BENEMÉRITA

UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

Writing a BA thesis in English Language Teaching undergraduate program during the COVD-19 pandemic

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages for the degree of

LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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PUEBLA, PUE.

MARZO 2026

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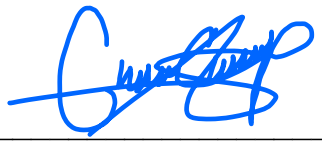
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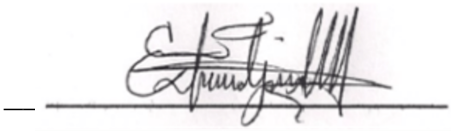
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MARZO 2026

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the problems ELT students face while writing their thesis project during the COVID-19 pandemic and how students and teachers overcame those problems. In addition, it was also important to investigate the interaction between the teacher and students in a distance learning context.

The research was carried out at a public university located in one of the biggest cities in central Mexico. This university has an undergraduate program in English Language Teaching where students are trained to become English teachers. Interviews using the technique of stimulated recall were used to collect the data. The research findings have shown that academic writing, difficulties in finding sources of information, recruiting participants for the study and the change of the Research Seminar professor from Seminar 1 to Seminar 2 were some of the problems that the participants faced when they wrote their thesis. The participants pointed out that some of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were changing topic, the settings of the thesis project were closed, procrastination, lack of feedback, lack of motivation and tiredness of being in front of the computer. Those experiences helped them find some solutions: change topic and start writing the first three chapters again, use different ways to approach the participants (social media, personal connections, university resources) and ask for the Research Seminar professor's help. The teachers supported and gave feedback to the students. More results and implications are described within this thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not finish this thesis without the help of many people. I really appreciate all the support I received. I want to dedicate some words to those people.

I want to thank my thesis director Mtra. Gicela Cuatlapantzi Pichón for her patience in every meeting and for giving me all the encouragement to finish my thesis.

I would also like to thank my readers Dr. Yonatan Puón Castro and Mtra. Eva Estefania Trujeque Moreno for taking the time to read my thesis and providing some feedback to improve it.

I want to thank all the participants in helping me obtain the information necessary because without their answers this thesis would not have been possible.

I also want to thank my family who supported me, especially my mother who always encouraged me all the time and my two siblings who supported me financially to study a bachelor's degree.

Dedicatoria

Quiero agradecer a mi directora de tesis por todo el apoyo que me brindó al asesorarme en mi tesis. ¡Muchísimas gracias!

A mi madre Francisca por darme su apoyo emocional en los momentos que se me presentaba alguna dificultad o sentía mucho estrés.

A mis hermanos Juan y Erica por su apoyo económico y darme la oportunidad de estudiar una carrera a pesar de los momentos difíciles que estábamos pasando.

A mi abuela, la última vez que la ví con vida me dijo que le echara ganas en la universidad para ser alguien en la vida.

A mi amiga Miriam, a pesar de que ya no se encuentra presente físicamente, ella siempre creyó en mí y estaría muy feliz de saber que por fin voy a presentar mi tesis.

A mis amigas Jisel y Daniela que a pesar de la distancia me siguen apoyando y dando ánimos.

Con todos estoy eternamente agradecida. Muchas gracias por estar en mi vida ya sea físicamente o espiritualmente.

¡LO IMPORTANTE ES QUE LO LOGRE!

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction to the problem

Writing a research project is usually a requirement to graduate from an undergraduate program (Licenciatura) in Mexico. The Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP, 2000) mentions in the document *La Estructura del Sistema Educativo Mexicano* the different modalities that students have to obtain the final degree requirement at the end of the major. In general, universities request students to write a research paper that can be presented in front of a panel that is designed for that. In other universities, they require writing a thesis, or the presentation of a dissertation, writing monographic informs about some professional experience, making a general exam among others.

The *Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP*) offers what is called *titulación automática*. It is an option that students who did not fail any subject during the major and got a general grade point average of 8.5 in their major have. There are other options to get the degree; however, the option that is for all students is the presentation of a thesis project (de Vries et. al., 2009).

The major in ELT of the language department of BUAP offers that students develop skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that allow them to join as active participants in society. They promote both national and international mobilization. They must value the diversity of languages and cultures as well as research, innovation and the development of English teaching. It is necessary to emphasize than in the undergraduate program in English Language Teaching, research is developed through three subjects: Research Methodology, Research Seminar I and II, in which students carry out their research projects.

This purpose of this research was to investigate the process of writing a thesis in an undergraduate program in English Teaching throughout.

1.1 Rationale

My interest in the topic began when I read a thesis called *Factors that affect the final paper work of the students of the Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas Inglés* made in 2014. In this thesis, the researchers mentioned that research is used as a tool for students to develop their thesis and that conducting research is one of the most important tasks in university according to the new *Modelo Universitario MINERVA* in 2009. I became interested in the field of research of my own major due to the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic which has transformed many aspects of human life and society around the world including education.

Both students and teachers were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Students did not continue learning on all educational levels. Most governments around the world had temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the coronavirus. They responded to the necessity that students learn via online and distance learning. Therefore, students had to stay at home and take online classes. They had to find out how to participate during the online sessions and how to complete their assignments at home. Teachers also had to find out how to contact their students, how to teach the content of the class and find new ways to evaluate students. These are some aspects that the pandemic changed in education.

When it came the time to write my thesis project, I had to do it completely online. I had to find the information on the Internet instead of going to the libraries and it was very

difficult for me because sometimes I did not have full access to the books or articles from the web pages where I found them. In addition, I did not know web sites where to find reliable information. I did not feel comfortable taking online classes because sometimes I could not take them on time due to problems with the connection of the Internet or the link of the class session could not give me access. When I could join the session, I did not know what the teacher was talking about, and I could not ask the teacher to repeat again what she had already said.

All these problems I faced gave me the idea of investigating the problems ELT students face while they wrote their thesis project during the COVID-19 pandemic and how students and teachers overcame those problems. In addition, it was also important to investigate the interaction between the teacher and students in distance learning.

1.2 Location of research

This study was carried out at the language department of a public university in central Mexico. This department offers two undergraduate programs one in English Language Teaching (ELT) and the other in French Language Teaching as well as the Master's degree in ELT. Additionally, other language courses are offered to the public in general. The English Language Teaching program includes subjects to design and develop a research project during the last year: Research Seminars I and II.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The priority of this research was to identify the problems ELT students face while writing their thesis project during the COVID-19 pandemic and how students and teachers

overcame those problems. In addition, it was also important to investigate the interaction between the teacher and students in a distance learning context.

1.4 Research aims

- To identify ELT students' problems during the process of writing their thesis.
- To identify students and teachers' solutions to those problems during the process of writing their thesis.
- To investigate teachers and students' role in distance learning to overcome the problems faced.

1.5 Research questions

This research sought to answer the following research questions:

- What problems did ELT students face when writing their thesis project in Research Seminar (RS) I and II in a distance learning context during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How did they overcome those problems?
- What was the role of the teacher and the students to overcome the problems faced while pursuing distance learning?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is relevant for ELT students, especially for the students that are going to start with the development of their thesis project in the last courses. The results of this study could give students some ideas to solve some problems they may face while writing

their thesis online. Moreover, it is expected that students can identify the problems they might have when writing their thesis project before the process.

The results of this study could increase awareness among teachers and other researchers about students´ needs in distance education.

1.7 The theoretical context of research

The following areas of research are related to my study: foreign language acquisition, foreign language teaching, English language teaching, research, educational research, thesis writing, research methodology, thesis structure, academic writing and distance learning.

1.8 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter I provided background information about my research. I explained the rationale of the topic. I established the setting and the purpose where it took place. The research aims and research questions were also provided. In the following chapter the literature review will be explained.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter the following topics will be explained: foreign language acquisition, adult learning, program for the preparation of a language teacher, research methods in education and applied linguistics which includes the worldviews in research; quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods and research designs in applied linguistics. The process of writing a thesis is also provided; it includes the structure of a thesis, academic writing and conventions of academic writing. Finally, distance learning is explained.

2.1 Foreign language acquisition

According to Gulzar et al. (2014), foreign language acquisition is a language where the environment is not spoken as a native language. Littlewood (1984) mentions that this acquisition is a subconscious process. It is also a language that is considered foreign if it is learned in a classroom and is not spoken in the population where the teaching occurs (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). There is a discussion that American Community Survey (2005, cited in Alsairi, 2017) developed about the age of the acquisition of a foreign language. It may start in childhood, puberty or when one is an adult.

Lightbown and Spada (2013) mention four perspectives that explain second language acquisition. These are: the behaviourist perspective, the innatist perspective, the cognitive perspective and the sociocultural perspective.

Behaviourism is a theory of learning that was more popular from 1940s to the 1970s. B.F Skinner was the best-known proponent of this theory. Behaviourists mention that children learn a language through imitation by their environment; they reproduce what

they have heard and receive a positive reinforcement. Children would continue to imitate and practice sounds and patters until they form habits of correct language use.

Therefore, this theory also explained second language acquisition as a process of habit formation and learners were inducted to make use of the stimulus. It used audiolingual method in language teaching and the contrastive analysis hypothesis. Teachers used audiolingual teaching materials and classroom activities focused on mimicry and memorization. Also, students heard and learned the dialogues and sentence patterns. The contrastive analysis hypothesis mentions that errors are the result of transfer from learners' first language. However not all errors made by second language learners can be explained in terms of first language transfer alone.

The innatist perspective was created by Noam Chomsky. He mentions that all human languages are based on some innate universal principles. Children are biologically programmed for language and that language develops in the child in the same way that other biological functions develop. Then, children have little knowledge of the underlying rules of a language system on the basis of the samples of a natural language they are acquired. This is known as Universal Grammar and occurs during a critical period of their development where humans are genetically programmed to acquire certain kinds of knowledge and skills at specific times in life.

This perspective focuses on advanced learners' knowledge of complex grammar rather than in the simple language of beginning learners because children that acquire the language of their environment must have some knowledge that allows them to discover such complex syntax in spite of limitations of the input. Stephen Krashen's model is the

most influential by Chomsky's theory of first language acquisition. He developed the Monitor Model and described five hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis.

