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Thesis

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS THE KEY ELEMENT IN THE
PROCESS OF EMPOWERMENT OF EFL FEMALE
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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OF EMPOWERMENT OF EFL FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS”**

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research was to deeper understand the perspectives of female university students about how the English Language empowers them. The research was conducted in a public university and it was addressed to female students that just started the first semester. The study incorporated the influenced of role models around the participants. The methodology of the research was achieved by narrative inquiry where data was gathered by participants' narratives related to the focus of the research. Findings revealed that most of participants are studying English because English language has become the language of empowerment in education and it will open doors in their professional lives.

The study concludes that the relations among role models and social including family members' support lead women to empowerment through education in a specific community of students.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated first, to my favorite person: Fernanda, my daughter. My little lady, thanks for being part of my life and encourage me to become a better person, a better mom and a better professional. You have impacted me in the most profound ways. You have helped me grow into the woman I am today. I love being your mom my beautiful little girl and learn little but meaningful things from you. Thank you for your love; you are a blessing in my life.

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Chapter One-Introduction

1.1 Introduction

“Language is the infinite use of finite means” (Humboldt, 1836), what means that words can be recombined again and again to give rise to an uncountable sentences with different meanings. Language allow us to express our ideas, feelings, likes, dislikes. However, not all people is able to receive a proper education in Mexico, not even girls. Mexico has made good progress in educational programs, for example, universal pre-school enrollment is nearly achieved, scholarships are keeping more girls in upper-secondary school, and university enrolment rates are now similar for men and women OECD (2017). In addition to this, over 600 programs prevail today offering a major or minor in women studies (Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996).

However, in the labor market, women do not have equal access to leadership positions; even when women are encouraged to study, they suffer discrimination and workplace violence and they are pressured by society to remain in their home and care for children. For these reasons, it is important to invest in education, which empowers women to lead and set up companies, to achieve economic independence ONU MUJERES, (2014).

Empowerment is an interactive process, which occurs between the individual and his environment. Empowerment is a process of internal and external change. The internal process is the person’s sense or belief in her ability to make decisions and to solve her own problems. The external change finds expression in the ability to act and to implement the practical

knowledge, the information, the skills, the capabilities and the other new resources acquired in the course of the process (Parsons, 1988).

Empowerment is enhanced by the use of language as a symbolic tool for the exercise of authority. Through critical language awareness, people can take control of the multiple ways in which they participate in society. Therefore, language learning and teaching are seen in an extended context rather than a mere addition of a code for international communication. (Hussain, Azra and Zafar, 2009). Then, language can be a tool for empowerment.

In this globalized world, English is being used as the means of communication for most of the people around the world. Each country adjoining the world has different communities; the people in the different communities speak several languages. One of the most used languages by the people all over the world is the “English language”. Because of this, English language might help a person to enrich their opportunities in life, for example their employability skills.

Sen (2009) mentions that “Empowerment through English makes people aware of their capacity for personal development and potential for learning further and to access new forms of knowledge, which can open the mind and benefit society”. In addition to this, Robeyns (2009) finds that the benefit of learning a foreign language refers to opening mind which can access to information which makes us knowledgeable in new domains. Recently, opportunities in life tend to be equal for women and men. According to the Classy Career Girl’s blog: “Women today are definitely starting to get equal opportunities thanks in part to change in mindsets and opinions, but we are certainly not considered equal to men”. (2019). However, and in spite of what has been mentioned, in higher education, women’s representation in top-ranking leadership roles is less than one-third at colleges and universities (Cook, 2011; Gallant, 2014).

1.2. Statement of the problem

In Mexico, especially in small communities, women face many challenges in order to attend college. Higher education opens the door to economic opportunities and there is a potential empowerment arising from language education in several fields. Since English has become global in these days, there is a relationship between professional development and English language, according to Hussain & Zafar (2009): “Because English has become global today, to have a competent knowledge of the language is seen as a useful key for opening many doors. People often call English the international language of business, and it is increasingly true as international trade expands every year, bringing new countries into contact. “At the same time, the rapid spread of English has serious implications for all developing countries since access to higher education and employment opportunities through English has become a priority for people today”.

The approach of this study is focused on English language learning as the key to opening up for new perspectives of female empowerment as well as other opportunities of leadership in their own communities.

1.3 Significance of the study

The current study attempts to better examine the perceptions that Facultad de Lenguas BUAP, first semester female students have about studying an ELT and their views about self-empowerment through learning English Language. In addition, the study pretends to illustrate the reasons why women take leadership positions by learning English and in specific by going to college. The study also analyzes women’s empowerment development

to determine how their roles are conceptualized and implemented and, how women independently and collectively construct new empowerment role identities through acquiring the English language.

The problem was explored by using two narratives, which were elicited through previously prepared questions. The first one took place at the beginning of the semester and the last one at the end of the semester. Researchers, such as Cohen & Crabtree (2006) and Yin (2014) suggested this approach as it allows for a conversational nature to interviews and provides the participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms, just as happened during the two moments in the making of the study.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions explore women's individual perceptions with view of female behavior as they expressed their insights on empowerment through English Language in their classroom in their first semester of Facultad de Lenguas BUAP. Derived from the female participants' perspectives the answers may help accomplish the purpose of this research:

1. What are LEI female students' perceptions and expectations to learn English in their first semester?
2. What are the main factors that influence the participants' process of empowerment through English learning?

