



UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO
División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades

Learning to Teach English,

an endless experience.

TRABAJO MONOGRÁFICO

Para obtener el grado de

Licenciada en Lengua Inglesa

Presenta

Grethel Janine Aguilar Fernández

Comité de supervisión

Dra. María del Rosario Reyes Cruz

Dra. Edith Hernández Méndez

Lic. Ana Bertha Jiménez Castro

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COMITÉ DE TRABAJO MONOGRÁFICO.

Directora: _____

Dra. María del Rosario Reyes Cruz

Asesora: _____

Dra. Edith Hernández Méndez

Asesora: _____

Lic. Ana Bertha Jiménez Castro

Chetumal, Quintana Roo, México, Febrero 2011.

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Introduction

When I think back about my life as a formal English teacher, I realize what I have done, accomplished and learnt during all these years. I have worked for eight years as a formal English teacher in different educational levels, besides I have had two years of instruction to be a teacher. I have had the opportunity to experience a wide variety of students and programs that have helped me to fulfill my goal to improve my teaching.

I have had different experiences throughout my years of teaching. Therefore, I decided to collect my memoirs in this monograph to evaluate myself and, at the same time, to share them with those who may be interested in knowing how it is to become a teacher, after all the training received in the English Language bachelor's program at the Universidad de Quintana Roo.

Some of the main objectives in the English language program are to inform, instruct and, teach the methodologies and techniques required for teaching English. During the years of my education at college I was trained to teach young adults, but despite the lessons about language education shared in classes, and readings of some researchers in education (Chomsky, 1986 & Gardner, 1993), I was not trained to be a professor for young learners. Although the activities and theories were to be applied with any kind of students, I was not aware of the adequate methodology to apply to younger students. As a student at the university, my goal was to succeed in any teaching level, despite the lack of experience and reduced instruction I had for elementary students.

When I started thinking about the idea of writing my teaching experience in a monograph, I understood the importance of writing and analyzing the methods, activities, dynamics, and techniques used during my beginnings as a

teacher; all of it with the purpose of comparing them to what I do today, to what I have become, and to what I have changed as a person and as a teacher. For that reason, I want to mention the great impact and huge importance the social assistance or social service (“servicio social” in Mexico), required by the University, has had in my life as a teacher. The experience I got in the social assistance was beneficial in my beginnings as a trained teacher. I am sure that with no real exposure in a class, it would have been harder for me to gain all the self-confidence I have now.

I remember that although that the university students had to accomplish the goal of the social service, I did not take it seriously before deciding where to give my assistance. Honestly, most of my classmates and I did not realize how important it was to choose the right place where to offer our academic assistance as students in training. We, as students, just needed to do what we were asked to in order to accomplish all the graduation requirements. Now, I know that analyzing the decision in choosing the right place where to start the social service might give us the opportunity to open important doors for the students’ development as formal teachers, lawyers, etc.

According to what I experienced in the social service, I can say that it is the first step to put into practice what students are learning in classes, to face the future as a professional, and to start getting some experience in what students are going to do and work.

Currently, education is more than what I thought it was when I was in college. Education in schools is such a deep concept to be studied, to be analyzed, to comprehend, and to practice properly that does not only cover the theory to be taught. For me, teachers are guides, monitors, psychologists,

advisors and they have many other roles to play. According to my perspective, personal experiences, and ideas, the teaching life can be stressful in some days or situations, but really pleasant and satisfactory in many of them. Admiring and giving value to the development of pupils is a gift not everyone is able to experience and not everyone has the opportunity to enjoy. In my view point, a person who tries to be a good teacher is also a person who tries to be a good citizen.

I faced a large number of issues about teaching English while being in my internship to become a formal teacher, but there has been one thing increasingly clear to me over the years, and that is the importance social service has meant in my professional life. I take my social service as the best decision I have ever made as part of my future life as a professional.

Teaching to students was and is a very important factor in the story of my teaching experience. A teacher never stops from learning; a teacher is always improving his or her methods and techniques by being prepared frequently in the teaching field. That is why I consider important to get information about research and personal experiences of teachers that have had the opportunity to work in different areas in the TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language). Thus, it is my purpose to give a small but significant aid to those that are starting their first experience in teaching or those that are interested in this area, and who are planning to become English teachers.

The objective I had when I started writing my monograph as a teacher was to be helpful to those students interested in learning from a teacher who used to be in their position, at the same university and maybe, with the same teachers.

I will describe and analyze my teaching experience throughout the time I worked in 3 private schools and one university, from 1999, the time I began my social service, to 2006.

I mention the beginnings of my practice as a teacher (social service), as part of an important turning point in my teaching life. The practice was an experience that made me had the first spark in the teaching area.

The second place where I worked was the first close and real experience I had in teaching after I graduated from college, which was to teach kids in kindergarten. A small group of 3-year-old kids eager to absorb, reproduce, and practice what I had to show them. After that experience, I will describe the next step I had to take, which was to be in charge of the coordination of all the English teachers in the elementary section of the same school. To coordinate a teacher becomes a hard task to accomplish because of the great differences of personalities and emotions we can experiment as adults. A determined resolution sometimes was needed to be present in some situations but a warm voice to notify about the school's decisions.

Regarding the next working place where I taught, I write about the first opportunity I had to put into practice what my teachers of the University taught me. Methodologies, techniques, activities, dynamics, and even solutions suggested by teachers, were part of my guidance to try to be a good university instructor. The challenge was to work with university students with diverse needs and abilities but with the same goal, to learn English with a specific purpose (ESP).

In my last experience shared in this monograph, I recall my new life in a new school. This was the fourth step in my way of teaching. I worked with a

variety of syllabi, students, and techniques. To be in high school was a whole new world for me, personally and as a teacher. There were some things I had to improve to be useful and helpful when being in front of teenagers. But the main difference was not just the idea that for two years I had a good management of the books for elementary and kindergarten; the main task was to teach American and British Literature.

The conclusion of the entire experience obtained during the last years is an experience that has made me be a better person, a better teacher and now, a better mother for my daughters. Teaching is not just showing how to do something, teaching is to instruct, guide, wait for the right moment to act, listen, improve, help, and some other beautiful tasks to be practiced in a classroom and in your life.

With all respect, I write some suggestions I consider important to analyze for future generations in the English Language major. The suggestions are related to my needs and experiences as a student.

Contextual framework

I had the opportunity to be involved with a variety of schools and systems during my first years of experience that made me grow in different aspects. As I knew the schools, their systems and their structure, I could analyze the importance to know the background of every school in order to know their rules, their methods, their facilities and their disadvantages.

The first place where I worked as an English teacher in 1999 was the school *Centro Pedagógico Infantil (CEPI)*. This school had an agreement with the UQRoo to fulfill the requirement of the social service. Due to this agreement

between the two institutions, some students were interested in teaching in that place to fulfill the requirement of the program in our studies; I was one of those students. I had to visit the place and meet the principal to apply for the coming scholar year. It was a small school. The school was divided in preschool and six levels of elementary education with a principal and an English coordinator. Each class had from 10 to 15 students per level, and each class had one teacher for all the subjects in Spanish and one teacher for the English subjects. Full time English Teachers had two classes, while part time Spanish teachers (those who taught subjects in Spanish) did not cover full time due to other jobs they had in the afternoon. All the English teachers working at that school were my classmates at college.

The school had 90 students approximately. For teachers, it was easy to identify and know students of all classes. The space where to move around was small because it had been a four-bedroom house before. The house was adapted to be a school and because of the small size of the ground, it was easy for teachers to know almost all the students in the school by their first names.

After finishing college, I had to move to Playa del Carmen. I worked as a formal teacher in *Yits'atil*, a school in progress of expansion. The school had pre-school, and in 2000 the elementary section had only two groups of students. Six years before, the school had started with middle school and high school; therefore, this was the most established educational section. The school had a main principal, the owner of the institute, and one coordinator per section. Due to its infrastructure, there were more teachers and staff there than in my first working place. Every level of education was separated by stairs, gates or

alleys. Kindergarten had its own courtyard for festivals, sections of restrooms and offices, as well as their own play yard.

Yits'atil had a hundred students in kindergarten, forty students in elementary education, fifty students in junior high school, and forty-five students in high school. Because of the size of the school, there were more students, there were more teachers, and at the same time, more decisions were to be made in there in comparison to my previous job. The school was an ongoing project since the elementary area had not enough students because it was not fully settled. In the first year I started working there, there were only first and second grade of elementary education, on my second year, the principal decided to open the full area of elementary education, although fourth, fifth and sixth grade had 20 students in total.

Students in *Yits'atil* came from different cultures and nationalities. Playa del Carmen has a lot of citizens from all over the world. Most students at *Yits'atil*, that were not Mexican, came from the United States of America, Germany, and some countries of South America. In kindergarten, around 3 to 4 students, out of 25, per class were from another country. Every class in kindergarten had from 23 to 25 students.

While I was living in Playa del Carmen, I had the opportunity to work in the *Universidad Tecnológica, Campus Playa del Carmen*. In 2002, this institution was just starting with the first generations of students. It was occupying the building of a public high school of Playa del Carmen; the university was new in town. We had to get adapted to the classrooms we were provided, which were in good conditions, but the fact that the university did not have enough rooms for offices, classes and teachers' room, made it a little

complicated to work efficiently after class grading or planning. We were a few teachers working there, with only one assistant (secretary) and one computer for teachers. Because of the lack of a teacher's room, it was almost impossible that the staff met. Few teachers used to go to the multi-purpose room, the only office we had, so only those teachers who used to get earlier and leave late from our working place had the opportunity to meet in that room.

Most of the students taking lessons in the afternoon were from a working class, their characteristics and conditions were very different from the students in the morning. I used to have the afternoon classes, and 90% of my students used to work as waiters, divers, hostesses, nurses or they had their own little business. My students needed to learn English for specific purposes (ESP), and I knew my classes had to be guided in that way. Speaking was our main objective to practice.

In 2006 I got married and I had to move to Cozumel. The Colegio Cozumel, now Instituto Cumbres de Cozumel, was the place where I decided to work that year. The school had 25 years working with kindergarten and elementary education, and 18 years working with junior high school and high school. The Cumbres Cozumel was already placed, all established, all written in manuals, with new plans to be achieved but with no more expansion than court yards and football fields. Generations of students had passed and teachers had stayed. The school had a staff of workers with more than 10 years working there. The place was more than a traditional school with traditional methods; it was a place in process to evolve into the new generation of educational programs. All the sections had their own offices, restrooms and play yards. In

general, it was a school planned and designed from the very beginning to be part of the Cumbres system, an international school system.