The cognitive perspective focuses on "information-processing model of human learning and performance see second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding" (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.108). Through experience and practice information that was new becomes easier to process and learners become able to access it quickly and even automatically. According to this perspective, once skills become automatized, thinking about the declarative knowledge while trying to perform, the skill actually disrupts the smooth performance of it. Some usage-based theories emphasize the frequency that learners develop a stronger network of associations or connections between these features as well as between language and the contexts in which they occur. Competition model is another concept where the cognitive processes work. It is an explanation for both first and second language acquisition that takes into account not only language form but also language meaning and language use. Where exposure of language is associated with a particular meaning, speakers of a particular language come to understand how to use the cues that signal specific functions. A last area of work in the cognitive perspective is concerned with language learning and the brain. For a long time, it was supposed that language functions were in the left hemisphere of the brain. But recent studies show different locations in both hemispheres of the brain during language processing in first and second languages. However, it depends on the learners' age and level of proficiency.

Some hypotheses, theories and models inspired by the cognitive perspectives are the interaction hypothesis, the noticing hypothesis, input processing, processability theory and the role of practice.

The sociocultural perspective defines human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts, and is distributed across persons, tools and activities (Johnson, 2009). This is significant because higher level of human cognition in the individual has its origins in social life where the human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities, and that it is the social relationships and the materials, signs and symbols referred to as semiotic artifacts create uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking.

The proponents of this view were Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget thought that developing cognitive understanding is built on the interaction between the child and the things that can be observed or manipulated. He considered language as symbol systems that are developed in childhood, and this language represents knowledge that children have acquired through interaction with the environment. While Vygotsky considered that language develops mainly from social interaction and with this interactive environment children are able to advance to higher levels of knowledge and performance.

Vygotskian sociocultural theory is a theory of the mind that is grounded in the concepts of mediation, internalization and the zone of proximal development (Masuda & Arnett, 2015). The human mind does not always interact directly with the world, but the mind can use physical and psychological tools to mediate the world. Internalization is the reciprocal and transformative process for connecting the symbolically mediated concrete

activity of humans in the material world with their mental activity. Through internalization human beings can gain control over natural mental functions by bringing externally formed mediated artifacts into thinking. Vygotsky proposed the zone of proximal development, where learners construct the new language through social interaction.

All these perspectives that explain second language acquisition are necessary to apply them in the classroom.

2.1.1 Adults learning English

According to Darancik (2018) in foreign language education the four basic language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) are important parts of language teaching. Darancik also mentions these skills need to be developed and reinforced according to the level and needs of the learners. Additionally, "the acquisition of these basic skills help the learners to improve their vocabulary in the target language, learn the grammatical rules of the target language, memorize the characteristics of pronunciation, recognize cultural elements of the culture and develop sub-competences" (Celik, 2020, p.224).

Some authors maintain that young learners learn faster than old learners because children absorb more of the new knowledge and older learners have some difficulties adapting the language. Lightbown and Spada (2013) mention that it is difficult to compare children and adults as second language learners due to the critical period hypothesis and the conditions for language learning. Younger learners may learn faster because they have more time to dedicate to learning language. Older learners may have different reasons to learn a foreign language. They learn in situations where the knowledge and skills they are able to acquire in a short period of time will satisfy to use the language for everyday

communication, to succeed on foreign language examinations, or to read texts for an academic courses rather than to speak with native- like pronunciation. Some studies of second language development of older and younger learners have shown that older learners are more efficient than younger learners because they use their metalinguistic knowledge, memory strategies, and problem-solving skills. So that, they make the most of second or foreign language instruction. However, Palea and Boştină-Bratu (2015) state that after the age of 12 learners can never pass as native speakers phonologically because they adopt the phonological sound of the mother tongue.

2.2 Program for the preparation of a language teacher

The *ACTFL/NTCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teacher* (2002 cited in McAlpine & Dhonau, 2007) in order to assure that a foreign language teacher candidate attains the appropriate knowledge, skills and professional disposition, a foreign language teacher education program must demonstrate the following components and characteristics:

- The development of candidates' foreign language proficiency in all areas of communication, with special emphasis on developing oral proficiency, in all language courses. Upper-level courses should be taught in the foreign language.
- An ongoing assessment of candidates' oral proficiency and provision of diagnostic feedback to candidates concerning their progress in meeting required levels of proficiency.
- Language, linguistics, culture and literature components.

- A methods course that deals specifically with the teaching of foreign languages and that is taught by a qualified faculty member whose expertise is foreign language education and who is knowledgeable about current instructional approaches and issues.
- Field experiences prior to students teaching that include experiences in foreign language classrooms.
- Field experiences, including students teaching, are supervised by a qualified foreign language educator who is knowledgeable about current instructional approaches and issues in the field of foreign language education.
- Opportunities for candidates to experience technology-enhanced instructions and to use technology in their own teaching.
- Opportunities for candidates to participate in a structured study abroad program and/or intensive immersion experience in a target language community.

These eight components should be found within the context narrative of the program review. Additionally, there are other six content standards included in the ACTFL/ NCATE teacher preparation standards: 1) Language, linguistics, comparisons; 2) Culture, literature, cross-disciplinary concepts; 3) Language acquisition theories and instructional practices; 4) Integration of standards into curriculum and instruction 5) Assessment of languages and cultures; and 6) Professionalism.

Sayer (2007) mentions that the interest of English language learning in Mexico and the corresponding efforts to professionalize the field of ELT increased in 1990. Many Mexican universities initiated *licenciatura* programs in teaching English as an additional language. The curricula of these programs have been influenced by the input of the British

Council in the development of the *planes de estudio* and the teachers who teach these programs. Although the content of Mexican university programs has been influenced by applied linguists and ELT professionals from abroad, their organization and structure fit within the traditions of the Mexican university system. This has included the requirement for students to graduate from the rank of *pasante* to *titulado* of completing a thesis.

The curricular structure of *Programa Educativo de la Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés* (2009) of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla was designed in seven areas: 1) the common core of the universitary; 2) Target Language in English; 3) Teaching; 4) Linguistics; 5) Research; 6) Culture; 7) Elective subjects (teaching Spanish to foreigners, translation). These areas are integrated into 42 subjects, 39 of them are mandatory and 3 are electives, in turn, they are organized in two levels: basic level and formative level.

The area of research offers three subjects: Research Methodology (Metodología de la Investigación), Research Seminar I (Seminario de Investigación I) and Research Seminar II (Seminario de Investigación II). The purpose of Research Methodology is to analyze the different research approaches and their studies; it focuses on the professional competence in the development of research abilities for the research project. In the Research Seminar I students write the first two chapters of their research project (the introduction and the literature review) and a draft of chapter three that is about the research methodology. The purpose of Research Seminar II is to complete the research project initiated in the subjects mentioned before: chapter four, the results and chapter five, the conclusion (Metodología de la Investigación, Seminario de Investigación I, Seminario de Investigación II, 2016).

2.3 Research methods in education and applied linguistics

According to Kumar (2002) the word *research* is composed of two words *re* and *search,* which means to search again or to search for new facts or to modify older ones in any branch of knowledge. Mligo (2016) states that research is required in order to satisfy people's needs because these needs raise curiosity, puzzle, wonder, and surprise about the existence of problems around them that push them towards an urge to know. Research can be formal or informal: formal research follows scientific procedures to discover answers about a problem while informal research does not follow scientific procedures. Mligo also mentions that there are other definitions of research, especially for formal research. Some of these definitions are the following: research is the systematic search for knowledge about things we do not know in order for us to know them. Research is the search for answers to questions about our everyday life. Every question needs concrete answers that convince a person to whom it is provided. In order to have convincing answers to the question, one must do research. Therefore, there are three aspects when we do research for answering the question: first, we determine the problem; second, we collect data in order to answer that question; and third, we present the answer we have obtained from the collected data in a formal report. These three aspects are important for any research done within the social sciences and the humanities.

2.3.1 Worldviews in research

Creswell and Creswell (2018) propose four different worldviews: postpositivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism. They define worldview as a general

philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study.

The postpositivist worldview represents the traditional form of research and it is more oriented towards quantitative research than qualitative research. This worldview is also called the scientific method, positivist/ postpositivist research, empirical science and postpositivism. It holds a deterministic philosophy in which cases determine effects or outcomes. Thus, the problem studied is to identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes. It is based on developing numeric measures of observation and studying the behavior of individuals. There are laws or theories that govern the world and these need to be tested or verified so that we can understand the world.

The constructivist worldview or also known as social constructivism, is seen as an approach to qualitative research. Constructivist researchers often address the processes of interaction among individuals. They also focus on specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants. Then, researcher's intent is to interpret what they find, and these interpretations are shaped by the researcher's own experience and background.

The transformative worldview arose during the 1980s and 1990s from individuals who felt that the postpositivist assumptions imposed structural laws and theories that did not fit marginalized individuals in our society. These individuals are based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and socioeconomic class that need to be addressed. It holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs. Thus, the research

contains an action agenda for reforms that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live and the researcher's life. Transformative research provides a voice for these participants, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives.

The pragmatic worldview arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions. It applies mixed methods research, and the researcher chooses the techniques and procedures of research that are the best choice to his needs and purposes. The researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative data because he works to provide the best understanding of a research problem. This worldview occurs in social, historical, political and other contexts.

2.3.2 Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods

Mligo (2016) mentions that a particular research design is in a particular research approach. Research approaches are mainly three: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approach. The use of those research approaches does not depend on the researcher's preference for one or another but on the suitability of the particular method for what the researcher is studying and what he or she wants to find out. Ary et al. (2010) explain quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches which are provided below. Quantitative research uses objective measurement to gather numeric data that is used to answer questions or test predetermined hypotheses. It generally requires a well-controlled setting. Quantitative research originated in positivism, a philosophic view formulated in Europe in the 19th century. Positivists believe that general principles or laws govern the social world as they do the physical world and that through objective procedures

researchers can discover these principles and apply them to understand human behavior. Positivism is often considered the traditional scientific method, which involves hypothesis testing and objective data gathering to arrive at findings that are systematic, generalizable, and open to replication by other investigators.

Qualitative research, in contrast, focuses on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in natural settings. It does not begin with formal hypotheses, but it may result in hypotheses as the study unfolds. It is based on the constructivist philosophical view, which sees the individual and his or her world as so interconnected that essentially one has no existence without another. It sees social reality as unique; thus, the researcher can only understand human behavior by focusing on the meanings that events have for the people involved. The researcher must look not only at what people do but also at how they think and feel, and the researcher must attempt to understand their reality. The intended results of a qualitative research study is a narrative reports so rich and comprehensive that researcher can understand the social reality experienced by the participants. Furthermore, because the researchers do not know in advance how naturally occurring events will unfold or what variables may be important, they do not begin a study with hypotheses.

Mixed methods research is a new methodology in which the same study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The end results of mixed methods research are findings that may be more dependable and provide a more complete explanation of the research problem than either method alone could provide. It may be more difficult to carry out a mixed methods study because researchers must have knowledge and an understanding of both quantitative and qualitative methodology. A mixed methods study also typically

involves more extensive data collection and analysis and thus will require more time and effort to complete.