1.5 Justification

According to Osorio, (2017), a girl is more likely to continue studying if she has a positive female role model who has completed university. However, access to college does not guarantee success, and many college students never achieve their educational goals because of many reasons, one of those is discrimination. Discrimination is defined as making a difference in handling or favor on a class or categorical basis while disregarding individual merit (Lerardi, Fitzgerald, & Holland, 2010). Love (2010) also defined discrimination as acting based on prejudice and the denial of equal opportunities for education, employment, promotions and health care. Considering that, there is a more appropriate concept for this situation: Gender discrimination, that is rejection or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles which prevents a person from relishing full human rights (Florence, 2017).

Concerning the fact of learning English, this might mean that women often face aggravated barriers compared to men from the same countries or socioeconomic groups. As Norton and Toohey (2001) argue, "...if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their value in the social world" (p. 420). Currently, the English language is one of the most important languages in the world. Spoken English is extensively used in business, industries, research, government and education for day-to-day transactions. English is also a tool of intellectual discussions and social interaction among the members of the educated class. It is a widely studied language, spoken around the globe and has a wider dispersion than any other language. As a result of learning English, women can obtain higher

levels of education, which can provide them with better job opportunities, conceivably leading to financial independence and hence a sense of liberation (Mohammadian, 2014).

Additionally, English may open the door to a better future socially, professionally, and academically, especially for those working in the Higher Education sector, this would imply that English might be seen as a means of empowering women who make a big part of the Higher Education workers.

1.6 Importance of the Research

The aim of this research is to examine the perceptions of women about their empowerment while learning English language when they study a major in ELT at Facultad de Lenguas BUAP, that is, in a higher education context. The findings of this study will provide a distinct perspective on the EFL classroom environment, especially for women and their future. First, it will explore some of the different socio-cultural factors that have impact on teaching and learning English language regarding women empowerment. Second, the results of this investigation will provide a very valuable perspective so that teachers as well as students and authorities can create awareness of how leadership is developed in women and that this process of leadership might go across levels and over time, and with this, women can be empowered. Ladyshefsky and Flavell (2011) suggest that leadership development should include ‘the opportunity to learn through experience in a supportive culture that allows for growth and change’ (p.129).

1.7 Thesis organization

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 covers the introduction and the statement of the problem to be studied as well as the significance of the study, research questions, justification and importance of the research. These sections provide an overview of the study, its content and context. Chapter 2 contains the literature that theoretically supports this study. In Chapter 2, the concepts on leadership and empowerment from specialized authors are described, compared and discussed; in relation to the specific context of the study. Chapter 3 is concerned with the methodology used to carry out this research. In this chapter, items such as participants, setting, instruments, data collection and analysis are described. Chapter 4 is concerned with the analysis, findings, and interpretation of the data obtained. Finally, chapter 5 is based on the discussion of findings, conclusion of the study, implications, contributions, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.0 Chapter overview

This chapter is concerned with the literature of the basic concepts of the study. In order to identify the diverse factors that may impact learners or their learning process, as well as the process of empowerment English learners might go through. It is vital, then, to review some theoretical constructs that may shed light on the analysis of the phenomenon targeted in the present study: the empowerment of female university students through learning English.

2.1 Women Role in Society: Discrimination against women

In some contexts, discrimination against women starts at birth. Gender lines are drawn early, and exclusions for women continue throughout adulthood. These constant messages may lead to a false belief that women do not belong in the corporate world. Challenges in the form of discrimination for women begin in childhood as young girls may be brought up to believe that they are only suited for certain professions or, in some cases, only to serve as wives and mothers (Wolfe, 2018).

Sohaib, Saeed. and Cheema (2012) argued that the subordinate position of women in society is common in many cultures of the world. Although this position is somewhat attenuated in higher social classes, discrimination has well-known manifestations. For example, limited representation in the formal political system, a large share of the economy's informal sector and other types of labor with reduced financial rewards. Women have the almost exclusive responsibility for family and children, and other more subtle signs such as narrow career aspirations and low self-esteem.

Therefore, women come to believe in their own inferiority through stereotypes of women as childlike, incompetent and less capable of autonomous decision-making. In agreement with this, The United Nations (2014) said that Discrimination against women includes those differences of treatment that exist because of stereotypical expectations, attitudes and behaviors towards women. This is enhanced by their exclusion from high-level jobs and the reduction of women to sexual objects who are valued more for how they appear than for how they act and do, including the role of university students. According to Micheel, 1986: “Sexism or practices, prejudices, and ideologies that treat one sex as inferior, to the other in worth and status, is still one of the most serious ills afflicting humanity because besides making one sex (usually women) suffer, it deprives all societies of a vast intellectual and human potential that has hitherto been ignored or despised”.

2.1.1 Women as learners

People’s learning is affected by social contexts, their community groups, home, workplace, religious associations, free time activities, and in educational settings but particularly women’s. In fact, in every context of life. In the past, women tended to be excluded from participation in many times of formal education, but in more recent times, women have constituted the largest proportion and most rapidly growing cohort of participants in many educational settings, particularly in higher education (Hayes & Flannery, 2000).