Most students in Cumbres Cozumel came from wealthy families, or at least, they tried to have wealthy lives. Those students who knew the effort their parents were making to have them studying in those schools were more conscious of their development in class. Some other students were not very conscious of their role and the importance of it in class. Some students in this system had problems of attitudes because of the lack of attention at home, because of the need to fit in, because of the lack of guidance, among other reasons, according to what I could observe and to what some students told me.

“No general tradition exists in Mexico for encouraging active learning, managing group work, developing locally relevant materials, or adapting lessons to teach problem-solving. The quality of teachers’ assessments of student progress appears inadequate, and teacher responses to students’ questions are also” (Lopez-Acevedo, 2000b, p.16).

Even though, according to López-Acevedo, in Mexico it is not common to have teachers in current theories to attract students, to be concerned about their needs, to prepare dynamic classes, and to pursue students’ development; teachers of the present generation are being trained to develop those skills and required characteristics to be part of the modern era of teachers.

Private schools are concerned about children and youth education; they are being paid to do so. Private schools need to instruct teachers to improve their methods of teaching. Some private systems are simply direct with teachers, either they have the profile to be part of the new methodologies and the willingness to improve as educators, or they should find another place

where to work. As the private Cumbres system sets the objectives for its staff, the other three private schools where I worked did the same thing for their own benefit to be part of the new generation of schools. Hence, in the private schools where I worked at, most teachers were always in change, improving their methods, applying new theories, and aware of the new generations to come. If a teacher in a private school does not fit in the rule, then, his lack of innovation becomes evident to parents and students.

Although it is possible to see teachers in a very old fashion manner of teaching, with no willingness in achieving the new theories and methodologies in private schools, these are conscious of the risk of maintaining that situation in their institution. Private education must be always on top of innovation, if not, there would be no reason why to pay for a “special” service which lacks of improvement and progress.

The four private institutions where I worked were very different in conditions, situations, manuals, systems, syllabi, and infrastructure. The experience in each one was different too, with four ways of teaching, different levels and different bosses, who were part of my decisions, success, frustrations and learning. But, despite of all the differences I observed in those institutions, I found a similarity in them. The four schools were always trying to improve their methods and techniques, as well as their books and system. The competence in private education has become more positive to students and parents because of the pursuit of innovative educative places.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Communication is a human need. Teachers need to communicate as well as students. Teachers are responsible for creating a good environment in their classes. Teachers need to work not only on their own communicative skills, but also they need to develop students' willingness to express ideas, feelings and doubts.

More over than just knowing the syllabus, teachers need other essential factors to cover the objective of meaningful teaching. The factors that are going to be discussed in the present theoretical framework, which have been proved to work as some of the essential needs in the personality of a teacher, are the following: to motivate and get to know your students, to create and maintain a good environment in the classroom (classroom management), and to be flexible in the syllabus according to the class characteristics.

Teachers may face different experiences in a class, that is why, the analysis and self evaluation must take part in a teacher's task after class. The three general aspects that are going to be presented in the following pages are to help teachers to achieve important results in their academic role. Although there are more useful factors a teacher needs to succeed in a class, the ones I selected were essential in my learning and development as a teacher.

Motivating and getting to know your students.

Teaching and educating are actions that are never going to disappear. Mothers have, by instinct, the need to teach their babies basic surviving tips. Schore (1994) emphasizes that the mother or caregiver is not just the infant's

supplier of food, but she is also the primary contributor and mediator of the light, sound, pressure, and temperature that impact the infant.

Mothers play a very important role in their babies' life. Mothers are the energy babies need to survive, to grow and relate to others. The role mothers must play with their babies is not just teaching basic surviving tips; mothers implement caring and motivation to make the path of knowledge more pleasant and long lasting. As mothers are the main character in babies' lives, teachers are some of the main characters in the life of a student.

If mothers are to support, guide and motivate the learning of babies, teachers are to continue with the same labor. The inefficient role of a mother in her duty of conducting kids to their first contacts of knowledge and experimentation results in an inefficient future student. The inefficient role of a teacher teaching may result in a negative impact in the comprehension of the topic to be learnt.

Although the word motivation is complex to be explained in a few words, I share the thinking that Wiseman and Hunt used to describe motivation. "Motivation: an internal state that arouses students to action, directs them to certain behaviors, and assists them in maintaining that arousal and action with regard to behaviors important and appropriate to the learning environment" (Wiseman, D. & Hunt, G., 2008, p43). When students are motivated, they are inspired and enthusiastic about a goal or action. Students are encouraged by the motivation to achieve their objective, and while they are motivated, their behavior is influenced by the emotion and interest the motivation brings. When lack of motivation and attention towards a student is present, students can feel frustration, apathy, or experiment a rebellious attitude towards the learning and

teaching process. “A student who has grown accustomed to receiving low grades, for example, generally will not be motivated by the threat of receiving more low grades” (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008, p.48)

To have a relevant and significant learning, teachers need to do something more than repeating an action or situation. I observed in my experiences that stimulus and motivation are very important in the meaningful learning. “Estímulo es un cambio de energía en el ambiente físico que actúa sobre el organismo y desencadena una respuesta” (Arcila, 2001, p.20). Stimulus is a reaction in a human and every living thing. Sometimes mothers can teach kids common and daily habits with no need of stimulus, as they are: making their children washing hands before eating, greeting people, say thank you and please, among others. But, unfortunately, most of the time, routine habits are difficult for kids to adopt. With stimulus and motivation, the activities become easier to be achieved. Although children know that they have to accomplish the tasks, they sometimes avoid or reject to do them. Motivation and stimulus are good ways to make kids get interested in a task or achieving a goal and both are applied in school as well.

Learning a topic, a lesson or a subject is not just a matter of time and repetition, it is a matter of experimentation in life, a matter of feeling and thinking. “El aprendizaje no es un proceso simplemente intelectual, sino también un proceso emocional” (Arcila, 2001, p.32). Our emotions make us change our development in life. So, students change their attitude, their behavior and their response according to their emotions. And when teachers are not aware of this assumption, some teachers commit the mistake to punish students because they are emotional too.

Although the word “motivation” can be related to several meanings, the classification done by most authors is “intrinsic motivation” and “extrinsic motivation”.

Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham, & Motoike (2001, p.109-120) identified the intrinsically motivated behavior as a performance motivated by the satisfaction and pleasure gotten from appealing in a particular activity. When students are intrinsically motivated in a subject, they are eager to know about the topic, with no prize or reward related. An intrinsically motivated student is touched emotionally by the achievement to be attained and not by the reward. When teachers achieve the intrinsic motivation in students, it means that students have been lighted and guided to the objective they must look forward and accomplish.

“Extrinsic motivation is motivation to become involved in an activity as a means to an end. Extrinsically motivated students become active in their learning because they understand that they will receive something of value in return if they do what the teacher desires” (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008, p.49). Although intrinsic motivation seems to be the best way to motivate students to follow their goals as students, extrinsic motivation is a functional tool when it is gradually used, with no abuse of it.

Most children glow with excitement when they see a sticker to their latest homework effort. When offered a special privilege, most adolescents perk up with interest. Positive emotion and a spike in students' willingness to participate is what teachers often see when they introduce extrinsic rewards to the learning environment. The conclusion seems to be that extrinsic rewards are effective motivators that can contribute to teachers' efforts to manage classrooms (Reeve, 2006 p.645)

When extrinsic motivation is in a misuse or in abuse of its function, the behavior and willingness of the student can suffer an alteration in the intrinsic

motivation that the teacher should be working on. If teachers use extrinsic motivation as part of the main objective of students to achieve goals and intrinsic motivation is not practiced, encouraged and praised emotionally, students won't react positively to the task if there is no concrete prize to obtain. On the other hand, if the extrinsic motivation is repetitive and with no real effort to be obtained, students will be apathetic and their indifference to the topic or goal will take presence in class. The importance of being creative and resourceful when using extrinsic motivations in class is essential to succeed in the main objective. "Extrinsic rewards are ubiquitous in educational settings. They offer many benefits, such as their capacity to structure a learning environment and communicate a message of a job well done. At the same time, however, extrinsic rewards carry potential hidden costs and, hence, liabilities" (Reeve, 2006 p.660). Although it would be wonderful to have students in class by an intrinsically motivated attitude, the reality is that most students act towards extrinsic rewards.

When I had my first practices as a formal teacher, I could appreciate the benefits of extrinsic motivation. Most of the time, I had better results with extrinsic rewards than negative results. Negative consequences can happen when teachers use extrinsic motivation although they measure the amount properly. The kids' reactions, related to motivators, are not only guided by the amount of motivation received, or by the type of motivator; the reaction depends also on the student's personality. If a kid is used to react only by receiving prizes, that kid may have troubles in class to achieve goals related to academic pursues if he does not receive motivators for every goal he is expected to achieve. I understand when Reeve mentions the potential hidden costs

extrinsic motivators bring to a class or teacher, because although these motivators may help teachers succeed, at the same time, those motivators can distract students and teachers to achieve learning goals.

As a teacher, it is important to consider analyzing the consequences and possible defects in an academic technique, in order to measure the benefits and good use of the educational strategies to implement in a class.

Humans are emotional. Either people show or not show emotions, it is known that people feel and experiment changes in their mood. Some people know how to control their emotions and some others are not able to control or limit their actions when being emotional. Some students are more emotional than others, as well as some teachers are more tolerant than others are. "In any learning situation, where individuals are required to act and interact with others, there are potential social and emotional (affective) constraints and pressures that may interfere with effective learning" (Vale & Feunteun, 1995, p.127)

The importance of knowing the students' personalities, frustrations and feelings is essential for teachers and the success of the class. It has been proven that efficient and meaningful learning comes easier with trustworthy, caring and empathetic teachers (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). The leadership a teacher can attain in a class is not measured by the strong personality and loud voice, it is achieved by the number of students that trust him/her and by how many students have had positive responses towards his guidance. Suranna (2000) studied a 5-year teacher preparation program at the University of Connecticut. The study showed that a teacher leader was perceived to be a good classroom teacher, who was modern in theory and top practice and who

put always students to high expectations while also providing unswerving care and support.

