explore the adequate ways to address teachers' beliefs during their training programs because, as far as we know, there are no studies about this topic in the state of Quintana Roo. According to the literature reviewed, teachers' beliefs should be addressed during their training in order to avoid the persistence of non-functional beliefs after their formal instruction.

Incongruence was found in the language teaching policies from PND. It states that English should be taught as a second language, ESL. According to the learning context of students in Mexico and research studies, English should be taught as foreign language instead of a as a second language. It seems to be a confusion on the difference between ESL and EFL. People and even researchers on the field often address ESL merely as the language learnt after Spanish. Therefore, it would be relevant to investigate this issue in order to improve the English programs that are currently established in Mexico.

It would also be relevant to extend the topic of this study by using other instruments such as journals and observations because they could uncover deeper participants' perceptions. In this case, we only used one semi-structured interview.

We hope that the findings of this study contribute in the field of English education. This study found some important aspects that could support the development of functional teaching and learning beliefs, effective teaching strategies, the improvement of teachers training programs and English programs.

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## Appendix

In this section there are included the consent letters signed by our four participants. Their names were hidden to ensure anonymity.



Licenciatura  
DIVISIÓN DE CIENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y HUMANIDADES

### Tesis de Licenciatura

**Tema: Creencias de maestros de inglés acerca del aprendizaje y la enseñanza del inglés en niños de escuelas primarias públicas en la ciudad de Chetumal, Quintana Roo.**

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Su participación en esta entrevista es completamente voluntaria. Usted no está obligado(a) a participar. Usted puede terminar su participación en el momento que lo desee. Si decide no participar, esto no afectará de ninguna manera su situación laboral. Esta entrevista durará aprox. una hora (máximo hora y media) y se hará en el lugar y el tiempo que usted considere oportuno. Si usted está de acuerdo, esta entrevista será grabada para poder realizar el análisis con el mayor apego a su punto de vista.

**Confidencialidad:** todo lo que usted exprese durante la entrevista será manejado de manera estrictamente confidencial. Si usted acepta participar en este estudio, se le asignará un nombre falso a su entrevista que protegerá en todo momento su identidad. De la misma manera, la información que nos proporcione será resguardada por personal autorizado, y manejada de manera confidencial protegiendo su identidad. Los archivos digitales de audio de las entrevistas serán destruidos después de su transcripción, y únicamente los egresados autores de esta tesis de licenciatura y la directora del trabajo de tesis podrán tener acceso a esta información.

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Si usted acepta participar, se le dará una copia de este documento para que lo conserve.

Su colaboración es muy valiosa para nosotros, muchas gracias por participar

Si acepta participar, por favor firme abajo.

Fecha: 01 de Junio de 2015

Nombre y firma del participante en el estudio:

Fecha: 01 de Junio de 2015

Rubi Yacquelyn Castillo Castillo  
Nombre y firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento informado



UNIVERSIDAD DEL ESTADO DE QUINTANA ROO

Lengua Inglesa  
DIVISIÓN DE CIENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y HUMANIDADES

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Si acepta participar, por favor firme abajo.

Fecha: 01 de junio de 2015

Nombre y firma del participante en el estudio:

Fecha: 01 de junio de 2015

Rubi Georgetyn Castillo Castillo Castillo Castillo

Nombre y firma de la persona que da el consentimiento



UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO

Lengua Ingles  
DIVISION DE CIENCIAS POLITICAS Y HUMANIDADES

Tesis de Licenciatura

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Fecha: 01/06/2015

Nombre y firma del participante en el estudio:

Fecha: 01 de junio de 2015 Rubi Yaxuchán Castillo Castillo Castillo Castillo

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Rubí Yacquelina Castillo Castillo Castillo Castillo

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