Hayes and Flannery (2000. p.34) also argue that women’s’ learning is shaped by the simple access to formal education and they discuss three influential aspects of formal education: curricula, interpersonal interactions and institutional culture, which can be used

as indicators to access the learning context from a gender perspective. These three aspects are strongly related to learning English at the School of Languages because curricula has to do with, first, textbooks, instructional materials, teachers' lectures, and besides being influential resources of learning, they can strengthen stereotypical roles and images of women and men. The second aspect is the Interpersonal Interactions in the educational institutions that plays an essential role in influencing women's learning experiences. Hayes also refers to the gender-based biases in students-students, teacher-student and faculty-student interactions and gender differences in students' response in different relationships. The third aspect is the culture of an educational institution that refers to factors like gender proportion at institutions, schedules of study programs, intellectual culture and so on. In the past, women were kept outside of many types of formal education, but women's participation into many educational settings has growing rapidly in recent times. However, the high number of women teachers and learners, does not automatically guarantee a supportive culture for women's learning because in some formal educational settings special values are placed on certain kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing (Du, 2012).

More woman than men work part time, often to accommodate household and children care responsibilities. Consequently, women may be given fewer opportunities for formal job training. Women's informal on-the-job learning is also affected by gender. The types of behavior that make men successful may not work for woman because these kinds of behavior may be perceived as "overly aggressive" by the members of the group where they live.

2.1.2 Women learning at home and family

According to Baber and Allen, (1992), “In families, people construct gender identities, develop beliefs about the sexual division of labor and experience the effects of gender hierarchies in personal ways”. Women have different roles and relationships across their family, what leads to different learning experiences. Gender identity has been explained as:

“Gender identity is understood to refer to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not be correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms” (International Commission of Jurists, 2007).

This way, a person’s gender identity can change over their lifetime, and can be expressed in a number of ways and forms. These changes include outward social markers, such as name, clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, voice and other behaviors. Some individuals may express different gender identities in different situations. The content of gender roles reflects the characteristics that facilitate sex-typical task given in society to the extent that women more than men occupy roles that involve domestic activities and communal behavior. Cultures provide expectations for boys and girls, and children begin learning about gender roles from the norms of their family and cultural background. They also hear messages about gender roles from the larger world around them.

2.1.3 Women in the community

Initially, education is an elementary tool for development and if women most run into the mainstream of development, education then becomes mandatory. Women have passed through phases of frustration, deficiency and suffering through history, and these accounts partly for their determination today to eradicate illiteracy amongst them. In all schemes of women endeavors, this sector seems to record the greatest success. According to the United Nations (2015), about half of the world's human capital and business owners are women.

However, only the around one third of the work done by women in developing countries is measured in the national economic reports. In this concern, Melita and Cholil (2012) identify several factors as helpful success motivators for females in developing countries. Among these motivators, the following can be mentioned: new challenges and opportunities for self-fulfillment, education and qualification, support from the family members, role models to others, bright future of their children, need for additional income, family occupation, authority and independent decision making, employment generation and innovative thinking. Lately, women are entering the job markets and putting in efforts to get better income oriented jobs in order to become independent.

Women's learning in the community includes an immense collection of contexts in itself. It may refer to community groups, church groups, clubs, political, so on. Most of these community groups have the purpose of educating their members and the public. Women acquire skills and knowledge in different kinds of community groups. Women who became actively in local community centers reported a wide range of learning outcomes according to Bingham (1995).

2.1.4 Women learning languages

According to a 2008 study of young learners at Northwestern University, girls and boys process language differently. The study revealed that, when learning language, girls' brains show greater activity in the areas used for language encoding. Boys' brains, on the other hand, show activity in the areas associated with visual and aural functions. This means that while girls can process an abstract piece of language more efficiently, boys need some sensory reinforcement to process the data.

On the other hand, the female students are “more likely to attend class on time, sit in the front of the class, take notes, study the textbook and study in an organized way—all behaviors associated with a relatively high motivation to learn.” (Glynn, Taasobshirazi & Brickman, 2007). Extended to this, Muhammad and Ghani, (2013) state that “girls” tend to demonstrate significantly more positive attitudes than boys do, recognizing also that they are more successful in learning languages than boys”. Motivation to learn is “a student’s tendency to find academic activities meaningful and worthwhile and to try to derive the intended academic benefits from them (Glynn et al, 2007).

Why do girls seem to do better at the task of language learning than boys? Research has identified several factors that can potentially account for these gender differences. One of these factors is language-learning motivation. In Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh, (2006). girls scored higher than boys on all but one motivational variables. Girls got higher grades in integrativeness meaning that they had a more positive general outlook on L2 and its culture. Women have stronger personal reasons for learning; they had more positive attitudes towards the target language, speakers and their communities; they were more interested in the respective cultures and they were willing to put in more effort than boys were.