“In order to be effective with teens, adults need to know all kinds of things about the dynamic nature of adolescence, like how to calm down the hysterical students who just had a fight with her best friend...”(Potter, S.A, 2009, p. 21). When teachers are worried about the topic and not about the methods on how to get students attention and interest, all the aspects that surround a teenager's life are always going to be distracters and opponents of the teacher's goal. Teenage students carry a world of worries on their back, and when they get into the classroom, they bring all those worries to class. For a teenager it is very complicated to switch off his feelings and get concentrated to what he is supposed to think and learn.

“For those who do not remember adolescence and can't recall the horror, let me remind you of how difficult it is to concentrate when you are attracted to the person sitting next to you, or walk through a cafeteria with perspiration stains on your shirt, or are left out of a social event. Add this the pain of making a mistake in front of your peers, which is what teens risk every day in the classroom...” (Potter, S.A, 2009, p. 21)

Teaching students is a serious task to be done, as serious as educating children at home, raising kids and caring for them. When a teacher has no intention to make students be part of his/her objective to know and care, the task can become difficult and stressing; when the teacher is eager to explore his/her mission as it is to guide, know students, and be supportive in the learning process of students, the experience of both, teacher and student, becomes pleasant and successful.

Finally, after the study and investigation in this subject matter, I note the

importance of an action and reaction in students. To set motivators in a class teachers have to know at least the general needs and characteristics of the class assigned. Motivators can grow efficient students, but teachers are at risk of growing inefficient students when the learning goal is not the priority but the motivator is. To find a balance in the use of material motivators is useful to set educative priorities in a class with kids, as well as finding an effective way to approach to students needs in a classroom of teenagers with stressing conditions when being in a class of a mixture of personalities.

To motivate students, teachers need to know first their students to be effective in their goals. Students have not experienced yet what a teacher has. Students do not have some answers to some of their problems, yet, or to their doubts; they are in search for answers, and teachers should know the hidden signs of their wandering students in search for attention and direction. In order to have effective methods to motivate students, it is important to observe and analyze them.

Classroom Management.

“We define management as those actions taken to create an environment that makes it possible for teachers to teach and students to learn. This means creating a supportive, inclusive and nonthreatening environment” (Savage, T & Savage, M, 2009, p. 66).

Now, managing efficiently a group is more than setting a pile of rules that students need to follow and respect. Managing a group is to set goals to prepare a positive, effective and understanding environment that a teacher is responsible to manage. A classroom with rules may not work with no managing

of them. Rules do not work alone, they need to be managed, controlled and motivated by a leader, who is the person in charge of a class or an activity. Teachers need to be leaders for their students, they need to represent not only an authority, but also, they need to raise in students the spark of growing and responsibility. To manage a group, a teacher needs to communicate effectively the classroom goal. Communication sometimes is not as effective as it should be in a class. It may happen because of the lack of information about the need of a good forthcoming environment, cooperation, sharing of ideas and respect, among other factors.

“From babyhood onwards, everybody starts (and never ceases) to learn how to communicate effectively and how to respond to other people’s communications” (Broughton, et al. 1978, 1980, p.30). Children learn according to their environment. It is not surprising to see how a baby tries to communicate needs from the first months of life. Communication is a very essential need of humans, and the way they learn it is as important as the way they make use of it.

Most humans are able to acquire how to speak and express orally their needs. The learning of knowledge has passed from generations to generations for centuries, and the message has remained in humans, but the way it has been taught has not remained; it has been modified. Several studies and theories have proved the need of approaching to human’s individuality, needs and skills in order to have a long-lasting learning.

In a situation where students feel in constant observation, with lack of encouragement because of their good achievements, lack of effective communication, and lack of confidence, the objective of the program can be

ruined. "When learners feel relaxed and at ease with their classmates, it encourages a wider sharing and exchange of ideas" (Vale & Feuteun, 1995, p.21). How many times do teachers set goals to have a relaxed and sharing environment when planning a class? It is a reality that teachers plan more according to their programs and systems than to the relationships in class. Vale & Feuteun (1995 p.25) observed the preoccupation of the author in this topic, as it was expressed the following: "It is surprising that very few books deal with the importance of establishing positive relationships among the children in the class (and between the teacher and pupils) at the beginning of a language course". Creating a good environment in class is not just for children learning a language or subject; it is for all levels of education. To create a relationship with respect, tolerance, and sharing becomes, for teachers, some of the important goals to achieve in a class. When teachers get a good environment in class, they can guide, teach, listen, share, communicate, stimulate, help students, and make them grow up.

"Not only you have to teach your students the social skills they need to function well in your class, but you will also have to enforce those skills by insisting that they treat each other and you with courtesy"(Thompson, 2007, p.127). To get students respect, teachers have to start showing them how to practice it. If teachers show off students when they are in a mistake, if teachers ignore students, if teachers have no patient towards students, how are students going to follow the role model? Teachers are role models for students, and maybe unfortunately, more important than the ones they should have at home. "For many students, you may be the only person in their life, who routinely stresses the importance of hard work and good character" (Thompson, 2007,

p.128). If teachers decided to be part of this role, teachers should be proud of being so. With all the imperfections a human being can have, the only imperfection that should not be allowed in teachers is the lack of self analysis to identify mistakes made against the reputation and dignity towards students. “Remember that in the eyes of the community, you are a role professional all of the time” (Gardner, ed. Thompson, 2007, p.129).

Meyer and Turner (2006) have made several studies that have proved that when the classroom climate is ambiguous or negative, evasive behaviors, disruption, and cheating become very common to happen in students. Teachers are responsible for the environment in a class. The security, productivity, respect, tolerance, enthusiasm, and well being of students are in the teachers’ hands. If the teacher is in no condition to provide the essential factors for the good environment in the classroom and well being of students, he must be morally forced to ask for external help to his supervisor or principal of the institution he works at.

As communication was set as an essential factor in a classroom, listening is also important to be practiced in a class. Listening is not only a skill for students, but it is a skill to be developed by teachers as well.

To create a good classroom management teachers need to know what to do and what not to do. Potter, S (2009, p.66) wrote the importance of knowing and setting limits and rules in a class for the benefit of teachers and students. *The five things teenagers need from grown-ups* are essential for a good relationship in a classroom.

1. *Distinguish between their needs and wants. This is Needs vs. Wants.*

2. *Respond to them but not react with them. This is Responding vs. Reacting.*
3. *Relate to them but not identify with them. This is Relation vs. Identifying.*
4. *Be friendly with them but not be their friend. This is Friendly vs. Friends.*
5. *Focus on their needs and not on our own. This is Other vs. Self.*

Management and communication are two factors that come together. Effective management is set with a good communication. When a teacher is able to identify the real needs of a pupil and he gives what the pupil needs and not what the teacher wants to offer, then the result in the student will be useful for his development and growing. But, to work with effective objectives it is essential to have effective communication. Teachers need to communicate students what they expect from them and what the teacher is able to do for them.

To manage a class is as important as to plan a lesson. Understanding that management is a positive way to ease the path of learning, teachers increase the opportunity in their students to succeed in the class objective and/or in a student's personal objective.

Finally, if teachers and the institution staff work with students and not just for students, the management and communication that is expected to achieve in a group can be more meaningful for the members involved in the objective. A good environment is not set by the number of rules an institution or a teacher has, but by the number of students who are involved in the well being and respect of a class.

Flexibility in the syllabus

Flexibility is “the ability to take different approaches to a problem, think of ideas in different categories, or view a situation from several perspectives” (Davis and Rimm, 1994, p.189). Teaching in kindergarten levels proves teachers how flexible the education can be. When a teacher has everything planned, prepared and set for a class, it is in kindergarten where they can face that the process of learning acquiring for kids cannot be strictly programmed and controlled. “Any consideration of children starting school cannot escape the finding that children come to school with different levels of skills” (Dockett Perry, 2007, p.24). If students come with different level of skills, how can teachers manage a class to cover the objectives? Lin, Lawrence and Gorrell (2003) expressed “the practical unimportance of academic skills as children begin school, stressing teachers’ preferences for kids to start school with aptitude to express what they need, respect others’ turns, not to interrupt , follow instructions and share”. When teachers plan not just for achieving the syllabus goal, but for achieving a significant impact on the students’ responsibility, willingness and enthusiasm for improving in life, it is when the role of the teacher becomes in a guide, a support and a facilitator of tools and means to success for achieving students’ goals, and he stops being merely a provider of knowledge.

“Kindergarten is often the time when the transition begins to be made toward more experiences with lessons, although this is also the time when ambitious educators sometimes force too much formality too soon” (Krogh & Slentz, 2001, p.10). As children have a process of learning, and the beginning of their education is considered the foundation of a self-confident and

responsible student, teachers are the architects of the students' well construction basis.

A teacher needs to set goals for every objective, and for better results, they have to know the social and educative background of the class to be able to achieve his goals. Sometimes, teachers try to be so professional and formal that they fall into a serious role with little flexibility. Every level of teaching must be studied so deeply to be able to succeed. A teacher cannot talk to all students the same way, a teacher needs to moderate information according to the level of teaching, to moderate the vocabulary, and moderate his or her own personality for every different age of students. Every teacher has his or her own personality, but the same personality cannot be presented to any kind of teaching level.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, if a teacher is not able to guide and teach students with at least the three factors mentioned before, students are at risk of having an apathetic, untrustworthy and lethargic learning.

The more a teacher analyzes and evaluates students' behaviors, reactions, achievements and needs in the same way they do it to their own performance, the more meaningful the learning can be in students.

Motivation, analysis, classroom management, and the good use of a syllabus are useful tools and means to bring control over the class objective if the teacher is able to explore this area of education. Although there are other factors that can help teachers achieve academic goals, the real and meaningful learning will come after teachers decide to touch a student's life by being a role model, a guide and a human able to improve his own life.

A teacher must plan and act. Students of the new era are having more distractions than in the past. Technology is present in every classroom, even in kindergarten. Little students and teenage students are living in the fast track. Copying from the board, writing misspelled words twenty times, listening to the teacher for forty minutes before the bell rings are useless activities from past decades. Teachers are part of the education of the new generation of students, and they must be aware of the characteristics, of the needs and possible adjustments they had to make in their classes. If a teacher decides to make adjustments without knowing the specific type of students that teacher is going to have, then the changes to improve can take longer to work, or, unfortunately, can even not be appropriate to be effective.

In summary, a teacher can be theoretically prepared to face a topic and present it, but this will not ensure the success in front of a class of students. Many questions about a students' failure can be answered when teachers decide to approach the student's life. To approach a student does not cost money, does not take years, it takes willingness to do what a teacher has to do.