2.3.3 Research designs in applied linguistics

In this section, the most used methods in applied linguistics are explained: survey research, experimental research, case study, ethnographic research, action research and narrative inquiry.

Survey research: is qualitative research in which researchers administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2012). There are two different types of survey data collection instruments: questionnaires and interviews. In this procedure, survey researchers collect quantitative, numbered data using questionnaires or interviews and statistically analyze the data to describe trends about responses to questions and to test research questions or hypotheses. They also interpret the meaning of the data by relating results of statistical test back to past research studies .It is a tool that is used extensively by government, business, educational institutions and by individual researcher and it has long had an important role in the field of applied linguistics (Wagner, 2015). Survey research differs from experimental research in that the researcher does not manipulate the setting or environment in order to investigate how this affects particular variables or the relationship between variables. Instead, the goal of survey research is to get information about learners' characteristics, beliefs or attitudes; information that is usually not available from production data, such as performance or observational data.

Experimental research: is a way of determining the effect of something on something else. In other words, a researcher begins with an idea of why something happens and manipulates at least one variable, controls others, to determine the effect on some other variables (Gass, 2015). Creswell (2012) states that a researcher uses an experiment when he/she wants to establish possible cause and effect between his/her independent and dependent variables. This means that the researcher attempts to control all variables that influence the outcome except for the independent variable.

Case study: approach in which the object of inquiry is set in a natural context and the phenomenon that is investigated is delimited. It is also an approach in which the researcher's interest is in an in-depth investigation of the particular rather than the general (Casanave, 2015). The purpose of most case studies is to enhance the understanding of a phenomenon, process, person or group, not to experiment and generalize to other populations in the tradition of larger-scale survey research. For Yin (2000 cited in Griffee, 2012), a case study must have three aspects: it must have data from multiple sources, examine something in a real-life context and use theory to generalize results. Yin elaborates this definition by saying that a case study design is used when the difference between the object of the study and the context of the study cannot be easily differentiated.

Ethnographic research: is a qualitative research procedure for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs and language that develop over time (Creswell, 2012). To understand the patterns of a culture-sharing group, the ethnographer typically spends considerable time in the field interviewing, observing and gathering documents about the group to understand their culture-sharing behaviors, beliefs and language. Starfield (2015) mentions that the key

features of a broadly defined ethnographic method include studying people's behaviour in everyday rather than experimental contexts, gathering data from a range of resources chiefly by observation or relatively informal conversation and collecting data that are not based on pre-set categories or explicit hypotheses but that arise out of a general interest in an issue or problem. Ethnographic research is typically small in scale and focused on a single setting or group.

Action research: is the super ordinate term for a set of approaches to research which, at the same time, systematically investigate a given social situation and promote democratic change and collaborative participation (Burns, 2015). Mills (2011 cited in Creswell, 2012) state that action research is a systematic procedure done by teachers or other individuals in an educational setting to gather information about, and subsequently improve, the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching and their student learning. Educators aim to improve the practice of education by studying issues or problems they face. Educators reflect about these problems, collect and analyze data and implement changes based on their findings.

Narrative inquiry: is a way of doing research that focuses on the stories about *experiences* of life. Experiences become narratives when we tell them to an audience, and the narratives become part of narrative inquiry when they are investigated for research purposes (Barkhuizen, 2015). Creswell (2012) points out that narrative typically focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual.

2.4 The process of writing a thesis

Thompson (2013) mentions that a thesis or a dissertation is for many students the longest and most challenging piece of assessed writing that they will have to do in their degree program. The sheer size of the text and the complex task of planning one´s research, of synthesizing one´s reading and of sustaining a coherent and extended argument, is an immense challenge for any student writer. This challenge is magnified when writing in a language that is not one's mother tongue and in a foreign academic culture.

Ang and Nather (2016) state that writing a thesis or dissertation prepares the student to be a professional in the discipline. Through this process, one learns and demonstrates the ability to conduct independent, original and significant research. The dissertation thus shows that the student is able to:

- **Identify** problems
- **Generate** questions and hypotheses
- **Review** and **summarise** the literature
- **Apply** appropriate methods
- **Collect** data properly
- **Analyze** and **judge** evidence
- **Discuss** findings
- **Procedure** publishable results
- **Engage** in a sustained piece of research or argument
- **Think** and **write** critically and coherently

2.4.1 The structure of a thesis

Paltridge (2002 cited in Thompson, 2013) proposes four types of thesis organization: **traditional simple, traditional complex, topic-based** and **the compilation of research articles**.

In **the traditional simple**, the thesis follows the structure of a scientific research report, with separate chapters for the introduction, methods, results and discussion also known as the *IMRD model*. **The traditional complex thesis** typically begins with an introduction and a review of the literature and then is followed by a sequence of chapters, each of with follows the IMRD pattern, before concluding with a general summary chapter. **The topic-based thesis** begins with an introductory chapter and then a series of chapters that are each based on a topic; such theses are common in the humanities, for example. The fourth form that Paltridge proposes is **the compilation of published research articles.** That it is an increasingly common type of thesis in which most, if not all, of the sections of the thesis are articles, which have been published in international journals, and there may be an introductory and concluding chapter appended, in which the author tries to give unity to the complete text.

Traditional simple	*Traditional complex*	*Topic-based*
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
[Literature Review]	Literature Review	Chapter: Topic 1
Methods	Chapter: IMRD	Chapter: Topic 2
Results	…	…
Discussion	Chapter: IMRD	Concluding chapter
	Conclusion	

Table 2.1 Three forms of rhetorical organization for PhD theses (Paltridge, 2002 cited in Tompson, 2013)

Patil (2020) argues that the format of the thesis varies from each institution. But the review of those thesis formats used by various institutions shows the existence of certain common components in every thesis. The author makes a description chart about each of the components.

Component	Description
Title	• It should be clear, concise and specific. • It should denote the central ideas of your thesis. • It must imply what your argument will reveal about your topic. • Abbreviations should be avoided in titles unless a scientific community is better aware by its acronym. • Ideally, length should not exceed twenty (20) words.
Acknowledgement	• Genuine technical, financial and educational contributions of the academic institutions, technical experts, funding agencies, facility providers and research aide should be acknowledged. • Acknowledgement should not be confused with the "dedication".
Certificates	• Certificate of originality of the work (from author). • Certificate of research guide. • Certification by advisor committee. • Certificate of competent authority/ head of the institution.
Abstract	• Length should be limited to 250-500 words. • It should summarise the research process and the findings of the research. • It should cover an entire range of important findings and should be conclusive. • More emphasis should be on findings and conclusions rather than on the research process. • The abstract should also be written in the third person. • Generally, the first sentence of an abstract describes the entire study; subsequent sentences expand on that description.
Table of contents	• Enlist the entire list of headings and subheadings along with their respective page numbers. • The table of contents may be followed by List of tables, List of figures, List of illustrations, List of symbols and list of abbreviations wherever necessary.
Introduction	It should include brief details about: • Research problem • Problem statement • Statement of purpose • Rational and significance • Overview of methodology

	• Expected outcomes • Assumptions of the study • Limitations of study
Review of literature	• Opening remarks should state the content and organization of the literature reviewed as well as the strategy used in the literature search. • It should analyze and synthesize the relevant studies across discipline and compare and contrast different research approaches, outcomes, interpretations and conclusions. • Review the primary and secondary source that are recently published empirical studies in scholarly journals and publications. • Use archival records if the nature of research demands it; for example case studies. • Content should be logically organized by theme or subtopic, from broad to narrow. • Provides section summaries. • Describe the conceptual framework at the end of review of literature.
Methodology	• Introduction to the research problem. • Rationale of research approach. • Context of the research. • Operationalization of variables. • Define population and entail the sampling procedure. • Data collection methods. • Data analysis methods. • Limitations and delimitations.
Results and discussion	• Findings should be presented in clear narrative form using plentiful verbatim quotes and detailed description. • Findings should be supported by previous studies. • Deviant findings should be justified with alternative explanations. • Findings should be logically arranged in the form the research proceeded. • The discussion part should provide an in-depth analysis of the findings.
Summary and conclusion	• This chapter reflects upon the findings of the study, interrelates the findings if necessary and provides meaning to the entire set of findings. • Draw conclusions on research problems based on the findings of the study. • Set the stage for further study by describing what was the outcome of study and what further needs to be done for the advancement of science.
	• Enlists the citation for the reviewed literature, which appears all along the entire content of the thesis.

Bibliography	• Citation should be written in the format prescribed by the university/institution. • Citation should appear in alphabetical order.
Vitae	• Briefs the author's information, educational background, area of expertise, contact information, etc.

Table 2.2 (Patil, 2020)

Other authors as Davis et al. (2012) point out that whatever the form or style, the contents of the thesis will typically include the following:

1. Introduction: it is the general justification for the study, the hypothesis or question behind the research, and a specific statement of objectives.
2. Literature review: it is a detailed report of what has already been done on your subject (sometimes combined with the introduction and included as content in journal manuscripts).
3. Materials and methods: it is an account of specific techniques used in the study, including materials needed, procedures, statistical design and data collection and analyses.
4. Results: it is a presentation and meaning of the data acquired from your research.
5. Discussion: it is the significance of your own data as well as the relationship between your work and the findings of others (results and discussion are sometimes combined)
6. Conclusions: it is a summary of your findings and their significance and perhaps suggestions for further research or applications for the findings.
7. Bibliography: these are references to the literature used.
8. Appendices: it is related material that supports a point and provides additional information but is not essential for understanding the thesis itself.

9. Abstract: it is required for doctoral dissertations and may be needed for master´s thesis.

2.4.2 Academic Writing

Çetinkaya and Yılmaz (2017) mention that writing is one of the most challenging language skills in that it requires several skills including the use of correct grammar, the choice of appropriate lexicon, the ability to plan the process, the use of appropriate linking, to add but a few. It becomes harder when one is supposed to write in a foreign language, English in this case. Monippally and Pawar (2010) also mention that "while writing in general have various purposes; academic writing seeks to document and communicate knowledge in a written form" (p.4). Writing a thesis involves building up the ideas of research and thinkers who have gone before and helping to lay a foundation for future students (Oliver, 2004). The author also states that a thesis usually involves reviewing and analyzing the background literature to a subject.

2.4.2.1 Conventions of academic writing

Evans et al. (2014) state that theses, reports and scientific papers have to be written in the third person, as if someone else had made the discovery. To remove the presence of the writer from the text, scientists resorted to the use of the passive voice. As Oliver (2004) suggests the traditional way of writing about research is to use the third person or passive voice.