2.1.5 Positive Role Models

The most important function of the role model is to model attitudes, values, and behavior that the person may incorporate into his/her own attitudes, values, and behavior. Because of their holistic character, role models serve as examples of successful professional life careers that are worth copying (Makarova & Herzog, 2014). McDaniel (2002) studied role models and youth outcomes in a sample of 749 ethnically diverse youth and found that adolescents with an identifiable role model received higher grades, had higher self-esteem, and reported stronger ethnic identity than their counterparts who lacked role models. Werner (1995) found that resilient individuals tended to possess same sex role models and that females had the most powerful model of identification in their consistently employed mothers. Regardless of the source (family member, neighbor, peer, community member, or schoolteacher), having a positive role model was a recurring theme for resilient youth in her study. Access to role models who share adolescents' race, ethnicity, and gender can be a key factor in adolescents' identity development and can contribute to the development of their future goals.

Recently, Porter and Serra (2017) employed a field experiment in economics undergraduate classes and showed that the intervention of external role models increases women's enrollment in an intermediate class while self-stated intention to major in economics. Role models are important for motivational processes because they help to indicate particular goals and to suggest the path that one should follow to achieve those goals (Collins, 1996; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Effective role models must be perceived as competent (Marx & Ko, 2012; Marx, Monroe, Cole, & Gilbert, 2013), of the same gender or ethnic group to be effective (Lockwood, 2006; Marx & Goff, 2005; Marx & Roman, 2002; McIntyre, Paulson, & Lord, 2003). Individuals must be aware of the

role model's success in a mutual area of interest, although direct contact with a role model is not necessary (Marx & Roman, 2002).

Early role models are usually parents, modelling standards and providing a foundation for the development of their young offspring. Later, role models come from a wider arena, and eventually, as careers become more important, from the corporate, entrepreneurial or professional worlds (Gibson, 2003). As people seek role models as part of their career development, they often search for individuals with similar backgrounds to themselves. However, for minority individuals, including women, this can be difficult. Young women are considered to be in disadvantage by the lack of female role models at the top of organizations. Role models can be family members or teachers who directly and indirectly affect students' school experiences, self-esteem, and educational and occupational outcomes (Evans, 1992; Galbo, 1989; Solnick, 1995; Wilcoxson & Phelps, 2004).

2.2 Historical Background of English. English as an International Language

It is through the system of language that we make sense of the world and conduct thought. As such, language serves to represent, interpret, and constitute available to subjects as Canagarajah (1999) affirms. Nowadays, because of globalization, the English language has become the most common lingua franca of the world. 1.75 billion people worldwide speak it, functionally. In many countries around the world, English language is viewed mainly as the language for development at both the individual and national levels. English is the key to national progress and English may be the passport to success and upward social mobility, as Cheema and Singh (2015) say.

According to The British Council (2013), the economically active, the thought leaders, the business decision-makers, the young, the movers and shakers present and future are the ones who are learning and speaking English. During the past two decades, the topic of English globalization has caught the attention of many people worldwide leading to the meetings, dialogues, seminars, and conferences held by the governments and universities around the world in words of Razak, (2011).

Besides, English is used between individuals where the language is official, it is an international language. Thus, with the emergence of globalization, the need to learn English as an international language has more extensively been recognized as a vital and empowering tool for its users say Razmjoo, Ranjbar, and Hoomanfard, (2013). However, due to the significance that English has as an international language, it provides a strong competitive advantage in culture, diplomacy, commerce, media, academia and IT, and in the use and practice of soft power around the world.

Accordingly, Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012) emphasized that due to the global spread of English as the worldwide lingua franca, English proficiency is a key priority for development and progress in different areas including technology, science, business, and finance to smooth international communication.

2.2.1 English as a global language

Kumaravadivelu (2008) defines globalization as a “dominant and driving force that is shaping a new form of interconnections and flows among nations, economies, and peoples. It results in the transformation of contemporary social life in all its economic, political, cultural, technological, ecological, and individual dimensions” (p. 32). Fairclough (2000)

adds that the globalization process not only takes place between societies but also within complex societies (e.g. Mexico) that are “characterized by considerable cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 168). As Jenkins (2006) points out, English has become a medium of communication that links different societies as well as distinct peoples within societies, and prioritizing particular registers/literacies of English becomes relevant and problematic. English language is spreading around the world. It is used in political speeches from all around the world. According to Crystal (1997), a language gets an official status when it plays a special role that is recognized in every country to achieve such status a language has to be recognized by other countries around the world. That is the position of English language that in many countries is taught as a foreign language even when there is no the official language. Here, as John Adams, Kachru cited who made the prophecy that later in 1999: “English will be the most respectable language in the world and the most universally read and spoken in the next century, of not close of this one.”

English has two functions in the world according to Graddol (1997); a) it provides a vehicular language for international communication and b) it forms the basis for constructing cultural identities. It requires mutual intelligibility and common standards. As English plays an important role in these functions, it acts as a language of identity for a large number of people around the world. In 1992, Kachru agreed with two views of English in its global spread: The first one involves migrations of substantial numbers of English speakers from the present British Isles to, for example: Australia, New Zealand and North America. Consequently, the people who abandoned the country brought the English language with them.

The second stage of the spread of English, in the colonial contexts of Asia and Africa, entailed transportation of the language. In consequence, English was taken into new

sociocultural contexts. Nevertheless, English became extremely important and useful to the much larger local populations who have continued to expand the roles of English.