A good analysis of a group, a student, a syllabus and one's self work is helpful and useful for motivating, managing and achieving the syllabus' goal teachers are expected to get from students.

When people read they can use their imagination to create ideas, when students learn they can make ideas come true, and when teachers teach and guide, they can create a productive and cooperative human.

My life as a teacher started with my first opportunity throughout my last two years at college, and I was ready to be productive and cooperative to face that experience.

TEACHING ENGLISH AT THE *CEPI*.

My first experience as a teacher started in the place where I worked as a social assistant. I had the great opportunity to bring my knowledge as a teacher to a private school in Chetumal, Q.Roo during my seventh semester of college.

I started my social service as part of the graduation requirement we have to accomplish as students, and with this, I had the first grade students at the private school where I applied to practice for my profession as a teacher. I have to say that it was my first contact with children as students having me as the teacher of the class. The first problem I had to get through was that at the University, where I was studying, we were being trained to teach EFL in junior, junior high schools and higher education. Due to the circumstances, I had to find out by myself all the information I needed for planning my lessons. I started following step by step the book I had to use, without adding something else or taking something out of the content. Being flexible with the syllabus was not my intention and was not in my future plans. I had no idea of the need of flexibility in a class with diverse needs and diverse personalities of students.

I had teachers at the University that used a lot of intrinsic motivation with university students. For me, a university student, intrinsic motivation worked pretty well; but, I feared that with little kids as students it was not as useful and effective as it was with young adults. So, being in my first year of teaching, I decided to have extrinsically motivated students to ensure the class objective. I used to bring candies and chocolates frequently as part of the motivation of the day. And every day I had stickers to give to the most participative, the helper, and any other target they were able to accomplish. By being young, with no

huge economical responsibilities, I had no problem on spending my money on my students. I had no idea if that decision was going to work for long or if it was accepted by pedagogues, but I knew I had to do something interesting to make my students get motivated and love my class.

In my first months, it was very hard for me to do everything as I would have liked to. As an example, I can say that in those days I did not know how to measure the amount of activities my kids were able to do, I was experimenting and observing their behavior and abilities they had to know, how to deal with my lesson plans, as well as the kind of activities I had to use in every different topic. Through the time, I started to collect all the information possible I needed to have for my classes.

Some learning came with all these frustrations, and some more satisfactions made me believe I was in the right path, with effort, willingness, and determination to achieve my goals. I can remember that every time I planned a lesson and activity with my first graders I did not plan the real amount of time a 6 year old kid needed to write the date on their note books, the vocabulary words or any other information. By having every day the same "issue" in class with the timing when copying, I learnt to make things easier for my students. Observation and analysis had to be present in my class. The less they spent copying things on the board, the more they practiced the vocabulary and listening skills. I started bringing my home-made pictures for each vocabulary word of the month, I pasted them all around the class room in order to make my students get familiarized with the word and the picture, with this, they did not have to copy all the words on their note books; then, for homework, I divided the set of vocabulary words in groups of four to have them write

the word with its picture. It did not just help me on my “timing” in class, but also, it helped me to make my students remember the words of the month easily.

In first grade, students had neither any fluency nor enough vocabulary to participate actively in a conversation in English, and at the same time, I was not able to have my full class in English. I was worried to make them practice the language more than what I was doing at the moment. I decided to sing songs of their favorite cartoons but in English. The first song I used in class was “Scooby Dooby Doo”, and although my students knew the character and the cartoon, they did not know the song in English, but by gesticulating and having mimics for every word, they started deducing the meaning of the song. Of course they loved the catchphrase of the song, so I used to sing it when I needed some help in class with books or any other material.

Now, that I have worked in other schools I feel that the lack of experience did not help me to make my students participate more actively in conversations and activities to develop their speaking skills. Although I tried hard by bringing songs for kids, pasting pictures and drawings, words in vivid colors and posters, I have the feeling that my lack of experience did not help me to have better development of skills with my first group. Every two days students had their reading class, with yes/no questions at the end of the reading. Students read chorally, in pairs, or silently while I was reading and then at the end they had to answer the oral questions. Few students were able to understand by themselves the reading of the week. I had to perform some parts of the reading to make it more relevant and significant for them. But when it was time for answering, the yes/no type of answer became too easy for them, despite the content was not. Sometimes they had to mention colors or characteristics of a

character, but they were never asked to think and analyze what they read. I could see that sometimes it was easy for students to answer without understanding the question. Some students knew that by finding the clue word then, the answer was the rest of the sentence. But the objective was not only to memorize colors, or vocabulary, it was to make students reproduce the language, not just recall it. But in those days, I had no option to improve what I was doing. My lack of experience and lack of confidence in my teaching methods did not help me to have useful methods in reading comprehension.

“How much authentic communication occurs around reading predetermined stories, answering predetermined questions, and filling in worksheets? Probably very little” (Zamel & Spack, 2002, p.38). My performance in this subject matter in those days, I have to admit, was not useful to practice speaking skills in class.

One day, when I was checking one of my student's mail book, a notebook to inform parents about their kids' development and homework, I found a note from a parent telling me I did not check properly the exam of his boy. I checked as correct an answer in his exam that was wrong and the father requested me to be aware of those mistakes, because if not, his son was going to make the same mistake thinking he was right. I was completely ashamed about that complaint. It was the first time I had to face a situation like that as a teacher. My mistake: to consider some students are able to do, write or know something because they have done it before.

Since I had that incident, I realized the importance of grading every single exam cautiously for the benefit of my students learning; there should be no assumption that a student knows something, we have to make sure they

know it. Although I know it is hard to admit our mistakes, the best thing a teacher can do to improve himself/herself is to learn from mistakes, but teachers have to accept when they are wrong: consciousness. "Examinations should be conducted for purposeful evaluation and not just to pass or fail a candidate" (Dash & Dash, 2007, p.30)

I can visualize one of the hardest situations I have had as a teacher, a hyperactive child with behavior problems. The critical situation was not only that he had conduct problems, but that we were at the middle of the school year when he entered my class of first graders. My students were already adapted and they knew each other as they knew the "new" kid in class because he was a member of a class behind. I did not know why that happened, and I do not know it now, but the fact is that I was living in that situation: a kid with a label on his forehead representing the bully guy of the school.

If I had had a little instruction on some psychological or pedagogical area, I am completely sure I would have made better decisions, but it was not my reality. Through the time, I collected some different perspectives and points of view about my class's situation. Managing my class and my students became a priority for me. I realized that it was my duty to collect all the information possible to analyze the situation in an impartial manner to be fair with all my students. Fairness does not work for all students, what is fair for a teacher can be unfair for a student's perspective, but it was in my hands and I had to take control over my class. Frustrating days came with the new kid in class to make me understand that I needed good methods to apply to have a fine environment. I decided to pay less attention to all the small problems during classes having the "new" student involved. I tried to make the rest of the class

take no notice of the noises of their classmate, when he was being naughty, by using my so called songs to get their attention. Most of the time it meant to start singing my instructions and clapping for every action they had to accomplish. For example, students had to open their yellow note book and write the title of the topic. To emphasize the activities to do, I started singing the instruction clapping the commands. During the first weeks the new student had to work with me on my desk, due to the fact that our classroom was incredibly small, it was a room of 4m² more or less. Students had tables for two which could not be separated from their chairs. In those days I had 13 students, including the new kid. I knew that he could not stay on my desk more than three weeks, so I hurried to get a small desk for him. I decided to change things and help out everybody, those who did not accept him, and the one who felt left behind. The time was passing and my kids were not bored from having stickers, songs, and any other prize to feel great in class, so my extrinsically motivated students were still enthusiastic about the objective to get a reward. They really liked it and the “no more new” kid started trying to get something from what I was offering them to get, of course, just in case they really deserved it.

As time went by, topics were taught and the kids were practicing the language, my patience was working to help that kid to control his emotions in order to be involved in our activities. Honestly, it was really hard for me, a student in training to become a formal teacher, and for my self-confidence in the subject matter. In the mean time, I decided to get the best of that situation, collect all the material I was using that year for my new coming experience. Collecting material was a great idea of one of my teachers in college, whose subject to teach was related to this point, collect and create all the material

possible to have your own portfolio of activities. The portfolio worked so well that motivated me to create more and more ideas to fill it.

While I was motivated to create a useful portfolio of activities, my classroom management was working as well. My students of first grade had to work on their communication to talk about their feelings in class to solve their problems as I had to practice a good communication with them setting the class rules and the class' objectives. I had to be able to know my students needs and the reason why they behaved sometimes in a taunting way. I understood I was not alone, I knew that sharing with the principal my questions and doubts had to help me make better decisions, so I had to approach her. The familiarity in the school let me feel relaxed sometimes when in trouble because the teachers staff was able to give an advice if I asked for one.

I had to work with my students and for my students. I was about to desist sometimes, but there was always a reason for me to get in the track again. Students started to know that we were a team, and that we were going to end the year together, so, we had to help each other to do it right.

The first year ended and my kids achieved the class goal: share, respect and work together, so I was glad and I felt proud about my achievements. I learnt that students are motivated by their teachers' actions, emotions and decisions. If a teacher is committed to the class, he may commit mistakes when solving a problem, but his real good intentions to work for the benefit of students are going to guide him to the right solution. Although I committed mistakes because of my lack of experience, I was able and eager to fix them.

On the second year of experience in the same school, I felt I was prepared to teach in a better way than the year before. I thought I was going to

start with better sources in the teaching area. I got surprised when the principal of the school asked me to teach in kindergarten to two-year-old students.

My first week in kinder was really frustrating. I could not teach a thing to those yelling babies, crying for their mommies, and unfortunately, I was not their mom! Now, I understand that teachers need to be prepared for new challenges and take them as a positive learning to improve as a professional teacher. Challenges are the motor for me to evaluate myself and to make myself progress in every task I have in my life.

During my first close contact with babies, I learnt more than I thought I could get from them because of their lack of communication. In fact, communication was not a problem for my little kids. How surprising it was for me to see that they had such an ability to remember my songs, the vocabulary words to be practiced, commands, and my English version stories.