Evans et al. (2014) also mention that some non-English languages do not use tenses but rely on the context to indicate whether something happened in the past, is happening now or may happen in the future. In English we have such a rich collection of tenses that

we often get them wrong. This creates problems not only for students whose native language is not English, but also for English-speaking students. The authors suggest some general rules for tenses in academic writing:

- Use the past tense when you are reporting what you or others did at particular times.
- Use the present tense in an introduction to a chapter or section or a table where you are outlining its contents.
- Use the present tense when you are discussing the implications of some work of yours or others.
- Use the future tense when reporting the implications of yours or other work.

Oliver (2004) suggests that during the process of writing a thesis one has to consider the following:

1. The research thesis: it is to set out the different forms which a research thesis can take and explore the criteria which help to distinguish a master from a doctoral thesis. To discuss the broad characteristics of academic writing along with some of the features which characterize a well-written thesis. Also outline the formal university procedures and requirements for academic theses.
2. The intellectual content of the thesis: it deals with the strategies for writing about the academic content of a thesis. It examined the role of the thesis in making an original contribution to knowledge and discussed the incorporation of data within the thesis. It explored some of the fundamental philosophical terms which may be employed in a thesis and discussed strategies for integrating them in the text.

Finally, it discusses different approaches to the presentation of arguments and claims to knowledge.

3. Organizing the work: it focuses on the practical issues involved in organizing the writing of the thesis, exploring ways of planning the structure of the thesis and provisional chapter lengths and then discussing strategies to manage time effectively. Finally, it has to do with examining methods for recording references and different approaches to the order of writing the chapters of the thesis.
4. The role of the supervisor: it is to explore the overall role of the thesis supervisor and the ways in which she/he can help to maximize chances of success. To look at how the supervisor can help with reading drafts and with advice on the structure of the thesis.
5. Grammar, punctuation and convention of academic writing: it examines the style of academic writing required in order to be successful with the thesis. It is necessary to look at gender-neutral language and some of the conventions of grammar and punctuation and review referencing style within academic writing.
6. Layout of the thesis: it considers the presentation of the thesis and looks at different aspects of page layout and formatting. It also examines the use of tables and figures and the content of the appendices.

2.5 Distance Learning

According to El Guessab et al. (2021) distance education is distance learning, where the process of interaction between students and a teacher is with the use of technologies. The most promising and widely used complete educational technology is the Internet. Mehrotra et al. (2001) also mention that technological inventions led to many new forms of

distance education. Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2010) mention that the radio was the first technology, followed by the television that it included video recording and satellite transmission. Later it was the adoption of the interactive television and finally the digital evolution of personal computers, the Internet and the World Wide Web also well-known as "www" or "the Web". Mehrotra et al. (2001) explain that the type of communication based on the Internet towards the students and teacher occurs simultaneously (synchronous) or occurs in different times (asynchronous) while accessing the information on the Internet. Garrison and Anderson (2003 cited in Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2010) mention there is an integration to combine the three different forms of communication: the text, the verbal and the visual. This manner creates a unique online learning environment.

The online learning in an educational context changes the form of the teaching and the learning process about the traditional classroom courses (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2010) because the role of the teacher shifts from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, from passive to active and participatory learning (Mehrotra et al.,2001). El Guessab et al. (2021) mention that distance learning platforms are the key around the distance education participants assemble. There are 3 types of platforms: simple platforms which are online courses where there are a minimal asynchronous communication and the students can add in other courses; synchronous virtual classrooms, where the teacher teaches classes at a distance and the students' intervention can be more or minimal; and complex platforms where beside simple activities, they can include pedagogical design and some of them include only web-based tools.

In the platform, the teacher creates a general course using multimedia pedagogical resources, respects the needs and abilities of each student, and supports the activities of the

students. While the student works in the network and organizes and performs exercises, she/he notes the progress of the activities on the computer interface, performs tasks for self-assessment and transfers the completed tasks to the teacher for verification. The communication between the teacher and students can be individually or in groups and they suggest topics for discussion and collaborate on exploring or creating shared documents.

According to Bagapova et al. (2020), in recent years with the development of media and computer technology, teachers have begun to make use of interactive multimedia technologies to improve their teaching including foreign language learning. There are different approaches to teachers with technology; they are based on the different theories explained in the first part of this chapter. For example, there are cognitive tools refer to technologies, tangible or intangible, that enhance the cognitive abilities of human beings during thinking, problem-solving and learning. For example, cognitive tools are computer software programs. Learners learn language by designing instructions on their own with the help of software and computer technology. Then learners are fully involved in the learning process. As a result, they tend to learn more about the content and develop their critical thinking and higher-level learning ability. The cognitive rationale behind this approach is the constructivist learning theory. According to constructivism, a teacher cannot map his/her own interpretations of the world onto the learners because they do not share a set of common experiences and interpretations with learners. Cognitive tools help learners organize, restructure and represent what they know.

Borisova and Balabas (2022) argument the following peculiarities of teaching foreign languages under distance learning conditions:

- In distance learning there still exist two actors of the educational process: a teacher and a student.
- In the process of transferring knowledge, they are physically separated.
- A greater emphasis is put on a student's role in the process.
- To be a full participant in the process a student must be able to act independently.
- The actors' interaction is technically mediated.
- A mediator in this case is a computer (or any other gadget having access to the Internet).
- This mediated process must be carefully planned and organized by a teacher.
- To make the process effective, a teacher must be aware of distance learning peculiarities and be capable of applying both traditional and innovative methodical techniques.

2.6 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter the theories about learning languages were explained. It was mentioned: how adults learning English, the program for the preparations of the language teacher, research methods in education and applied linguistics. It was also provided the process of writing a thesis and the last topic about distance learning was explained. In the following chapter the methodology will be described.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This research aims to identify the problems ELT students face while they wrote their thesis project during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how students and teachers overcame those problems. In addition, it was also important to investigate the interaction between the teacher and students in distance learning.

In this chapter, I will explain the setting, the participants, the research methodology and the instrument that was used. I will also provide a description of how I went about collecting the necessary data for answering my research questions.

3.1 Setting

This study was carried out at the language department of a public university in central Mexico. The vision of the language department is to be one of the most important educational institutions and one of the most recognized locally, nationally and internationally in educating English teachers and translators in foreign languages and Spanish as a second language. This department offers two undergraduate degrees one in English Language Teaching and the other in French Language Teaching as well as the master's degree in Teaching English. Additionally other language courses are offered to the public in general. The English Language Teaching undergraduate program includes subjects to design and develop a thesis during the last year: Research Seminars I and II.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this research were 7 students who were studying the undergraduate program in English Language Teaching. They were 4 men and 3 women

from 22 to 33 years old. Most of them had already finished the two Research Seminars courses; only 3 of 7 participants had not finished the Research Seminar 2 yet.

3.3 Research methodology

This study was a qualitative study that is defined as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007 cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). According to Pathak et al. (2013), qualitative research is used to understand people´s beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior and interactions.

Merriam (2002) mentions there are several characteristics for the interpretation of qualitative research designs, and these are as follows:

- The researcher strives to understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experience.
- The researcher is the primary instrument for the data collection and the analysis.
- The process of qualitative research is inductive.
- The product is richly descriptive.

It is also a case study because it explores new processes or behavior or ones that are little understood (Hartley, 1994 cited in Meyer, 2001). As Yin (2009) mentions the case study method allows researchers to have meaningful characteristics of real- life events such as individual life cycles, small groups behavior or school performance. It is also appropriate for investigating phenomena when a large variety of factors and relationships are included.

There is not a way to determine which factors and relationships are important and these factors and relationships can be directly observed (Fidel, 1984).

In a case study, the researcher usually looks for a variety of data collection; for example, direct observations, interviews or available documents. And when the data is analyzed, the researcher uses conceptual categories that guide the study (Meyer, 2001). This investigation is a case study because the objective is to identify the problems that the participants faced when they wrote their thesis project during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4 Instruments

In this research, stimulated recall was used because it was necessary to understand the participants' process of writing their thesis project during the pandemic; therefore, they needed a stimulus to remember that process. It will be described in this section.

3.4.1 Stimulated Recall

According to deMarrais (2004), an interview is a conversation between two people (researcher and participant) that is focused on questions related to a research study. These questions usually ask participants for their thoughts, opinions, perspectives, or descriptions of specific experiences. Then, the researcher determines the research purpose, designs the study, selects the participants and intents to implement it. Finally, the researcher discusses the participants' interpretations and expresses how they regard situations from their own point of view (Cohen et al., 2007).

Stimulated recall is an immediate retrospective method based on Ericsson and Simon's central premise in the 1980's that cognitive operations still active in the

participant's memory can be accessed and verbally reported as data (Días, 2022). This is a technique in which participants are asked to recall thoughts they had had while performing a prior task or while they participated in a prior event. It is assumed that some tangible (visual or audio) reminder of the event itself will aid the participant in mentally reengaging with the original event (Gass & Mackey, 2017). Egi (2008) states that in the context of second language acquisition (SLA) researchers suggest that stimulated recall could be reactive due to at least two reasons: recall stimuli and verbalisation. The recall stimuli used to facilitate recall could serve as additional L2 input. In previous oral interaction and collaborative learning studies, video or audio recordings of learners' task performance have typically served as recall stimuli. Swain (2005, cited in Egi, 2008) argues that verbal reports need to be understood as a part of what constitutes learning not just as a research tool.

The researcher created the interview for the stimulated recall in Spanish; it was structured with eighteen open questions related to the student's topic in his/her thesis project to know if the students were going to present their thesis project, the time that students took to work on the thesis, the tools that the students used to obtain bibliographic resources, the chapter or chapters that were difficult to write, how the pandemic affected the process, how the students and their teacher overcame these difficulties. The last questions were about distance education in the Seminars I and II during the pandemic (see Appendix A).

During the piloting phase the researcher noticed that the participant did not understand some questions and then the researcher had to redesign these questions. As

some of the participants had not finished the two Research Seminar courses yet, the questions of the interview were redesigned.

3.5 Data collection procedure

To collect the data for the study, first, a Facebook publication was written in the language department group to inform the students who had completed the two Research Seminar courses or who were taking the Research Seminar II to be part of the study. In addition, some students were recommended by some teachers who were teaching the Research Seminar II. The researcher confirmed the participation of the students who gave like or commented on the Facebook publication using their personal Messenger chat. Secondly, the researcher asked the participants to take their thesis draft to the interview so that they could use it to stimulate their memory about the process of writing their thesis.