2.2.3 Linguistic imperialism

English has been considered as an imperialist language due to the growing importance of the language and its domains in several domains around the world such as: education, media, technology, diplomacy, and so on. Pennycook (1995) believes that linguistic imperialism can take place when English gets a waterway to business, employment and education opportunities. A clear example is the promotion of British English that declares that learning of language creates opportunities otherwise impossible: economically, politically and culturally.

While Phillipson (2009), argues that the Global spread of English is a form of imperialism: “an imperialist structure of exploitation of one society or collectivity by another”. Canagarajah (1999), agrees with these words: “The English language has had a history of imposition for political and material reasons in most periphery communities, often in competition with native languages.”

2.3 English as a tool for development

The language we use in our daily lives plays a role in the empowerment or disempowerment of women in the workplace and entrepreneurial dealings. Language in many situations dictates the power we have in relation to our other colleagues and partners, and to other people in society Po-Yi Liu (2014). In today’s global world, the importance of English

results as it is the most common spoken language. Therefore, English has played a significant part in the development of several sectors including medicine, engineering, and education as examples. English is a vital language for many kinds of professional and personal goals.

2.3.1 Leadership and empowerment

In any context, people take different roles and one of these roles is that of leader. Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers (Gardner, 1990). In addition to this, Northouse, (2004) argued that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to reach a common goal; a process that can be learned and is available to everyone.

Cantor and Bernay (1992) have suggested that leadership for some women is the result of redefining stereotypes about women and power. This definition is from a study of women who had succeeded in the difficult world of politics. They found that these women succeeded effective leadership roles through a combination of: “Competent Self”, “Creative Aggression” and “Womanpower”.

Cantor and Bernay (1992) define “Competent Self” as knowing who you are, taking risk, and believing that you can achieve. “Creative aggression” is being willing to take the initiative and to speak out when necessary. “Woman power” is a redefinition of power as the ability to make people’s life better. On the other hand, empower means believing in yourself and in your own ability to act. Irwin (1996), in addition to this, Ashcroft (1987), said that an empowered person would be someone who believe in his/her ability/capability to act, and this belief would be accompanied by the ability or capacity to do the action.

In addition to the mentioned definitions, Mc Laren (2016) has expressed that the term of empowerment refers to the process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way people live. Following the same author, empowerment also refers to the process by which students learn to question and selectively appropriate the aspects of a dominant culture that could provide them with the basis for defining and transforming the wider social order.

From this point of view, empowerment is about changing society. It is about getting the knowledge and understanding of how things work that will allow one to transform the conditions of one's life. Empowerment implies that the process could involve a change of perceptions about the self, the environment, and the relationship of the self and the environment.

On the other hand, Pat Collins (1990, p. 230) makes a connection with empowering with one- self as well as to others:

“Empowerment involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural or institutional, that perpetuate objectification and dehumanization. African-American women and other individuals in subordinate groups become empowered when we understand and use those dimensions of our individual, group, and disciplinary ways of knowing that foster our humanity as fully human subjects.”

Additionally, Gerson and Straub (1989) defined empowerment as the discovery of the deepest human self and demonstrating it in the sphere: “You will learn how to harness to passion of your mind and create your fullest expression of being human. We call this empowerment”.

According to Irwin, (1996 p. 13). Teachers are empowered educators:

“...who believe in themselves and their capacity to act. They understand systems of domination and work to transform oppressive practices in society. They respect the dignity and humanness of others and manifest their power as the power as the power to actualize their own unique humanity. They are strong, practical and compassionate as they work individually and with others to support the self-realization of all persons in their classrooms, schools and communities.”

Irwin (1996) agrees that an educator can be a teacher, parents, or even administrators, all of whom can empowered themselves to work for change and all of whom are educators. The author also applies this definition of empowered educators to empowered students:

“Empowered students are persons who believe in themselves and their capacity to act. They understand systems of domination and work to transform oppressive practices in society. They respect the dignity and humanness of others and manifest their power as the power to actualize their own unique humanity. They are strong, practical and compassionate as they work individually and with others to support the self-realization of all persons in their classroom, schools, and communities. (p13)”

2.3.2 Empowerment through English

Dr. Samuel Johnson (2017) said his famous quote: “Language is the dress of thought” as it is through language that ideas are expressed. Communication has become a lively fragment in our life. In this globalized world, English is being used as the intuitive language for more

than 300 million people around the world. Therefore, English is the “language of integrity” according to Sivaranjani and Ajitha (2016)

In relation to learning and knowledge, Sen in Esch (2009) mentions that empowerment through English is as a means of making people aware of their capacity for personal development and potential for learning further and to assess new forms of knowledge which open the mind and benefit society. In the same token, Robeyns in Esch (2009) finds that the benefit of learning foreign language refers to opening mind, which can access to information that makes people knowledgeable in new domains.

Knowing a foreign language also allows people to communicate worldwide. Large numbers of people around the world perceive knowledge of English as either important or essential and knowledge of the language is a requirement for many types of employment, as well as being seen as a symbol of education, modernity or even sophistication. There are also studies on English and self-confidence. Alkire (2002) conducted a research about women empowerment in relation to English in Lahore Pakistan. It is done through a project called Oxfam, which train women of Lahore in English learning. The results show that English is able to influence the participants’ self-confidence. Meanwhile, Mansoor (1993) in his research claims that students in Pakistan have a positive attitude towards English and they believe that English will secure them a place in the labour market. Learning English Language can contribute to women’s independence and as it can make them eligible to obtain university scholarships and earn postgraduate degrees from universities in English-speaking countries. In brief, as a result of learning English, women can obtain higher levels of education, which can provide them with better job opportunities, possibly leading to financial independence and hence a sense of liberation.