My first months were hard. Kids seemed to miss their stability at home, the comforts and easiness of having what they wanted in just seconds, and being at school the attention was not as personalized as they might be used to at home. They had to scream louder to be heard because other kids were a competition with really intense screams. They had to call the teacher's attention every time they felt someone else was stealing it from them, as well as they had to be helped by the teacher more times than their competitors. For my two to three year old kids, the first month was hard, so it was for me, but I cannot say we did not work on our program at all. The program was more flexible than in elementary school, we had tons of time, which I did not have the year before, we had more handcrafts, more stories, more songs and more hugs to give. It was a different world for me. At the beginning, I have to admit it, I missed my ex

students, I missed the energy and the dynamism a teacher has with six year old students. But, my new personality as a teacher was flourishing. My stories and the performance (acting out of stories) were my favorite act in classes. I really loved telling stories in English to 3 year old students with an excellent acting out. I felt so comfortable by being myself in class, with no judgments while performing, with applauses because of my incredible stories, and feeling like Snow White in a school. I had to stop hurrying things; I started to be more patient and flexible. In the first weeks I had to sing and tell stories during the whole day, without working on the picture of the day or the student book.

Being flexible with the syllabus helped, and setting objectives according to my students helped me to start a good year. Setting the first rules, creating a good environment, managing the class and being organized and making my students get involved in class was useful for the next months of class. Students started to identify their responsibilities and to practice their daily habits. While the time was passing by, their growing was being helpful in class. They started as toddlers, who had to learn social roles, developed motor skills, practice listening skills, respectful behavior, and to communicate their needs, and, by the end of the year, they were able to be more independent, responsible and self-confident, and, of course, they had practiced basic skills of the English language.

I knew in that year of experience that I was able to do what I wanted with willingness and effort. In that moment I knew that if I had no information at college about preschool teaching or elementary teaching, I had to get it for myself. It was me the one who was going to live all those experiences in schools, I was not going to accept to reject an opportunity of life because I felt

out of sorts in the level to teach, or I felt unable to teach something more than what I was being taught. I knew that every experience I was having gave me enough learning to want know more about the teaching field.

The experience gotten in kindergarten was of great importance for my future life as a professional teacher. All the knowledge acquired during my last year of college gave me the opportunity to improve myself as a teacher not just in training, but as a graduate student to face the real world of a formal teacher.

Although my social service lasted only more or less 4 months, the opportunity to keep practicing lasted 2 years. My last two years of college were really productive thanks to my social service. I ended the first year of practice with 10 students turning four, and my singing abilities grew as my students did. Although I feel that little kids can learn songs faster than adults, I have to admit that they were not very aware of all the vocabulary practiced from day one to the last day of school. But, most commands were practiced from day one until the last day of school that they were able to remember them.

The purpose of the social service is not just for serving and doing a great labor for free, it is also for learning how to start your profession and how to start setting the first bricks of your future.

I encourage those students in college to consider the social service as a very significant issue to be accomplished in a serious and analytic manner. It is not easy to have good opportunities, I know, but it is our responsibility to try to get the best options and opportunities that are around us.

Although the social service is to assist to public institutions, not to private associations, my major had no other place than the *CEPI* to perform as teachers. In those days I did not think about the importance of having more

places where to practice, but nowadays I consider important to have enough places where to practice and improve the teaching methods of learners to be teachers.

I can say that in two years I had the opportunity to meet with great theories and experiences related to education and linguistics by reading Howard Gardner and Chomsky as part of my personal objective to improve myself as a learner to be a teacher. To motivate little students, to know them and care for their real needs, to manage a class with social difficulties and to adapt the syllabus of the school when teaching toddlers were the beginnings of my learning as a formal teacher.

I am glad to have made important and meaningful decisions about my social service. The opportunity to work and study should be able for everybody; the willingness to do it depends on every one. I achieved significant learning in my training to be a teacher, which was essential for my career. My actions and performing as a teacher were conducted more consciously because of the great experience lived in my two years at CEPI.

TEACHING ENGLISH AT YITS'ATIL.

When I finished my last semester of college, I thought I was going to keep working in Chetumal, specifically at the school where I started my social service. Suddenly, in the middle of July I received a call from Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo It was about a great position in a bilingual school. I have to say that it was really hard for me to make up my mind and move to another city and to start teaching with a different system, staff, students and books. With all the mixed ideas I had in my head about my new life in that city, I decided to take the

risk and prove myself that I was able to succeed wherever I wanted to go.

When I arrived to Playa del Carmen, I felt out of place, shy, and extremely anxious at work. I learnt everything about the new books I was to teach in *Yits'atil*, I just needed to get used to the new school and its system. Needless to mention, as a recent college alumnae, I was nervous but at the same time, confident of my skills and training. I started with two groups: Kinder 1 and preschool, 25 kids in each group, very different from the experience I had during my social service. Here I was again, in a totally new situation to face. Hence, I started feeling freaked out, thinking on how I was going to deal with that amount of kids asking for attention.

The difference from my last job was huge. I had in the other school classes from 10 to 14 students and in the new school I had classes of 25 little kids. The number of students was not the only variation; the programs and the institution were new methods of teaching for me. The programs and books to be used demanded a higher level of proficiency with different skills to practice. Incredibly for me, I had to work with a book that consisted of different stories to read. I could not believe that I was to teach my students how to read and write in English. Now, it was not just teaching how to speak properly, but to write and read to little students who do not even know how to do it in their native language. Since the very first moment I knew I had to make all my effort and spend time to be prepared for the new challenge. Then, in that moment, instead of feeling anxious I felt eager to start.

My first days in kindergarten were exiting. As I knew before, little students are such souls filled with beautiful feelings and surprises, and this was not the exception in the rule. I had no problem in being adapted with my

students and with the book. I was socked with the amount of activity and exercises we could do in class. The book I was using had several activities and ideas to use; unfortunately, I did not have enough time to use them. I had to select and use the best of them for my daily objective.

My creativity was flourishing with each class, my willingness to improve myself was increasing, and my satisfaction of the results gotten was of immense pleasure. Teaching how to read and write to 5 year old students was not a difficult task for me to achieve. In fact, I enjoyed every single class and activity. My imagination and resourcefulness was helped by the book and by the everyday experience of classes.

I can remember how much fun I had in my first performance teaching sounds of vowels and consonants. At the beginning I hesitated about the idea of succeeding in teaching the alphabet and reading, but my students trusted me so much that I knew I had to do the best. Little kids believe teachers know everything, they can solve any problem, and that they have the right answer for everything. That was the role I knew I was playing in class, my kids made me realize they thought I had those characteristics; I could not misuse the role they wanted me to play. I needed to be responsible for my task and my acts.

When a teacher is aware of her /his role in class and with students, it becomes easier to have a good performance and achievement of goals. I wanted to be aware of my acts, I wanted to know that I was not just teaching a subject, and I wanted to know that I was more than a teacher for those little kids because they trusted me not just as a person in charge of them, but as a close character in their lives.

My two groups were different in different ways. Kinder 1 was a group

where the practice of the language was not the only thing I had to have in mind. Little students need several activities to verify they have a well understanding of the subject matter. On the other hand, little kids cannot spend a lot of time doing the same thing; they need dynamism in their classes not just as part of a beautiful and successful program but because they are little kids who need to vary their activities to have the teachers' attention.

Managing the two groups was not difficult for me this time. I was prepared, with past experiences that were a guide for me to prevent things that may interfere in my objective. I knew I had the capability and the willingness to act as a real and good teacher, instructing my students, verifying their understanding and their well practice, and supporting them. I knew I had to set my goals, practice them, and accomplish them even if I was to face difficulties while trying.

In kinder 1, I had the opportunity to play the role of a doctor, a mommy, a shark, a kitten, a fisherman, etc. How was it possible? I was being imaginative to get my students attention, to thrive their reasoning although they were in a fantasy with my stories. That is the magic of teaching in kindergarten, that you can be whatever you want to, it is up to you, the only condition is to enjoy it in every single moment. When a teacher stops from enjoying their job it is when they should reconsider their goals and their purposes of working with people in need to be instructed in an efficient way. And, fortunately, I was enjoying my job, my duties and my responsibilities in every class.

I had to start by observing my students, identifying the right methods for each one to work with me to have the right motivation and encouragement.

In this new school I had not to spend a lot of money on students. I

decided to use more intrinsic motivation to make my students get involved, although I did not forget that there were special moments to have extrinsically motivated students. I did not start with monetary prizes and awards, but with surprises and encouragement. Students felt supported even when they did not have the right answer. I wanted to improve what I had done before and to experience what I feared to do before. My personality was more confident of my acts and decisions. I felt comfortable with my preparation as a teacher that my attitude was positive towards learning.

Because of the experience of the last two years, I knew there were important things to keep in mind as a teacher: to observe, analyze, listen, motivate, encourage your class and get the best from the program. I wanted to be able to keep learning, for me, that was only a bit of what I had to learn.

All the activities I was having in kinder 1 were just sparks I had at night when planning. I used to sing almost every instruction as I sang my questions to be answered by students. Sometimes I felt that I was a clown, a magician, or a comedian trying to get people's attention and interest. The more my students wanted to participate in my games, the more I felt I was on the right path.

One of the most common and favorite games in class with kinder 1 was to paste a card with a word, picture or subject of the week around the classroom. I used to have at least 4 pictures around, I picked 3 to 4 students to walk to the words I was saying aloud, so all kids were attentive to see if their classmates were in the right picture. We repeated the activity with different words, different purpose and different commands. The activity was possible due to the dimensions of the classroom. I had no desk and no chair in the classroom; I was always walking around the students and tables.

Kinder 3 was a little different, students were starting to copy words, to identify words, and to work more formal using their tables. Although, I had them motivated, we used to play with my home made puppets and pictures around the class. All the stories to be read every week were told with art material which I had to make while planning for my lessons. Reading became a very special, interesting and motivating activity for kinder 3 students. Telling stories by acting them out was really attracting for 5 to 6 year old students, as well as it was for younger kids. And, of course, the use of the book was not as simple as it seemed to be. I had to take courses, to go to conferences of the publisher house of the main book we used, to really grab the essence of the activities and methods. Attending to conferences was one of the most exciting things when working in *Yits'atil*; to have the opportunity to improve, to be updated in methodologies of education, to analyze and perfection the role as a teacher with great people with amazing experiences was a great heritage that institution gave me.