We agreed on a date and hour for the interview and notified his/her the platform that will be used for the interview. The interviews were via Google Meet platform. The interviews were recorded, and they were in Spanish to gather as much information as possible. Finally, all the interviews were transcribed in a Word document to analyze the information obtained.

3.6 Data analysis

At the moment of analyzing the data, the researcher identified from the interview the questions that could answer the research questions. Then, the researcher made notes of the different ideas of one particular question. The researcher was careful with the words and expressions of the participants to avoid misunderstanding of meaning. Once the

researcher identified the words or phrases used frequently, these ideas were organized into categories to answer the research questions.

3.7 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the participants and where this study was carried out were described. The researcher also explained the type of research and method used to get appropriate data. In the next chapter the results will be provided to the data analysis done.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to identify the problems ELT students face while they wrote their thesis project during the COVID-19 pandemic and how students and teachers overcame those problems. In addition, it was also important to investigate the interaction between the teacher and students in distance learning.

This chapter presents the results about the information gathered through the interview to students that finished their two Research Seminars and students that were taking the Seminars. The three research questions (RQ) that this study addressed are answered.

4.1 Research questions

The research questions are provided below:

- What problems did ELT students face when writing their thesis project in Research Seminar (RS) I and II in a distance learning context during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How did they overcome those problems?
- What was the role of the teacher and the students to overcome the problems faced while pursuing distance learning?

The results were categorized into themes, and they are the following.

4.2 Students' problems when writing their thesis

In this section, all the problems mentioned by the participants are reported. In this study 7 students participated. All the participants will be referred to as P1, P2, P3, and P7.

4.2.1 Academic writing and students' solution

Most of the participants had problems writing chapter two, especially about academic writing. One participant found it difficult to write academically, especially in the selection of the topic. The participant commented:

> …[tuve problemas con] el capitulo dos por el tiempo más que nada, el primero al definir los temas y después ya darles orden y redacción y que a lo mejor estuvieran mal y se tuvieran que volver a redactar o al estar investigando y hacer los resúmenes o tomar las ideas principales para redactar. Eso fue lo más pesado de los cinco. (P1)

> …[I had problems with] chapter two because of the time, first defining the topics and later organize and write them and maybe the writing was going to be bad and probably I had to write that again. I also had problems writing summaries, looking for resources and taking the principal ideas for the thesis. That was the most difficult of the five chapters. (P1)

Participant P1 did not mention any solution.

Another participant found it difficult to organize ideas, add more information or include information that was not necessary. He thought it was time consuming:

> …yo tuve prácticamente un año para poder darle una buena elaboración. Por el tiempo fue el capitulo dos el que tomó mucho tiempo en que quedara bien…Cuando yo entré a seminario 1 que fue en otoño 2020 la maestra me decía: "sí está bien, pero necesitamos que ya cuente con estas características; la introducción debe ser por ejemplo de un párrafo y tienes que empezar a incluir la información que te falta. Ese punto considero que no debería entrar aquí" y en este caso la maestra de seminario 1 me apoyó mucho en indicarme qué debería ir o remover de ese capitulo hasta que ya quedara. (P2)

> … I had practically a year to be able to organize my thesis. About the time, it was chapter 2 that took a long time to get it right… When I started Research Seminar 1, which was in autumn 2020, the teacher told me: "it is fine but we need it to have these characteristics; the introduction should be, for example, a paragraph and you have to start to including the information that is missing. I think that point should not be included here" and in this case the seminar teacher supported me a lot in indicating that I should include or remove from that chapter until it was already. (P2)

Participant P2' solution was to ask for the teacher's help:

En mi caso le dije [a la maestra de seminario]: "yo tengo esto que trabajé durante el semestre pasado. Yo quiero que usted me revise la información del capitulo dos y me diga qué necesito hacer porque yo considero que ya tengo bastante información". Y la maestra me dijo: "está bien lo que hiciste pero no se puede poner esto, en este otro punto te falta ponerle más información". Me removió un punto completo que creo que fue el último. La maestra me dijo: "este punto creo que no es necesario porque no se relaciona mucho con tu tema y lo que sí te pido es que busques quienes han investigado del tema". (P2)

In my case, I told the seminar teacher: "I have this that I worked on last semester. I want you to review the information in chapter two and tell me what I need to do because I consider that I already have enough information". And the teacher told me: "what you did is fine but you cannot put this, and in this other section you need to add more information". The seminar teacher removed a complete section that I think was the last one. She told me: "I think this section is not necessary because it is not very related to your research topic and what I ask you to do is to look for those who have investigated about your research topic". (P2)

4.2.2 Bibliography and students' solution

Two participants mentioned having difficulty in finding bibliographic resources for chapter two because articles were not complete online or there was not much information about his or her research topic. The participants commented:

…al momento de encontrar un poco de información se me ha dificultado porque en ocasiones no dan el documento completo o no me muestra los autores… (P3)

…at the time of finding it has been difficult for me to find some information on web pages because sometimes they do not give the complete document or it does not show me the authors… (P3)

El capitulo dos está siendo el más difícil para mí debido a que en la bibliografía en ocasiones ha resultado escasa debido a que mi tema de tesis es un tema que no ha sido investigado por muchos investigadores. (P7)

Chapter two is being the most difficult for me because the bibliographic resources have sometimes been scarce because my research topic has not been investigated by many researchers. (P7)

Participant P3's solution was to ask the teacher for resources for chapter two:

De ese capitulo [capitulo dos] en ocasiones le pregunto a mi maestra qué páginas de internet puedo consultar para encontrar la información que necesito o qué programas desbloquean los documentos para verlos completos. Cuando tengo problemas para encontrar la información es cuando recurro a ella. (P3)

From that chapter [chapter two] sometimes I ask my seminar teacher what web pages I can consult to find the information I need or what programs unlock the documents to see the full text. When I have problems finding information, that is when I go to the seminar teacher. (P3)

Participant P7's solution was to compare his information that he already obtained with the information that he found on internet. He also asked to his thesis advisor for help.

> Corroborar la información que ya tengo y buscar investigaciones que estén relacionadas con mi tema de tesis, es decir, que contengan las palabras clave o que estén en la misma área de mi estudio y cuando se ha prestado la ocasión, pregunto a mi asesora de tesis. (P7)
>
> Corroborate the information I already have and look for research related to my thesis topic, that is, research that contains the key words or that are in the same area of my study and when I have the opportunity to ask my thesis advisor I do it. (P7)

4.2.3 Finding participants

Something curious about one participant is that apart from having difficulty finding the bibliographic resources, she also had difficulty finding her participants; for that reason, she could not write chapter 4.

> …el capitulo dos fue difícil porque no hay mucha información con respecto a lo que estoy investigando y además es un tema poco amplio. Entonces es difícil estarlo clasificando [palabras clave] y estar buscando referencias confiables… y el capitulo 4 que fue de los resultados no lo pude escribir porque no encontré a los participantes… (P6)
>
> …chapter two was difficult because there is not much information about what I am researching and regardless of that, it is not a very broad topic. Then it is difficult to be classifying [key concepts] and looking for reliable references… and chapter 4, that is about the results, I could not write it because I could not find the participants… (P6)

Participant P6 could not solve how to find her participants for her study even when she used different ways to approach the participants like Facebook or asking some relatives that were teachers. She needed a specific profile for her participants.

> …a pesar de que utilice Facebook preguntando quien podría ayudarme, nadie me contestó. También pregunté a algunos de mis familiares que también son docentes y tampoco encontré en ellos el perfil que yo buscaba en mis participantes. El perfil que yo buscaba era que tenían que ser docentes de primaria en una escuela pública y que tuvieran la licenciatura de enseñanza del inglés. Y es por ello que no pude conseguirlos. (P6)
>
> …although I used Facebook to ask who could help me, no one answered me. I also asked some of my relatives who are also teachers and I did not find in them the profile that I was looking for in my participants. The profile that I was looking for was that they had to be teachers in a public elementary

> school with a bachelor´s degree in English Language Teaching. And that is why I could not get them. (P6)

Similarly, one participant mentioned that it was difficult to find the participants to administer the instrument.

> …sí se me ha estado haciendo muy difícil porque ya llegó el momento de estar buscando a los participantes para que te puedan apoyar con sus respuestas. Entonces sí es un poco difícil porque no tengo muchos compañeros de la facultad que tengan contacto con las otras generaciones… (P4)
>
> … it has been very difficult for me because the time to find the participants has come so that they can support me with their answers. So it is a bit difficult because I do not have many colleagues who have contact with other generations… (P4)

Participant P4's solution was to write a message on Facebook to find some participants:

> …hay un grupo de Facebook de la facultad pero uno publica y no hay respuesta de otros compañeros para apoyarnos. (P4)
>
> …there is a Facebook group of the language department but one publishes and there is not answer from other colleagues to support us. (P4)

Also, she mentioned other solutions; for example, to ask her seminar teacher, her partners that are also writing their thesis project and ask her thesis advisor:

> Algunas veces le he preguntado a mi maestra de seminario, en otras ocasiones he recurrido con otros compañeros que están desarrollando su proyecto de investigación y también me estoy apoyando con mi asesora de tesis. (P4)
>
> Sometimes I have asked my seminar teacher. On other occasions I have asked other colleagues who are also developing their research project and I am also supported by my thesis advisor. (P4)

4.2.4 A different Research Seminar teacher in the second course

Only one participant mentioned that the change of teacher from Seminar 1 to Seminar 2 affected him because in Research Seminar 1 his teacher told him that he had

made good work in the three chapters but in Research Seminar 2, the teacher asked the students to work again in the three chapters that they had already made.

> Prácticamente [tuve problemas con] todo porque el cambiar de maestro también es bueno y es malo. Yo tuve a mi primer maestro de seminario y él me dijo que estaba muy bien y solamente me faltó poco para concluir el capitulo tres. Cuando inicie el seminario dos, mis compañeros y yo tuvimos que regresarnos al capitulo uno y dos porque el maestro nos decía: "de nada sirve que avancemos el capitulo tres, cuatro y el último que es el cinco si no están bien el capitulo uno y el capitulo dos. Entonces todo va a estar mal y vas a hacer tres veces el trabajo". Volvimos a recapitular el capitulo uno y el capitulo dos y a mí me hizo ver muchos errores que cometí. No avanzamos mucho más que el capitulo uno, dos y tres nuevamente. (P5)
>
> Practically [I had problem with] everything because when we change from one teacher to another, it is good and bad. I had my first seminar teacher and he told me that I was doing very well.. When Research Seminar two started, I and my classmates had to go back to chapter one and chapter two because the teacher told us: "it is useless for us to move on to chapter three, four and the last one, which is five, if chapters one and two are not right. Then everything is going to be wrong and you are going to do the job three times again". We went back to sum up chapter one and chapter two and he made me see many mistakes I made. We had to do chapter one, chapter two and chapter three again. (P5)

Participant P5 had to do the first three chapters again. He continued working that way only to satisfy his seminar teacher and to obtain a final note:

> …yo lo único que hice fue entregar lo que el maestro quería y como él lo quería. Ya que al final del curso el maestro me daría una calificación de acuerdo a lo que yo hice… (P5)
>
> …what I did was to do what the teacher wanted and how he wanted it. At the end of the course the teacher would give me a note according to what I did… (P5)

4.3 The pandemic effects

All the participants mentioned at least one pandemic effect; some participants mentioned some issues related to data collection and other participants mentioned personal difficulties.