Cantor and Bernay (1992 p. 256) suggest five empowering messages specifically for women and girls: You are loved and special. You can do anything you want to do. You are entitled to dream of greatness. You can use and enjoy your Creative Aggression. You can be courageous and take risks. These messages can lead to the construction of powerful stories, as the case of the stories of the participants of this study.

In order to accomplish the objective of the study, narrative approach was used because of the nature of the study and the participants involved in it. Each participant wrote a narrative related to the research topic.

2.4 Narrative approach

Narrative inquiry is an umbrella term that captures personal and human dimensions of experience over time, and takes account of the relationship between individual experience and cultural context as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say. These approaches “are underpinned by feminist postmodern values concerned with collaboration and reflexivity as ways of ‘collecting, analyzing, and re-presenting people’s stories as told by them” say Etherington, (2004, p. 75). Thereby, narratives can challenge traditional and modernist views of truth, reality, knowledge and personhood. Other aspects include how narratives construct identity (Czarniawska, 1997), how narrative can aid education (Abma, 2000), and how narratives may act as a source of understanding (Cortazzi, 2001). Through stories, narrative becomes as instrument to construct and communicate meaning and share knowledge.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

In sum, this chapter showed information on the concepts scholars have developed around the topics that build the body of this research. These concepts have helped to identify the diverse factors that may affect learners or their learning process, as well as the process of empowerment English learners, especially female university students might go through. These theoretical constructs have been useful on the analysis of the phenomenon of empowerment targeted in the present study.

Chapter Three: The Methodology of the Study

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used to gather and analyze the data for the current research study. First, the context of the research will be described. Second, the study design is explained. Next, a description of the participants and the data sources for the study will be addressed. Finally, the last section will provide a short explanation about the analysis to be done and the procedures as well as a brief conclusion of this chapter.

3.1 Research Methodology

Because of the nature of the research, participants' narratives were elicited through the form of stories; therefore, a qualitative narrative approach was adopted. Regarding the qualitative approach Creswell (2007) explains:

“Qualitative research begins with the assumption, a worldwide, and the possible use of a theoretical lens and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researches use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes.” (p. 37).

The current study uses narrative inquiry as the main methodology. According to Lieblich et al. (1998), using a narrative inquiry approach enable us “to understand the inner or subjective world of the person, how he or she thinks about her own experience, situation,

problems, life...” (p. 172). With the participants’ narratives, it was easier to understand the inner thoughts about their perspectives studying because they share personal information. A qualitative narrative approach to this research was chosen because the purpose of this project was to explore and understand the transition process and go deeper into the perceptions and expectations of female students who are studying an ELT program to become teachers.

3.1.1 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is an umbrella term that captures personal and human dimensions of experience over time, and takes account of the relationship between individual experiences and cultural contexts according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000). In this research, participants wrote about their personal life related to education and their experiences that led them to choose the English Language for professional development.

Narrative inquiry is a means by which researchers systematically gather, analyze, and represent people’s stories as told by them, which challenges traditional and modernist views of truth, reality, knowledge and personhood according to Etherington. (2004). Since participants wrote about their life, it has to be assumed that they were honest with the information presented.

3.2 Context of the Research

This research was conducted in the School of Languages of a public institution that is located in the central part of Mexico. The institution is a public and autonomous university. In the School of Languages people can study a BA program in Teaching English Language. Teachers that study at this School are highly competent in their area. They have a wide

knowledge in different cultures. As this is a public university, most of the students are between middle-class to lower middle economic class.

The first semester, groups are between 15 and 25 students according to the different subjects. Most of the students are girls but there is a small number of boys, too. Some of the students that are enrolled in the School of Languages are the first ones studying a bachelors' degree in their family history. It is also important to mention that students are from different places of Mexico, from big cities to rural communities. Most of the students speak Spanish as their native language, additionally; there are one or two students, in each cohort, who speak an indigenous language besides Spanish.

3.3 Participants

The participants in this research were female students from a public university. According to the design of the study, there were two moments: the first narrative, in which 14 participants submitted their narratives. The second narrative, which took place at the end of the first semester, only 12 participants submitted the second narrative. All of the participants of the study were female students from first semester studying the ELT major in a public university in Mexico.