Despite my classes were large and the experience with large groups was not my specialty, I could manage both groups efficiently. I had no big issues with students. Most students were so involved in my class-games that they knew they had to respect the conditions of the class to help us get the activity done. I always tried to have every student be participative and active in my classes. For me, answering correctly was as important as trying, even more with those students who had difficulties to deal with answers in public. I wanted to have a good environment in class to make it possible for everybody to participate actively and happily. Our objectives were communicated and respected. I saw that kids were more conscious of their actions if they had a

small talk analyzing their actions instead of punishing or taking them out of a class. Students knew there was always an opportunity to correct their actions before a consequence did that for them.

I had the opportunity to live a great experience, my world changed with every objective achieved, with every smile, with every performance, with all the stories and songs. I knew I was on the right path, a teacher in training, and I knew I was never going to stop from learning.

I have to admit that the work I did in kinder 1 and 3 was not only part of my devotion to what I was doing; also, the institution let me work properly and successfully with a useful program. I could see that the two groups had similar characteristics. The two groups had good basis of what they had to know for their age, both groups had good conduct manners, and both groups knew what a consequence was. Despite I could have students who sometimes wanted to refuse to follow a rule, for me, instead of feeling challenged, I felt motivated to help that kid to like the rule and understand it.

Yits'atil institution taught me about real teaching, real commitments in a teaching staff, work in group but at the same time be responsible of my own group. I learnt that although you may feel that you are giving more than what you are paid for, never is enough, and that the satisfaction gotten is part of the paycheck. Making a good team is not only for students, but also for teachers, that the good environment in a classroom is always going to ease every possible obstacle in the group learning. I learnt that year that kindergarten students need devoted teachers, who love what they do and who are aware of the conditions they are going to work.

My year in kindergarten gave me the opportunity to see myself with more

respect as a teacher. I valued my mistakes of the past to improve my ways of the present and plan better for the future. I thought I had almost all the tools to be successful as a teacher. I was not aware of what my future had for me, but I was planning it. But while I was planning my next year as a teacher, my real future was a little away from my plans.

ENGLISH COORDINATOR.

To instruct, educate, guide, and teach a student was something exciting for me, but to coordinate teachers and programs was something really different I had never experienced.

In my second year of teaching after graduating I had the opportunity to be in charge of the English coordination of the Primary section in Yits'atil. The responsibility of my new position at work was of great importance for my present and future as a professional teacher.

My days of teacher were not over, I had to coordinate and at the same time to be in charge of the science subject in all the primary levels. I had not only to study the new subject to teach, but also, to study all the programs of English in order to be able to instruct and guide my teachers to have a good performance in their planning and classes. I was excited to face the new role, but at the same time I was anxious because of the new task I had in my hands. I had never been a science teacher in the past, even less a coordinator, but I knew I had the instruction from the UQROO to study programs, to evaluate and write lesson plans, to control activities and performances in classes, etc. Indeed, it was my first time in that position but it was not the first time for me to check lesson plans and to control general activities of a school. I had

participated during the last year in the same school with some activities for the general benefit of the school and I had to look for different theories of education to improve myself as a teacher. Therefore, I was not with a lot of experience but I had the enthusiasm to play a good role in the coordination as well as in the subject to teach.

In the past, I was working for myself and for my classes, so the achievements obtained were of personal satisfaction. I did not depend on other teachers to accomplish my objectives in class. As a coordinator, my objective depended on the performance of teachers in my charge, which was different from being a teacher. A coordinator needs to control the general activities and objectives of the section to manage, and at the same time, to be in constant contact with teachers. The successfulness of a coordinator of area, in a personal point of view, depends on a good management of teachers but in a positive attitude. "The first step in building trust in the supervisory process is to make teachers aware of the purposes of evaluation. Emphasize that it is collaborative, constructive enterprise" (Bergman, Powers, & Pullen, 2010, pp.52)

Coordinators are not to be friend teachers but it is important to have a good relationship with respect to have a positive environment and create a good atmosphere at work. Having a positive disposition in the coordination area, a sense of respect between the two main parts –teachers and coordinator- is of great impact in the well developing of the objectives of the institution. "The principal must be a diplomat. As we negotiate the minefields often set before us, we may not always have a choice of what to say, but we do have a choice how to say it" (Bergman, Powers & Pullen, 2010, pp.6). Working with students,

managing classes and organizing groups and events were helpful experiences for me as a teacher to develop my skills as a coordinator of area. If I had to learn how to have a good and positive communication with students, I was able to do it with the teachers' staff. At least, I had to try to use my past experiences in this new learning.

Albeit I presented a section of communication towards students in the theoretical framework it can be also applied among teachers. The same information and research work for a good communication with a teachers' staff. Working with students and working with teachers is essential to practice social skills. Communication and management require a sense of maturity in the leader of the team, and the team as well, needs to be conducted with meaningful motivation. Observation and analysis is part of the daily tasks a coordinator has to work on with teachers, classes, students and even parents relationship with students. To be able to communicate ideas, dispositions, methods and every need of the school, the coordinator needs to practice his listening skills to be able to respond to the needs of his staff.

I maintained a good relationship with the English teachers I coordinated, which helped me to have a good disposition from them to collaborate and work as a team. All of the teachers were new at school (including myself in that section), so it was not hard to set rules and responsibilities; we were there to start from almost nothing. Most of the teachers were Native Americans and it was great for me to practice and improve my English, so I got the courage to step on the same ladder they were standing, with the intention to inspire a good confidence of myself. A head leader needs to keep calm, be firm, be objective, be prepared and educated, be an inspiration for the team; I had to trust myself

to try my best to guide the group of teachers on my charge, take care of the students and face parents; all of it, with the best disposition, not an easy task, but it was impossible not to try. "School leaders are faced with everyone's problems, but they also have to joy of working with lively interested students and adults, witnessing the exhilaration of learning and helping people identify and solve problems" (Bergman, Powers & Pullen, p.1).

At the beginning of my duty, I may say I was completely anxious about my development, as well as the way to conduct myself in that field. Not everything was perfect for me; there were some days where I had to struggle with difficult situations out of my hands though they were part of my responsibility. Students with difficult personality, problems of attitude, low academic level, and truants were part of my daily activities to check and solve. "As principals, we often find ourselves in a squeeze play between parents, teachers, and students. We would like to think that we all have the children's best interests at heart, but there are times when the needs and wants of these constituencies do not mesh" (Bergman, Powers & Pullen, p.2)

The role of a principal or coordinator of area is very different from the teacher's role. The responsibilities differ in the way that teachers are aware of their daily plans, lessons, activities in class, grades, student's achievements, and programs. Coordinators in elementary levels need to cover those spaces teachers may flaw. If a teacher does not attend a class, the coordinator needs to cover him/her, either with his/her presence, or finding a substitute teacher; If a teacher is in a hurry with his or her grades, the coordinator needs to make sure grades come on time to fulfill the school agenda, it can be by helping the teacher or staying longer extra time to verify the teacher finishes, and then, the

coordinator needs to set purposes and commitments with the teacher with difficulties to cover the agenda.

In my position, I was not only supervising teachers' roles and goals, but students' progress and the Main Principal's needs and goals. The role of a coordinator seemed very demanding to me; I had to have and show patience, strong character in difficult situations, flexibility in special situations, and clearness of mind in hard situations.

During that year at school and as a coordinator, I have to admit that I was very distracted with personal plans that made me more difficult to perform the role. I was preparing my wedding, which was not going to be in the city I was living by the moment, so I had to travel almost every weekend to Mérida, Chetumal, Cancun and Cozumel for the arrangements. I was exhausted and I felt I was not a 100% fresh for every situation presented at school. I know that was my mistake, although I did not mix emotions at work, at least that was my intention, but my physical condition was different than the one I had had in kindergarten last year. Now, I realize how important emotional and physical states are when being at work.

During the first five months I had teachers coming and going from first grade. It was very difficult to find a teacher with all the characteristics required for first graders. Most teachers were Native Americans and the first graders did not speak English fluently, so, teachers used to get easily frustrated with the lack of communication with students. Hence, they had not enough patience, not just because those teachers did not speak fluent Spanish, but because they were not trained teachers to be in front of a class.

My main problems during this year was the lack of trained English

teachers, the different culture in the teacher's staff, and the lack of contact teachers had with the psychology of kids.

All of the teachers I had during that year had no kids at home. They came to the Caribbean to have great working experiences, but most of them did not share our Mexican culture, our beliefs, our customs, and rules. They were beautiful people inside, but with different culture and customs that made them seemed intolerant to the eyes of the staff of the school. The differences showed in our cultures during the months did not help them feel completely comfortable at work. Although they were responsible and educated, it became very difficult for them to understand the ways and decisions the school had. It was a struggle of cultures.

My role was not only to supervise their work, but at the same time to work like a bridge to join the school and teachers. And as I said before, although the decisions had to be set with no possible changes, I had to express them in the best way possible to have a positive attitude towards it.

Teachers knew they were in a different country, they were aware of the differences, and they committed themselves to try harder to follow the system we were at. Although they tried hard, some days it was very difficult for them to understand students' behavior, lack of respect (as they called it) and lack of interest. Students behaved differently in the first period than in the second period of the day, and teachers had problems to understand that. I had several meetings with the English teachers to talk about their development and their difficulties. We discussed the fact that the warm weather in the classrooms affected students' development and spam of attention in class. Teachers were worried about grades and attention but I was worried about the means and aims

to get students motivation and attention despite the weather conditions. The system we were working was more dynamic than copying from the board, staying sat during 2 or 3 hours in a row, and working for hours in the activity book. The education was changing, and students were in the process of this change, where teachers had to guide them to know their limits and respect them.

The experience in the coordination was full of learning. I never imagined how exhausting it was to be part of the life of a lot of people. I got interested in learning more about this field, but by the moment, I knew I had to improve myself as a teacher to be able to do it again. A coordinator or principal needs to be the head of the school, and by being so, that person needs to be committed in 100%.

Telling teachers what to do, how to do it, and why to do it was complicated for me at the beginning. I had to change my character to improve as a professional because, although the people who know me may say that I have a strong character when I want to express my thinking, I am undetermined to say what I need when I am anxious, insecure and apprehensive in a situation. And, I played my role as a coordinator with all those characteristics that did not help me be more assertive and concrete to guide teachers the first months. So, when someone wants to achieve a goal, as far or difficult it seems to be achieved, there are two things that a person needs: determination and courage. Then, knowledge comes.

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA.

One of the most desired challenges I had as a formal teacher was to have not only the opportunity, but also the capacity to teach in a higher level. Actually, while I was studying at the Universidad de Quintana Roo, my teachers were instructing me to design activities and lesson plans based on books used in a higher level.