4.3.1 Changing topic

Participants P1 and P6 mentioned they needed to investigate a different topic because their participants were children so they could not access elementary schools because all the schools were closed because of the pandemic. The participants commented:

> Al comenzar el tema de mi tesis, yo tenía un tema distinto que era el desarrollo de materiales para la enseñanza del inglés para niños con autismo, pero a causa de la pandemia las escuelas que ya me habían confirmado donde iba hacer mi investigación ya no me dieron acceso a entrar porque ya estaban cerradas y además los maestros comenzaban a enseñar en línea. (P1)
>
> When I started I had a different topic, which was the development of materials for teaching English to children with autism, but due to the pandemic, the elementary schools that had already confirmed where I was going to do my investigation did not give me access because they were already closed and the teachers were teaching online. (P1)
>
> El tema de mi tesis era distinto porque se enfocaba en el alumno de cómo era el proceso de aprendizaje. Al momento que las escuelas cierran [por la pandemia] ya no se pudo llevar a cabo la investigación y además iba ser un poco tardado en hacerlo. (P6)
>
> The research topic of my thesis was different because it focused on the student and the learning process. At the time that the elementary schools closed [due to the pandemic] the investigation could not be carried out and it was also going to take a while to do so. (P6)

Participant P1's solution was to change his research topic, so he had to start writing the first three chapters again. The participant mentioned:

> …al entrar a seminario de investigación dos, [mi solución fue] hacer de nuevo los tres primeros capítulos con nuevo tema. El nuevo tema me beneficio que fuera todo en línea porque básicamente de eso era el tema. Entonces para el primer tema de mi tesis si me afectó la pandemia pero para el segundo tema me beneficio. (P1)
>
> …when research seminar two started, [my solution was] to do the first three chapters again with a new research topic. The new research topic benefited me from being all online because the topic was about it. So for the first research topic of my thesis project the pandemic affected me, but for the second research topic it benefited me. (P1)

On the contrary, participant P6 could not solve how to find her participants because the elementary schools were closed due to the pandemic:

> …no hubo una solución porque salir a buscar los participantes en las escuelas era imposible porque estaban cerradas las escuelas [debido a la pandemia]. En ese tiempo yo estaba trabajando y estaba embarazada y entonces no podía salir mucho porque era una persona de riesgo a contagiarse del coronavirus. (P6)

> …there was no solution because going out to look for the participants in the elementary schools was impossible because they were closed [due to the pandemic]. At that time I was working and I was pregnant and so I could not go out much because I was a person at risk of getting the coronavirus. (P6)

4.3.2 The settings of the thesis projects were closed

Participant P2 had difficulty in finding his participants because he did not know how to contact the students he wanted to participate in his study. The participant commented:

> [La pandemia me afectó] en encontrar a los participantes de mi investigación. Yo ya tenía previsto cómo encontrar a mis participantes pero al momento que se eliminan las clases presenciales y empiezan las clases a distancia, yo dije: "ahora ¿qué voy hacer para buscar a mis participantes?". (P2)
>
> [The pandemic affected me] in finding the participants of my investigation. I had already planned how to find my participants but when face-to-face classes were eliminated and distance classes began, I said: "now what am I going to find my participants?". (P2)

Participants P2's solution was to use different ways to approach the participants. He used a Facebook group that the language department created but he did not get many answers. Therefore, he asked some partners that had at least some characteristics for his study. The participant mentioned:

> …[mi solución] fue publicar en el grupo de facebook que tiene la facultad: "compañeros buenas tardes o buen día. Estoy trabajando en este tema de investigación de tesis… Les dejo el enlace para que contesten un cuestionario y necesito cierto tipo de estudiantes con estas características…". Nada mas obtuve respuesta de dos participantes y necesitaba cinco participantes, entonces dije: "y ahora, ¿qué voy hacer?". Entonces empecé a acudir con compañeros que al menos cumplieran con el mínimo de las características que yo buscaba en mi investigación para que contestaran el cuestionario porque tenían que ser estudiantes que estuvieran cursando el taller de lectura y escritura académica. (P2)
>
> …[my solution] was to publish in the facebook group that the language department has: "partners, good afternoon or good morning. I am working on this thesis research topic… There is a link to answer a questionnaire and I need certain type of students with these characteristics…". I just got a response from two participants and I need five, so I said: "and now, what am I going to do?". So I started asking some classmates who at least had the minimum of the characteristics that I was looking for in my research to answer the questionnaire because they had to be students who were taking the academic and writing workshop. (P2)

4.3.3 Procrastination

Participant P3 had some procrastination issues and could not organize her time to write the thesis. The participant commented:

> [La pandemia me está afectando] porque no le estoy dedicando mucho tiempo a la tesis. A veces de las dos horas que le dedico a la tesis, estoy media hora decidiendo si lo hago o no. Siento que me he vuelto muy desorganizada más que nada… (P3)
>
> [The pandemic is affecting me] because I am not dedicating time to work on the thesis. Sometimes of the two hours that I work on it, I spend half an hour deciding if I do it or not. I feel like I became very disorganized… (P3)

4.3.4 Lack of feedback

Participant P4 felt that there was not a good seminar teacher's supervision during the thesis writing process. The participant commented:

> [La pandemia me está afectando] porque al ser clases a distancia no hay un contacto humano que te diga: "voy a revisar bien este punto o tienes que buscar más información". Y no que solamente que te diga: "sí, está bien o hay que seguir trabajando". Siento que no me corrige bien la maestra de seminario ya que falta la atención individual. (P4)
>
> [The pandemic is affecting me] because in distance classes there is no human contact so the teacher can tell you: "I am going to review this section well or you have to look for more information". Instead, the teacher only says: "Yes, it is fine or you have to keep on working". I feel that the seminar teacher does not give enough feedback since individual attention is lacking. (P4)

4.3.5 Lack of motivation

Participant P5 did not feel motivated about what he was investigating. The participant mentioned:

> …a mí me afectó demasiado [la pandemia] en que yo nada mas estaba investigando el tema y ya no tenía ganas de seguir avanzando… (P5)
>
> …it affected me too much [the pandemic] I was just investigating the topic and I did not want to continue working… (P5)

4.3.6 Tiredness of being in front of the computer

Participant P7 mentioned two pandemic effects. First, to be much time in front of the computer made him feel tired. Second, he could not go to the libraries because they were closed due to the pandemic. He could not find books on the Internet because the books that he needed were not available. The participant mentioned:

> [La pandemia me está afectando] porque primero al escribir en línea es estar mucho tiempo frente a la computadora y eso es cansado. Segundo, no puedo entrar a las bibliotecas como la que se encuentra dentro de la facultad de lenguas de manera física debido a la pandemia para encontrar libros que puedan ser una bibliografía útil para mi investigación. Y a veces es muy difícil encontrar libros de manera virtual porque están más de forma física. (P7)

> [The pandemic is affecting me] because firstly, writing online means to spend a lot of time in front of the computer and that is tiring. Second, due to the pandemic I cannot physically go to the libraries like the one inside of the language department to find books that could be a useful bibliography for my research. And sometimes it is very difficult to find books virtually because they are available only printed. (P7)

4.4 Research Seminar Teachers' support and feedback

All the participants got help from their Research Seminar teacher. Participant P1's teacher facilitated him to administer his instrument to students that were taking professional practice because the teacher was also a Professional Practice tutor. And she also helped with the student's new research topic. The participant commented:

> Mi maestra, como también era tutora de práctica profesional y el instrumento de mi investigación estaba dirigido a los estudiantes de práctica profesional, me ayudó compartiendo mi instrumento a sus alumnos para que lo contestaran. También cuando le conté del problema que tenía con el primer tema de mi tesis y me ayudó a organizar un nuevo tema de investigación que estuviera enfocado en las clases en línea… (P1)

> My teacher, who was also a Professional Practice tutor and my research instrument was aimed at professional practice students, helped me sharing my instrument with her students so they could answer it. Also, when I told her about the problem I had with the first research topic of my thesis, she help me to have a new research topic that was focused on online classes… (P1)

Participant P2's teacher guided the students about how to administer his instrument. The participant commented:

> Cuando comenzamos a trabajar en el instrumento y su aplicación en seminario de investigación dos, la maestra nos dijo: "jóvenes, sabemos que no se puede hacer una cita presencial con los participantes, así que traten de buscar quienes pueden a distancia". Nos presentó ejemplos mediante un autor que decía que se puede aplicar el instrumento por teléfono, carta o utilizando algo actual como una video conferencia y respetando ciertas características… (P2)
>
> When we started working on the instrument and how to administer it in the Research Seminar Two, the teacher told us: "guys, we know that you cannot meet the participants face to face, so try to find who can be interviewed from a distance". She gave us some examples about how to administer the instruments by telephone, letter or using video conference and respecting certain characteristics… (P2)

Participant P3's teacher gave her a specific day to clarify questions or help about the process of writing the thesis. The participant commented:

> [La maestra me está ayudando] en asesorías personalizadas que me da los días jueves en caso de tener dudas o que tenga que revisar alguna información que no está bien… (P3)
>
> [The seminar teacher is helping me] in personalized feedback that she gives me on Thursdays in case I have doubts or if I have to review some information that is not correct… (P3)

Participant P4 mentioned that sometimes she felt that her teacher helps her, but sometimes it did not occur and although the teacher sent relevant information to the students, the students were confused by the teacher's explanation. The participant commented:

> A veces [la maestra] sí me ayuda y en otras ocasiones no me ayuda. Ella nos manda información que está en la misma plataforma que estamos utilizando pero al momento que la maestra lo explica en la clase me confunde un poco. (P4)
>
> Sometimes [teacher] helps me and some other times she does not help me. She sends us information that it is on the same platform that we are using, but when the seminar teacher explains it in online classes, she confuses me a bit. (P4)

Participants P5's teacher gave some feedback, but it was according to who finished first. The participant commented:

> …[el maestro] sí nos explicaba las dudas pero el problema fue que el alumno que terminara primero era quien le revisaba primero y así sucesivamente… (P5)
>
> …[the teacher] answered our questions but the problem was that the student who finished first was the one who checked first and so on… (P5)

Participant P6's teacher considered that there were very few participants in the study, thus, she suggested the students what resources they could use to administer their instrument. The participant mentioned:

> …[la maestra] nos sugirió que fueran pocos los participantes, también nos mencionó de qué maneras podíamos conseguirlos y nos dio algunos consejos de cómo aplicar la entrevista u otro instrumento diferente a través de las plataformas… (P6)
>
> …[the teacher] suggested few participants, she also told us how we could get them and she gave us some advice on how to administer a interview or another different instrument through the platforms… (P6)

Participant P7´s teacher sent him information related to his research topic and also, she gave him some research strategies. The participant commented:

> …[la maestra] me ha dado algunos documentos donde yo pueda encontrar información respecto a mi tema de tesis. También me ha compartido algunas estrategias de investigación con la finalidad de seleccionar y eliminar información que no es relevante. (P7)
>
> …[the teacher] has provided me with some documents where I can find information regarding my research topic. She has also shared me some research strategies in order to select and eliminate information that is not relevant. (P7)

4.4.1 How teachers checked the students' thesis project and gave feedback

The participants explained how the reviews were and how constantly the teacher checked the student´s thesis project. Participant P1's teacher checked his thesis project during the class but later the teacher checked it individually. The participant mentioned the following:

> Cuando comenzamos con las primeras clases en línea la maestra daba el tema y luego nosotros hacíamos unas actividades con respecto al tema y después presentábamos nuestros avances del capitulo que íbamos de la tesis. Pero después fueron sesiones individuales donde cada uno presentaba lo que iba avanzando en la tesis y la maestra lo iba corrigiendo. (P1)
>
> When we started with the first online classes the teacher explained the topic then we used to do some activities regarding the topic and then we presented our progress of the chapter. But later they were individual sessions where each one presented the progress and the teacher corrected it. (P1)

In addition, participant P1's teacher gave him proposals about where to find information on Internet, and how to improve his academic writing. The participant commented:

> Las correcciones se hacían durante las clases en línea y si se tenía alguna duda también se resolvía en ese momento. De forma individual me daba sugerencias de páginas de donde buscar información o buscar formas de redacción y también me decía: "mira, aquí puedes cambiar esta palabra por esta otra palabra". (P1)
>
> The corrections were made during the online classes and if I had any question, the teacher resolved it at that time. Individually, she gave me suggestions of web pages where to find information or find forms of writing and she also told me: "look, here you can change this word for this other word". (P1)

Participant P2 compared the revisions between his two Research Seminar teachers. The participant mentioned the following:

> Con la maestra de seminario uno fue un acompañamiento en todo momento incluso cuando enviábamos nuestro trabajo, lo leía y escribía: "me parece que necesitas ayuda en esta parte, te voy a dar una cita para tal fecha". Ella no se esperaba a que tú le dijeras sino ella tomaba la iniciativa de decir: "nos vamos a reunir tal fecha para que te diga qué necesitas hacer o qué debes mejorar". En cambio con la maestra de seminario dos, estábamos todos [en la clase en línea] y nos decía: "vamos a trabajar en esto, ¿quién tiene dudas?, ¿quién tiene una pregunta?" Si un alumno tenía duda, la maestra le pedía que presentara su trabajo [en la plataforma] y todos lo veíamos y decía: "lo que necesita su compañero es trabajar en esta parte, si se dan cuenta la referencia está mal, vamos a revisar otra vez las normas APA…" (P2)
>
> With the Research Seminar I teacher, there was an accompaniment at all times, even when we sent our work, she read it and used to write: "I think you need help with this section, I am going to give you an appointment for this date". She did not wait for you to tell her, but rather she took the initiative to say: "we are going to meet on such a date so that I can tell you what you need to do or what you must improve." On the other hand, with the Research Seminar II teacher, we were all [in the online class] and she told us: "we are going to work on this. Are there any questions? Who has a question?" If a student had questions, the teacher asked him/her to present his/her work [on the platform] and we all saw it and she said: "what your classmate needs is to work on this part; if you notice the reference is wrong, let's review APA standards again…" (P2)

Participant P2's teacher gave him feedback on the platform or video meeting, but it was if the student really needed it. The participant commented:

> [La maestra] hacía la retroalimentación en la plataforma o en video conferencia si lo necesitabas. Lo revisaba y te decía: "veo que está bien lo que escribiste, continua trabajando". Y cuando la maestra me devolvía el capitulo me daba cuenta que me ponía de amarillo la información que no era necesaria y me escribía comentarios como: "arregla esta parte", "esta parte esta bien pero agrégale un poco más de información" o "¿cuál es la intención que quieres decir en esta línea?". (P2)
>
> [The teacher] gave feedback on the platform or video meeting if you needed it. She reviewed it and used to tell us: "I see that what you wrote is good, continue working". And when the teacher returned the chapter to me, I noticed that she turned the information that was not necessary in yellow and she wrote me comments like: "fix this section", "this section is fine but add a little more information" or "what is the intention you want to say in this line?" (P2)

Participant P3's teacher checked her thesis project on the platform. The participant mentioned the following:

> Como mencioné anteriormente, los días jueves son las asesorías personalizadas. Aparte de mostrarle los avances [a la maestra] se suben también esos avances a la plataforma que utilizamos. De esa manera ella va revisándolo y para el día lunes nos dice si hubo algún problema y entonces lo vuelve a explicar. (P3)
>
> As I mentioned earlier, on Thursdays we have individual feedback. Apart from showing the progress [to the teacher], it was also uploaded to the platform we used. That way she went over it and by Monday she told us if there was a problem and then she explained it again. (P3)

Participant P3's perception about the teacher´s feedback was good because the teacher noted the information was not related with the other information that the student had before. The participant commented:

> Cuando no está muy bien redactada la información o cuando la información que agregamos no coincide con la información que ya tenemos, entonces es ahí donde la maestra nos dice: "tienes estas opciones; puedes buscar en esta página de internet o te recomendaría que lo plantearas de esta forma". Considero buena la retroalimentación de la maestra además de que es muy paciente. (P3)
>
> When the information is not very well written or when the information we add is not coherent with the information we already have, that is when the teacher tells us: "you have these options; you can search on this website or you should write it this way". I consider the teacher´s feedback is good, in addition to the fact that she is very patient. (P3)

Participant P4's teacher gave her revision in each class and the students showed what they had written (progress). The participant mentioned the following:

> Es por cada clase y [la maestra] nos pide quien quiere mostrar su avance o qué tiene hecho de forma individual. (P4)
>
> In each class the teacher asks us who wants to show her/his progress or what we have made and we present individually. (P4)

Participant P4´s perception about the teacher's feedback was negative because the teacher did not provide detailed comments of information about what or how to improve. The participant commented:

> La retroalimentación siento que solamente es de: "sí, está bien", "trabaja más en esta parte" o "la próxima clase me enseñas tus avances". Siento que la maestra le hace falta decir: "lee esto para que puedas mejorarlo o lo entiendas". No es muy directa la maestra. (P4)
>
> I feel that the feedback is only something like: "yes, it is fine", "work more on this section" or "next class, show me your progress". I think that the teacher needs to say: "read this so you can improve it or understand it". The teacher is not very direct. (P4)

Participant P5 sent by email what he had written every week. The teacher told his students that they had to be patient because it was difficult for him to check all the students' work. The participant mentioned the following:

> [Al maestro] le teníamos que enviar por semana los avances y él los iba revisando conforme iban llegando a su correo. Pero teníamos que ser pacientes con la revisión porque el maestro nos decía: "al estar revisando sus avances por correo es más cansado para mi vista. Estoy todo el día dando clases en línea, terminó las clases y luego tengo que abrir cada archivo de cada alumno para revisarlo, también entiéndanme que tengan un poco de paciencia." (P5)
>
> [To the teacher] we had to send the progress every week and he would revise them as they got them in his email. But we had to be patient because the teacher told us: "when I check your progress by email it is more tiring for my eyes. I am teaching online all day, the classes finish and then I have to open each file of each student to correct it. You have to understand me and have a little patience." (P5)

Participant P5's perception about the teacher's feedback was good because the teacher made them rewrite chapter 1 and 2. The student noticed that what he had written was not coherent sometimes. The participant commented:

> La retroalimentación del maestro de seminario 2 nos hizo repetir el capitulo 1 y 2. Nos hacía preguntas de un libro que él tenía pero no recuerdo el título de ese libro. Si no contestábamos bien, él nos decía: "no, estas mal. El autor nos sugiere que en el capitulo 1 tenemos que tener estas ideas bien claras; ¿qué es lo que quieres dar a entender?, ¿tu explicación de la hipótesis está bien definida?" Había preguntas que nos hacía dudar y cuando leíamos un párrafo de nuestro tema de investigación y no había coherencia, era cuando uno decía: "tiene razón, estoy mal". (P5)
>
> The feedback from the teacher two made us repeat chapter 1 and 2. He asked us questions from a book he had but I do not remember the title of that book. If we did not answer correctly, he would tell us: "no, you are wrong. The author suggests that in chapter 1 we should have these ideas very clear; what do you want to imply? Is your explanation of the hypothesis well defined?" There were questions that made us doubt and when we read a paragraph of our research topic and there was no coherence; it was when we said:"he is right, I am wrong." (P5)

Participant P6's teacher made a review of each document that the students uploaded on the platform that she used, and the teacher gave specific days on the platform to solve students' difficulties. The participant mentioned the following:

> [La maestra] lo revisaba en la plataforma y siempre hacía observaciones en cada archivo que nosotros subíamos y también nos asignaba días para decirle qué dificultades teníamos y que era lo que avanzamos de la tesis. (P6)
>
> [The teacher] reviewed it on the platform and she always made observations on each file that we uploaded and she also assigned a specific day to tell her what difficulties we had and what progress was made in the thesis. (P6)

Participant 6's perceptions about the teacher's feedback were good because the teacher noticed that the student was not focused on her research topic, so the teacher guided the student about what she had to investigate. The participant commented:

> En base a lo que teníamos, la maestra nos decía: "te estás saliendo del tema que estás haciendo. Tú tienes que hacerlo de esta forma". De esa manera era como ella hacia la retroalimentación de nuestro trabajo. (P6)

> Based on what we had, the teacher told us: "you are getting out of the topic you are doing. You have to do it this way." That was how she gave feedback on our thesis project." (P6)

Participant P7 mentioned that he showed and shared the document that he had written (progress) on the platform the teacher used. The teacher reviewed and gave some feedback and the student improved what was wrong. The participant mentioned the following:

> Le muestro [a la maestra] mis avances compartiendo mi pantalla en la plataforma que estamos utilizando y luego mi maestra lo revisa, me corrige lo que está mal o me hace ciertas observaciones con la finalidad de mejorar mi redacción. (P7)
>
> I show [the teacher] my progress by sharing my screen on the platform we are using, and then my teacher checks it, she corrects what is wrong or makes certain observations to improve my writing. (P7)

Participant P7's perception about the teacher's feedback was excellent because the teacher could solve the problems that the students had and she gave him some advice. So, at the end of each session the students knew what to improve. The participant commented:

> Considero que [la retroalimentación] es excelente porque todas mis dudas la maestra las resuelve o me dice consejos. Al finalizar cada sesión yo ya sé que hacer, sé que corregir y sé lo que está bien. (P7)
>
> I consider that [the feedback] is excellent because all my questions are answered by the teacher or she gives me some advice. At the end of each session I already know what to do, I know what to correct and I know what is right. (P7)

4.5 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter the results of the research were provided. In students' problems when writing their thesis were found academic writing and students' solution, bibliography and students' solution, finding participants and a different Research Seminar teacher in the second course. The pandemic effects that the students happened to be found changing topic,

the setting of the thesis project were closed, procrastination, lack of feedback, lack of motivation and tiredness to be in front of the computer. And about Research Seminar teachers' support and feedback, students explain how teachers checked their thesis project and gave feedback. In the following chapter I will explain the findings that answer my research questions, the accomplishment of research aim, the limitations of the study, the further research, my personal reflection and my final comments.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

5.0 Chapter introduction

This chapter mentions the findings that answer my three research questions, the limitations of the study, the further research and my personal reflection.

5.1 Findings

The study was done in order to answer three research questions. Thus, they are shown and answered in this section.

RQ1 - What problems did ELT students face when writing their thesis project in Research Seminar (RS) I and II in a distance learning context during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Regarding the students´ problems, they mentioned some problems about academic writing, bibliography, finding participants and having a different RS teacher in the second course. About academic writing, it was difficult for the students to write academically, especially in the selection of the topic. Also, it was difficult for them to organize ideas, add more information or include information that was not necessary. Students thought it was time consuming.

Regarding bibliography, some students had difficulty finding bibliographic resources for chapter two because articles were not complete online or there was not much information about their research topic. Something important to mention about other students was that apart from having difficulty finding the bibliographic resources, it was

also difficult to find the participants due to the pandemic; for that reason, they could not write the chapter 4 or to administer the instrument.

In addition, it was also mentioned that the change of RS teacher from Seminar 1 to Seminar 2 affected because in Research Seminar 1 the teacher told students had made a good work in the three chapters but in Research Seminar 2, a teacher asked the students to work again in the three chapters that they had already written. The student explained that the teachers had a different perspective about research.

About the COVID-19 pandemic, the students mentioned some pandemic effects: changing topic, the settings of the thesis project were closed, procrastination, lack of feedback, lack of motivation and tiredness of being in front of the computer. About changing topic, some students needed to investigate a different topic because their participants were children so they could not access elementary schools because all the schools were closed because of the pandemic. Regarding the settings of the thesis project, they were closed. It was difficult for a student to find the participants because he did not know how to contact the students he wanted to participate in his study. About procrastination, a student had some procrastination issues and could not organize her time to write the thesis.

Furthermore, other students felt that there was not good supervision from the Research Seminar teacher during the thesis writing process. There was also a lack of motivation; a student did not feel motivated about what he was investigating. Regarding the tiredness of being in front of the computer, a student mentioned first that being spent much time in front of the computer made him feel tired. Second, he could not go to the libraries

because they were closed due to the pandemic. The student could not find books on the Internet because the books that he needed were not available.

RQ2 - How did they overcome those problems?

In academic writing, a student did not mention any solution. On the other hand, the solution of other student was to ask for the teacher's help. Regarding bibliography, a student' solution was to ask the teacher for resources for chapter two. Another student's solution was to compare the information that he had already obtained with the information that he found on the Internet. Also, he asked his thesis advisor for help.

In finding participants, a student could not solve how to find her participants for her study even when she used different ways to approach the participants: using Facebook or asking some relatives that were teachers. On the contrary, another student's solution was to write a message on Facebook to find some participants. This student mentioned other solutions; for example, she asked her RS teacher, her partners that were also writing their thesis project and her thesis advisor.

About a different Research Seminar teacher in the second course, the student had to do the first three chapters again. He continued working that way only to satisfy his RS teacher and to obtain a final note. According to the student's explanation the RS II teacher told students that it was not good to move on to chapter three, four and five if chapters one and two were not right.

About the pandemic effects, a participant's solution was to change his research topic because the research setting was closed, so he had to start writing the first three chapters again. On the contrary, another participant could not solve how to find her participants

because the elementary schools were closed due to the pandemic. During the pandemic, the settings of the thesis projects were closed, and a participant's solution was to use different ways to approach the participants. He used a Facebook group that the language department created but he did not get many answers. Therefore, he asked some partners that had at least some characteristics for his study.

RQ3 - What was the role of the teacher and the students to overcome the problems faced while pursuing distance learning?

All the participants got help from their RS teachers. They supported and gave feedback to the students. For example, a participant's teacher facilitated him to administer his instrument to students that were taking professional practice because the teacher was also a Professional Practice tutor. Similarly, the other participant's teacher guided the students about how to administer his instrument. Other participants mentioned that the teacher considered that there were very few participants in the study, thus, she suggested to the students what resources they could use to administer their instrument.

In addition, in some cases, the teacher gave a specific day to clarify questions or help about the process of writing the thesis. In other cases, students felt they did not get the feedback they needed even though the teachers sent relevant information to the students and sent them information related to their research topic. It seems that students needed more help to understand those readings.

Furthermore, the participants explained how teachers checked their thesis project and gave feedback. The teachers checked students' work on the platform that they used, and feedback was given individually during the class or if the student really needed it.

Additionally, the participants' perception about the teacher's feedback was good because the teacher could solve the problems that the students had.

5.2 Limitations of the study

When it became the time to interview participants, first, it was difficult to find the participants for the research project due to the pandemic. Second, interviews were not carried out face to face, instead video conferencing was used. So, it was difficult to listen to them because sometimes the audio was cut off. It is important to mention that the first free apps for video conferencing did not offer a good connection. It was a problem to begin the interview on time. Third, it was a small number of the participants to make a more accurate data interpretation. Finally, the analysis was difficult to find the themes to organize the information for chapter four.

5.3 Further research

The main purpose for developing this research project was to identify the problems ELT students faced while they wrote their thesis project during the COVID-19 pandemic and how students and teachers overcame those problems. In addition, it was also important to investigate the interaction between the teacher and students in distance learning. Thus, from this work some suggestions for doing further research emerge.

This research was focused on analyzing Research Seminar I and II students' experiences, but it could be interesting to interview the teachers who teach these subjects to compare and contrast their opinions.

It may be also interesting to observe some classes to actually see how teachers teach and use the platforms or how teachers give feedback.

5.4 Personal reflection

During the experience of doing this thesis project, I have gone through different experiences which I would like to talk about. First, I was afraid of having a thesis advisor because I listened to my partners about having some bad experiences: some thesis advisors scolded when the student did not make a good progress or the thesis advisor was very demanding during the development of the thesis. That is why I did not want to have a thesis advisor. However, in my case something like that did not happen to me. My thesis advisor was patient, she always motivated me to continue working and though sometimes I made little progress, she told me that what I had done was good. She also supported me a lot in how to find my bibliographic sources on some platform that she knew or sent to my email some PDF books or articles.

When I started to work with my thesis advisor and she reviewed my chapters that I had written during the Research Seminars, she told me that I did not have enough information. So, I noticed that some chapters required more time to write than others. One situation that happened to me at the beginning was that I had difficulty with the citation of my authors because I did not cite them correctly. With the guide of the APA style that my thesis advisor gave me in format PDF and her explanations, I could learn how to cite correctly. Other situation was that I had to learn how to write formally and use some terminology.

About how my thesis advisor and I worked during my thesis project, I liked how we worked together because we had a specific day to meet and give feedback. So I always tried to keep working on my chapters during the week and send them by email before the meetings. Finally I am happy to finish my thesis because I worked very hard and put in a great deal of effort since it required dedication in each chapter.

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Appendix A

Entrevista de los estudiantes

La entrevista es en español, sólo se grabará el audio de la entrevista y se usará un sobrenombre para proteger tu verdadera identidad.
El propósito de esta entrevista es identificar los problemas que enfrentaste al escribir tu proyecto de tesis *en la modalidad en línea* durante la pandemia del COVID-19, las soluciones que tú y tu maestro hicieron para resolver esos problemas, y la interacción entre tu maestro(a) y tú en la educación a distancia en los cursos de Seminario.

1. De qué trata tu tema de investigación?
2. ¿Vas a presentar tu tema de tesis en un examen profesional? ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Cuántas horas le dedicaste/**le estas dedicando** a tu tesis por semana?
4. ¿Qué hiciste/**estás haciendo** para obtener tu bibliografía?
5. ¿Fue/**Es** difícil para ti escribir tu tesis en inglés? ¿Por qué?
6. Del capítulo 1 al 5, ¿cuáles fueron/**son** los capítulos que fueron/**están siendo** difíciles para ti?
7. ¿Qué dificultades del capítulo # tuviste/**estas teniendo**?
8. ¿Qué hiciste/**estás haciendo** tú para resolver los problemas de ese capítulo?
9. ¿Consideras que la pandemia te afectó/**te está afectando** al escribir tu proyecto de tesis?
10. ¿Cómo te afectó/**te esta afectando** la pandemia al escribir tu proyecto de tesis?
11. ¿Tú maestro(a) te ayudó/**te está ayudando** en resolver las dificultades que enfrentaste?
12. ¿Cómo el maestro(a) te ayudó/**te está ayudando** a resolver los problemas que tu enfrentaste/**estas enfrentando**?
13. ¿Cómo el maestro(a) te contactó/**te contacta** durante el curso de seminario?
14. ¿Cómo fue/**es** la participación durante las clases en línea?
15. ¿Cómo el maestro(a) revisaba/**revisa** tu progreso en tu proyecto de tesis?
16. ¿Cómo fue/**es** la retroalimentación que el maestro te daba/ **te está dando**?
17. ¿Cómo fue/**es** la evaluación en los cursos de Seminario 1 y 2?
18. ¿Te gustaría mencionar algo más acerca de la educación a distancia de tus seminarios?