Table 1. Getting to know the participants

NAME	HOMETOWN	CHARACTERISTICS
Guadalupe	Puebla	Low self-esteem
María	Puebla-Cholula	Introverted person
Angelica	Guadalajara-Guerrero	Sensible
Sofía	Huejotzingo-Puebla	Lovely, responsible, I want to share that I can achieve goals
Diana	Huejotzingo-Puebla (Chiautzingo)	Shy, sincere, sensible, gentle person
Brenda	Puebla	Friendly
Sandra	Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz	Independent and responsible
Irma	Puebla	Empowerment
Alondra	Puebla	Joyful and I want to achieve my goals.
Carla	Puebla	Active person
Paty	Tlapacoyan-Veracruz	Shy and quiet
Ofelia	Córdoba-Veracruz	Responsible and respectful
Natalia	Chalchicomula, Ciudad Serdan	Outgoing and nice person
Juana	Veracruz	Shy

Table 1 shows a summary of information about the participants. In the first narrative, 14 female students participated submitting their narratives. The characteristics included in the table, were the ones mentioned by the participants themselves. They wrote in Spanish but the narratives were translated into English by the researcher. Their names were changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Then, their pseudonyms, place where they are from and some characteristics that describe their personality, are presented in the table. The participants are all Mexican having Spanish as their native language and English as their second language. Some of them are from outside the city. As information in Table 1 shows, there are participants from Huejotzingo, Coatzacoalcos, Tlapacoyan, Cordoba, and Chalchicomula in Guerrero.

Participants' personality vary according to each of them. Some of the participants were shy and some others are on the opposite side: they are outgoing girls that have set their own goals. Because all of them have a basic level in English language, they wrote their narratives in Spanish, except one girl who answered in English. These participants were chosen consciously to accomplish the purpose of the research, which consisted in analyzing their perspectives on an empowerment process through English learning during the first semester that these female students took in the university. To achieve the purpose of the research, it was necessary to look for participants who had just entered to study the bachelors in English Language Teaching. In this way, they could share their perspectives and the reasons they had to study an ELT program.

3.4 Instruments

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, two instruments were used to gather the data of this study: First instrument: initial narratives and Second instrument: empowerment narrative, which will be described in the following section.

3.4.1 First instrument: Initial Narrative

First, the participants wrote an autobiographical narrative taking into account some specific aspects that were given to them as suggested by Jaatinen (2007). This author sees the language teaching and learning essentially as an autobiographical inquiry arising from the experiences and the subjective life-words of participants. The aspects were chosen with the help of the thesis supervisor. These aspects might present some of the characteristics that

leaders have. Participants had to write about themselves considering information such as: hometown, educational background, family values, people who had supported them in the pursuit of education, people who have made an impact in their life, the most relevant decisions that they have made, their personality and their expectations studying the English language.

Students were asked to write this narrative at the beginning of the scholar year when they had just entered in the School of Languages.

3.4.2 Second instrument: empowerment narrative

The second instrument was an empowerment narrative where participants were asked to write about their experiences following the guidelines by Mellita and Cholil (2012). These scholars have identified several factors as helpful motivators that contribute to generate success in female subjects. They state that in particular, special attention has been paid to e-business as a possibility to promote women empowerment and reduce gender inequality such as:

- New challenges and opportunities for self-fulfillment,
- Education and qualification,
- Support from the family members,
- Role models to others,
- Bright future of their children,
- Need for additional income,
- Family occupation,
- Authority in independent decision-making,

- Employment generation, and
- Innovative thinking

Participants wrote the narratives taking the above-mentioned factors into account and related them to their lives. Narratives were written at the end of the first semester, in November 2018.

3.4.3 Timelines

After transcribing and analyzing the information of participants, timelines were created to share the stages that participants went over after different periods in life as part of their personal and professional development. Timelines started in the past with decisions that participants have made and role models that have inspired to them until their future expectations regarding the ELT.

3.5 Data collection process

The first stage of the data collection procedure was to ask female students to write a narrative taking into account some aspects as their hometown, educational background, reason why they decided to study the major. The first instrument was written in August, at the beginning of the semester and the beginning of their university life. It was written in both languages: English and Spanish; and participants were asked to write in the language they felt more comfortable. The second instrument was a narrative but this time, it was taken from some authors in order to have a support in the instruments. The researcher created Timelines in order to organize the sequence of events in a visual representation. Since the perceptions that

the participants had when they just started studying in the School of Languages and at the end of the first semester to understand deeper the perspectives or if they were still the same.

3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis was carried out by following a narrative inquiry (Etherington, 2004) approach within a qualitative orientation research. As mentioned, in August 2018, at the beginning of the semester, the female students of a new group were asked to write a narrative taking into account some aspects as their hometown, educational background, family values. They were asked to write about the people who have supported them in their education, people who made an impact in their life, the most relevant decisions that they have made their personality and their expectations regarding the English major. The instructions were given in English and Spanish and they could answer in the language they feel comfortable. Out of 14 students, only one answered in English, the other 13 wrote in Spanish.

In November of the same year, at the end of their first semester, the same female students were asked to think about some factors, relate these factors and how they have affected their life and write a short description. This time, out of 14 participants, only 12 female students participated. The instructions were given in English and only one girl answered in English. Eleven girls answered in Spanish.

In order to analyze all the information, four steps were followed:

- First, the narratives were read.
- Second, the information from all the participants was transcribed to an Excel table according to the categories.
- Third, the information was classified into key words according to each domain. It was also classified according to the most mentioned aspect.

- The fourth step was to create nine timelines. Three of them were related to each instrument to provide relevant information in relation to the sequence in which events happened in the lives of the participants and how these events influenced the following stages in the lives of them. These timelines guided to choose 6 participants randomly and to create timelines per each one to gather information from the first and second narrative according to each participants' narratives.