During the second year in Playa del Carmen, having a full time job in the morning in Yits'atil, I decided to explore a new experience. I sent my curriculum to a public high school and offered my services as an English teacher in July 2002. In the middle of August I had a phone call from a university in Cancun that was going to have a Campus in Playa del Carmen; the coordination needed teachers interested in joining to its institution.

To my surprise, I was told that they were interested in having me as an English teacher in the intermediate level. Inspired by all those excellent teachers and instructors I had in college, I could do nothing but to get prepared to make a good role as a teacher at the *Universidad Tecnológica Campus Playa del Carmen*. I was determined to give all my potential and to share my knowledge to my new students, so I looked for the material I made during my years of college and kept from my class *Practica docente*. The portfolio done during my years at the university was going to be great to use.

During the first two weeks, I had a feeling just like if my teacher from college, of the teaching practice class, was right next to me in my classes checking my performance. That was not too appalling for me; on the contrary, I tried my best to achieve my goal. I experienced a feeling of satisfaction that made me stronger as a person and as a teacher.

The first announcement that got my attention was the way of grading, the percentage that practice and exams had. A technical university considers practice as an important issue in each subject when evaluating a student. 70 % of the grade in my subject was to evaluate the practice a student does in class; therefore, the theoretical evaluation is just the 30 % of the grade. I grew up as a student with the idea that what you get in an exam shows what you know, as a result I had to make good exams to demonstrate that I was really prepared in each subject. I can assure that most of my students had had the same experience as students; what they get in an exam is what they are, a 5 or 10.

Hence, my students did not have a different perspective of what grading was, they expected me to grade as we were used to. They thought exams were the most important part of classes; what students did in class was not essential for their grades. Despite this idea, my students had to get used to the new grading method the university had, although it was really difficult for them to get their 70% of practice. Some of my students were worried about the exam but were not able to practice the language during the activities in classes. The situation was hard for me to have a fair evaluation for all the students. There were some students that seemed to know according to the grades of their exams, but they had difficulties in their speaking skills, therefore, participation was not their strongest point in class. In that situation, to observe and analyze the planning, my students and the classroom environment was of great importance to organize my classes and set the objectives. Students needed to be informed, as well as to understand, not just listen to the rule. They had to find a reason why to do things in that way; students needed to feel encouraged with the new method of grading and the teacher had to make students feel able

to reach the objective.

Considering how difficult it was for my students to get the 70 % of their grade, I encouraged them to feel comfortable in class in order to participate more and to leave their embarrassment outside the classroom. Classroom management took hours and weeks for me to plan and create a good atmosphere in a place where students were adults with different needs, different abilities, and different goals to be in that class. Because my classes required a good environment to succeed in my goal as a teacher, which was to make students learn and speak the language, I started planning extra activities for them. I asked my students to mention their favorite singers or songs in English, with the information gotten; I made my portfolio of songs and lyrics for my classes.

I remembered some of the important points, learnt in college, to present activities with songs. First of all, we have to be aware of the vocabulary used, if the teacher had an introductory group, the language had to be for that level or at least the teacher had to make sure that students knew most of the words; Second step, a teacher who uses a song as an extra activity has to have an objective related to the general goals of the unit; third, the teacher must prepare the activity by checking the CD, among others. There are different kind of activities when using songs in class to practice and not just the listening skill, at the same time they practice writing (completing the missing words), speaking, and reading (singing along).

“When you plan an activity or lesson for an entire class, subgroup, or an individual, you must consider that some children will have difficulty attaining your objectives, and that it is your responsibility to make the learning worthwhile

for them” (Krogh & Slentz, 2001, p.20). Although they were university students, this statement worked so well to understand my students. Most of the students in my class had different levels of English, although they took the exam to level them, most of them did not share the same knowledge. They were supposed to have similar level because of the written exam, but the reality was different. Most students knew English because of the contact they had with tourists, it did not mean they knew grammar rules, or how to write properly. So, the result was that they were in the same room without sharing the same practice and knowledge.

I was aware of that because I lived in a touristic area where a lot of people use to speak not properly but intelligibly the English language. Because of the failure of the purpose of the written exam to level students, I had to make my classes so varied in order to make every student feel part of the program. The class was for everyone, not only for the ones who were able to answer in English, but even for those who needed guidance to complete spoken answers. They knew their situation, they had to learn English to improve in life, and it was their goal. Most students were eager to learn, to try harder and to be part of the activities after the first month of practice. The only hard problem was that some students skipped classes because of work, some others were very exhausted in class, and others were only interested in learning English, not accomplishing the program we had to follow.

It becomes difficult to teach when you do not understand your students' needs. I really believe that if a teacher is not aware, or does not want to be aware of the conditions of his/her class, then, the teacher becomes only a transmitter of information. Sad but true. My class condition was special so my

students were. I was aware of their needs, their reality and their situation at work. I could have gotten mad and felt disrespected by having students yawning in my class or coming late, but I had first to know every students conditions to take measurements to apply a consequence. It is hard work, because I had 35 students, where in my class were never the 35 in list. Some days I had 25, and some other classes I could have the same amount of students but with different faces, which meant that I had 10 students (more or less) who did not come to the last class, and I was missing 10 more students who were not going to achieve the goal of the day because of their absence.

Again, when students trust their teacher, it is easier to correct the bad attitudes or bad customs in students. I am going to believe this assumption until I experience the opposite in one of my classes. Students were so different in age, level of understanding, customs, and personalities that I had to create a strong personality in class to join all of these characters in class to make them work together, learn together and practice together.

When life is more than spreading what you know, but leading people to the place where you got that learning from, it is then when life becomes completely interesting and productive for teachers. I wanted to feel productive; I wanted to take the best of what I felt it was an unorganized opportunity, but at the end, I knew it was just common life, real life, with authentic characters and situations of our reality as teachers.

This was another opportunity for me to use and polish my research about education. If I analyze and observe my students, if I use intrinsic motivation to encourage them to achieve the lesson goal, if I organize the plan in order to be make it more pluralized instead of direct to a specific level of students, then

everybody is going to get a benefit in my class. I had to set different objectives for every student. I had to accept that my book was not the main tool in class; the book was only an aid to make students practice their skills in class. I understood that working in those conditions could make me work longer hours to plan for them, but after two months, I was sure that if they saw me working with them and for them, they were going to push themselves to reach the class goal: help one another reach their goal. Everybody was there to speak, listen and understand the language. Maybe some of them were going to be able to produce the language fluently, maybe some of them were just going to be able to reproduce and understand, and maybe some of them were going to develop their listening skills but with not enough speaking and vocabulary, but everyone had an objective, and we had to work hard to reach it. For me, to be able to encourage my class, I had to be able to communicate effectively the goal of the semester. Everyone needed to know the expectations, the conditions, and the proposals.

A great experience ended, the only time I have had to be in front of university students, and I loved it. I explored a new profile in me, a new personality and way of teaching I had. All the activities and practices helped my students to finish the four-month program with a performance in English at the end of the course. Teenage students, adult students, workers and business men in one class, with one objective, learn the language that was going to open doors and opportunities for them in the future.

I had to move to a different place to live, I had to leave the opportunity of being in a place where the bricks were starting to be set, but I knew that as they had their dreams to come true, I had mine too.

Once again, my objective was covered. I was almost complete. I knew that my idea of a good teaching using motivation, observation, good management and flexibility was working just fine for me. I knew that it was able to be a good teacher with those methods used in every level, in every condition in a school, with large classes and different ages of students. I was experimenting and learning but although I was in disposition to keep learning and trying, I did not anticipate that my new life to come was a huge different adventure for me as a teacher.

HIGHSCHOOL LITERATURE TEACHER.

I did not imagine I was to live different experiences in different places in such a short period of time. After graduating I had to make up my mind to move to a new city in a new working place, but, after two years of teaching in Playa del Carmen, I had to move to Cozumel. My personal life was having a big change as my professional life. The idea of leaving my job, my students, and my routine was not the best feeling ever, but I knew I had to follow my personal dreams, and moving to Cozumel was part of my personal plans when my fiancé and I decided to get marry. The Caribbean Island was the place we were to start our new family.

I had no problems in finding a place where to teach. The opportunity to work in the Colegio Cozumel, now Cumbres Cozumel, was great for me; it was the same system of the one I studied during my whole elementary and high school education that made me feel comfortable. Although I had to start all over again in many things, as it was to study books and programs, I was eager to start.

The proposal offered was to work in high school and junior high school, the surprise was that I had never worked in those levels, even less taught Literature.

I thanked the years of training in college when studying with my teacher of Literature. I could remember with such clearness my classes of Literature at college that my first reaction was to ask for the books and check the content of them. I felt really proud of myself when I saw some readings to be taught and recognized them as part of the readings studied at college. The best thing was not that I remembered them so clear but that I had my notes of those classes where my teacher gave us information about the authors, the content, vocabulary, etc.

Honestly, I really liked my literature class during my days of college. I liked not only to read and learn about the subject, but also to observe the techniques my teacher, Robert Mackler, used to have in classes. As a student, I admired the dedication my teacher had for each class, preparing material, varying the activities, and more, that I wanted to be as he was and behaved in class. In that moment I understood the impact a teacher can have on their students.

My idea was not just to be prepared with the material, but also to be prepared to be in front of a group of teenagers. I was once a teenager and I knew I had a tough job to accomplish.

The school where I was going to work gave me all the books needed to teach, but I knew I had to prepare the extra material to support my teaching. I started my search on the web as soon as I could because I had not enough time to prepare my plans and activities. I knew teenagers like to test teachers

and if a teacher in class is not prepared, has no control of the subject, or pretends to know without really knowing the topic to teach, that teacher has a potential failure in class.

The year started and my classes were almost as I expected them to be. I started as always, observed, analyzed and then, decided what kind of motivators I could use for my students. I was aware of the responsibility, energy, and patience it required to teach to teenagers, although it did not mean I had all of them well developed. I had to work on my patient when having students misbehaving because little students are different from teenagers, so I had to treat them different.

I wanted to practice what I have learnt in my last job and I wanted to use the activities I used to have in college, but this time, I had one little problem. The classes lasted only 45 minutes. For me, my classes were too short because of the experience I was used to in the other schools and in the University where I worked. I can remember that during my first weeks of teaching I had many problems because of the timing in my classes. Although I had planned my activities with the proper timing, I could not believe my plan was not even close to the reality of the classes. I had not enough time to perform all the activities I had in mind. With some classes, I understood I had to measure my activities and the content of each class.

Teaching first grade of high school, with 31 students in a private school, was difficult. I felt that I needed the advice of an experimented teacher (or psychologist in education) to understand my flaws in classes. But, in those days, I was so concentrated in collecting activities, warm ups and work sheets to get my students attention that it took me 4 months to understand that the

problem was not the amount of time, activities, and practice of the language. The problem was set in the environment of the class. A room with 31 adolescents not interested (most of them) in their grades, studies and future, mad against the rules, making sub-groups in class, making fun of the one who was eager to learn, was difficult for me. According to my analysis, all of the classroom chaos ended to be emotional. I accepted the idea that the environment needed to be fixed, not my program. It was very different from my second grade of high school, where students had more than a relaxed environment with their classmates. The students in second grade of high school had strong personalities, all very supportive with every classmate, and with a little more experience in high school that they did not had to prove the oldest students who they were and how much they worth.

Emotions were in the air, and in the whole school. In the theoretical framework I mention the importance of identifying your classroom environment and improving it. We have to open our eyes to every detail around our students that can affect the objective of the class.

I had to design a lot of activities for every reading my students had to analyze. I liked to get at least 12 to 20 main ideas from a reading and, after reading the whole story, I used them to make my students organize the story. We used to do it by teams, and my students liked it a lot. Although I worked with the three different levels of high school, I was able to share my activities by just changing the content. My ideas to work in my literature class flowed from working in groups, performing a play, writing essays, designing a newspaper, creating an art work, writing songs with the content of the reading, among others. My students had the opportunity to love the stories not just by the written

content, but also by the emotional content the author wanted to share.

I had rush times. I did. Despite my willingness to be in up to date in educative theories and ways of teaching, my patience and skillfulness sometimes was not adequate. I knew that I could not react towards the difficult situations but respond to them. I was not there to be my students' friend but I had to be friendly, so, I had to control myself and have a good consequence to the distracters and misbehaviors. I decided to set 40 minutes of genuine practice after my students' final class. They had to stay with me not to waste their time while they write or read the class work. They were going to use valuably my time. I was there not to waste mine, neither theirs. I started with the first audacious who did not see the consequence that bad. I was not mad, so I had not to punish him or call his attention for staying late with me. I was positive towards his decision to study more than the others. Of course this was not ideal for the boy when he saw that he was there to learn, not to pay a fine. That student had the opportunity, according to my words, to have a special treatment with a special class for him to learn the class objective. At the end of the feedback, he knew that if he was not going to work during classes, he was going to work with me. The student ended the tutoring knowing that the objective had to be covered, in class or in a personal tutoring. The class knew that it was up to them to decide how to learn. It was useful and positive to work more efficiently in class, but I had to set limits and habits in my students to help them accomplish the class objective. Interruptions, comments out of place, and distractions were substituted by moments of participation in my tutorials.

I was finally able to have a good control on each class that I could even categorize my activities for each group; I had my own solving-problem activities

when there was a limitation in class because of my students' lack of participation or interest. I was able to be prepared because of the experience in each program and in the readings to be analyzed.

I was able to find a lot of tools to develop my activities and ideas to teach my subject in the school I was working. We had a lot of instruments and new techniques for the well understanding of every subject. I see how important is to have the right tools, materials, technology, information, etc. for a teacher to accomplish his or her objectives in teaching.

We may think that if a teacher wants to teach a subject, disposition and knowledge are the only factors they need. In fact, I identify the importance of those extra materials and resources to have a better result.

My years of teaching in high school have given me another perspective of education and teaching. I saw the impacts each school has had on my life in general, and I appreciate every day of teaching. I can say that during the last year of experience I kept improving my methods, kept going to education courses and kept working on the improvement of my lesson plans. That is why I will always feel that I do not know enough to stop from researching about education.

Working in a private school in high school was full of surprises and learning. I understood that students must be analyzed as humans and not as numbers in a class. Working with teenagers make the process of learning more complicated because of the conditions they are living, the emotional factors that surround them, and the social factors that affect their development. I was able to understand what at the beginning was almost impossible to understand. I could see that first grade of high school can be much more demanding when

students are not heard, guided positively and have no opportunities to improve. What made me feel weak at the beginning in first grade of high school ended to be my strength at the end of the year. To control a difficult group, to create an environment of respect in my class, to motivate the learning in every class, to make students participate to have no consequences and, to use the syllabus for the benefit of the group and not against the students with special needs were my rewards. Identifying my skills, polishing them, improving them and being able to share them with my students were of significant in my personal life. The experience I got in every institution I worked is never going to disappear. My paychecks are already wasted; my experience and my learning are still here, intact and ready to be used and improved with my coming opportunities at work.

CONCLUSIONS

The years have passed. My experience has not, although is still half way to be completed. Working at CEPI guided me to my future career. I was a university student with an opportunity. I will be always thankful the first opportunity I had to practice and cooperate in that institution. I learnt how to face my mistakes, how to be a positive leader, and how to perform a variety of characters for my class goal. I understood the importance of being prepared for a class, as I learnt how to coordinate a personal life and my first job. I learnt that motivation is not applauding a team and increasing their ego. I learnt how to use limits as part of a good management and organization in a class. I learnt how to read hidden messages in a student's face, and I accepted that my life as a teacher was not yet enough to show off, but enough to try harder to succeed.

Yits'atil was a place where not only the material was of good quality, but also the job had to be so. I learnt how to design a costume with simple materials and how to use my voice for guiding and not for making me be heard. I learnt that the objectives need a process to be achieved, that reading can be extremely funny, and that mimics are also a useful tool for English classes. I learnt that team work is not only useful with students, but also among teachers. I learnt that even little students need a teacher who communicates properly to them and not just talks to them. I learnt that little students can be intrinsically motivated with no difficulty. I learnt that coordinating a team is a serious responsibility that requires positive and trustful leaders and that managing a team and teaching a class were similar tasks but not the same. I learn that when you are not prepared to take an opportunity but the opportunity is ready for you, you must take that risk and be able to learn from that experience.

In the UT I was able to be part of a specialized teaching. I admire my students because of their courage to have better opportunities in life. I saw that people can change even when they are adults, I was able to analyze extremely deeply my students' conditions, I learnt how to motivate adults in a hurry to go home and relax instead of singing a song in a class. I learnt how to get the best of an unpromising situation; I realized that programs can sometimes be disadvantageous when the conditions were not well set since the beginning. I learnt how to use the book for the class benefit and not to use the book for the final examination. I learnt that no matter how discouraging a class can be, the class is there to achieve a goal, and if we have to modify the methods, then we have to do it.

In the institution Cumbres, I can say that I lived the most stressing but meaningful experiences. I admire the strength of some of my coworkers to get the best from our teenager students. I learnt that being empathetic does not mean to conceal or accept a bad attitude. I learnt that enjoyable classes make enjoyable teachers and enjoyable students. I reassure that reading is fun and that generates analytic and empathetic students. Working at Cumbres showed me a world of contrasts that needed to be faced with courage, love and faith. In this institution I had to work with all my aspects set at the beginning of my training. I had to work on motivation, observation, management and flexibility, but also I had to use a method to explore my patience skill hidden in me. After the process of adaptation, collaboration and recognition took place in my classes, I could see the worth of my goal.

It is very important for me to analyze myself and to evaluate my accomplishments and my mistakes. I am the kind of person who thinks about the everyday learning and who tries to take the advantage of every experience. I am prepared for the next step and I want to continue in this path of knowledge, guidance, service, and improvement.

In this work, I tried to concentrate my learning and experiences in order to evaluate myself and to collect some situations that can be valuable for those living in the same area I am developing myself. I hope this self-evaluation be of significant aid for future generation of teachers, either it can be helpful when considering some actions and decision presented in here, or for not committing the same actions to avoid experiences mentioned in this monograph. The goal of a teacher is to keep working hard, keep learning, maintaining a sense of responsibility with his or her duty: instruct with efficiency for future generations.

There is no better experience than the one that helps you achieve your dreams. I am ready to make my dreams come true. I am just half way to get the best of me as a teacher. I need to keep working hard in my goals to play the role model students need in a class room. There is no better acknowledgment than seeing your fruits growing. And, I knew that as I have worked hard as a teacher, I could do the same with my memoirs in this monograph. I hope you have had a pleasant journey with what I have learnt and lived during the last years after graduating from college.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When I started the major in English Language, I had no idea of the occupation I was going to be prepared for. Most of students in college, in my generation, had little instruction of the specific areas where to work. We used to fantasize with jobs and roles to play when graduating. When I was told that our major was focused to become teachers, I started to focus my learning to the teaching field. My surprise was that the more I started asking, the more I was nervous about my profession. I felt that we had not enough conversation in English to improve our fluency when speaking English. How was I going to teach something I was not good enough to speak? Most of the time we were searching for information, writing journals and taking notes, analyzing texts and theories, reading amazing fragments of literature, but few of the students were able to hold a conversation with fluency, coherence and good use of the vocabulary. I consider that my proficiency in speaking English I got it with the exposure in Playa del Carmen and Cozumel, with native speakers working with me. With exposure to the situations where I had to be clear and fluid, my skill

was improved incredibly. I think that it is really essential to have more practices in Belize, or in touristic areas where students can practice the language. Most of the time students are working on tasks to be read, to be analyzed or to be written, but we were not forced, in a positive way, to practice speaking skills.

As the speaking skills need to be developed more in our major, the guidance in the teaching field needed to be less specific as well. I had major problems when I had to deal with young students, most of the information we were working with at college was for young adults. In “Práctica Docente”, one of the subjects I had at college to learn how to plan and teach, I asked my teacher about the flexibility of the program in our class to use it with young students, instead of young adults but the program was already set and it was not possible. The program in our class was to teach to young adults, so, when were we going to have training or information for little students? We never had a class for lower levels, never less, information about elementary education and its implications. I consider important that a major of 5 years of training should have more subjects to cover and, in my opinion, there are few subjects essential in the life of a teacher. I would suggest topics like Práctica Docente to be exposed in three semesters, as well as Metodologías y Técnicas de la Enseñanza del Inglés. With more exposition to the language and practice in teaching, students at UQROO can be better focused in their profile as students of the English Language major. Unfortunately, some students start their studies without knowing what to expect from their education at college, but if the training is well set, well defined and enriched with practice of the profession to be part of, students can be better prepared to face the teaching world with great pride and self-confidence.

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