Table 2. Example of the second step. Information

Important decisions	Personality	Expectations regarding English Language
To be who I am	Low self-esteem	I want to help people to learn English
Study at BUAP	Introverted girl	
	Sensible	The English language will open many doors
	Kind, responsible, to show that I can achieve my goals	
Continue studying		Travel around the world and teach English
Choose the major	Shy, honest, sensible, gentile	Finish the career and teach English or Spanish
	Sociable, solidarity	The career will open many doors in the future
Leave hometown and continue	Independent, responsible,	Teach English because it will open many doors and it will help me to have a better life
Continue studying	Leadership	This is a well recognized profession
Choose the major	Cheerful, solidarity, comprehensive,	I want to be a model for other people
	Multifaceted	I know I can work in different areas
Choose the major	Shy and quiet	I want to go to the USA to teach English or Spanish , travel around the world, work as i
Choose the major	Responsible, respectful	I want to be a great teacher and travel around the world
Choose the major	Extroverted, cool, sometimes grumpy	My expectations are so high
Choose the major	Shy	Finish the carrer with honors and learn all the posible so my family could be proud of r

Table 2 shows that once that the narratives were read, all the information per each participant, was transcribed and summarized in the table, allowing the researcher to compare and identify the relevant information given by the participants. Then, after analyzing the information obtained, the data was reorganized in different categories obtaining the results, which will be shown in the following chapter.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodology of this study has been described. The context of research and the participants were detailed in order to offer a broad view of the environment of the study. In addition, the study research design was presented. The instruments and the procedures followed proved to be effective since they allowed gathering valuable data to answer the research questions. The following chapter will present the results of the data analysis as well as the discussion and interpretation of the outcomes.

Chapter Four: The Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will provide the results obtained from the instruments and the analysis and discussion or interpretation of the female students' perceptions and their empowerment process in ELT. The order of the data follows the organization established in the previous second and third chapters. In the first section, six participants' narratives are analyzed. In the following sections, the most meaningful data obtained from the two narratives elicited in two different moments are presented and categorized: 1) The past, which goes with the decisions and perspectives that made female students when choosing the major and 2) their perspectives about their empowerment through a major in ELT. Finally, a brief conclusion of the results and the discussion is presented.

First, the whole information was divided between the first narrative and the second one as explained in the methodology of the study. The information was classified and the following categories were obtained: past and present. These two items refer to the characteristics that female university students shared in common in order to perceive the motivation that helps them to study this major in ELT. At the very beginning, the information was categorized into the key words per each category. Then, a timeline was created to categorize the participants' information.

The researcher made sense of the past and meanings that the narratives created as the participants told the stories of what had happened to them. Narrative inquiry also helped to organize the information about how people have interpreted events; the values, beliefs and experiences that guided those interpretations; and their hopes, intentions and plans for the

future. In this case, narratives were the instrument that helped to know about past events: thoughts, values; and the expectations in the future life of the students. A narrative is therefore a construction in which the investigator also participates, due to the particularity of its mode of production. This characterizes the process of research that consists in making memorials, life stories, autobiographies, diaries, in other words writings about oneself, in histories that are rich in meaning and in which particularly aspects appear. So, in this kind of study the researcher does not want to know what or how facts “really” happened, but how the narrator thought about it at the time and how he or she remembers it in the present (Abrahão, 2003). Partial autobiographies were used in this research so participants incorporated some elements of their own life in the narratives told.

Table 3. Information classified

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION		EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATION		NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES		
1	I want to be a teacher	4	1 Education helps	3	1 Learn the language	4
2	Job opportunities	3	2 Education is mandatory	2	2 Finish the bachelor's degree	4
3	We need to study	2	3 Finish the career	2	3 Grow professionally	2
4	I don't want to be a teacher	1	4 Get a certification in the language	2		
SUPPORT FROM FAMILY MEMBERS		ROLE MODEL TO OTHERS		BRIGHT FUTURE OF THEIR CHILDREN		
1	Family	12	1 Family	5	1 Better education	6
			2 I want to be a role model for others	5	2 Better lifestyle	1
			3 A teacher	3	3 I don't want to have kids	
NEED FOR ADDITIONAL INCOME		AUTHORITY AND INDEPENDENT DECISION MAKING		INNOVATE THINKING		
1	I want to work and get paid	6	1 I want to be independent and grow professionally	5	1 In this major we have to innovate	2
2	I have enough	2	2 I chose the major	2	2 Personal and professional ideas shared	7

The information was classified into different categories highlighted in bold letters in the table. Then, according to each category, the different answers were grouped. Some of the answers were repeated in the participants’ narratives. The numbers in blue color are the

numbers of different answers per category. Next to the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 the repeated answer is shown to prove its importance regarding the perceptions of participants. Finally, next to the answers, are the number of participants who expressed the same perceptions. The number that the answer was repeated is in red color. For example: talking about “Employment generation” there were four different answers by the participants and the most repeated answer is “I want to be a teacher” expressed by four participants.

Then, the column in green color shows the characteristics that were related to empowerment and, finally, the gray column shows the characteristics that were related to students’ perspectives learning the English Language.

4.2 Participants’ Narratives and timeline.

At the beginning of the scholar year, 14 female incoming students in the ELT were asked to write a narrative taking into account the following aspects: hometown, educational background, family values, people who have supported them in education, people that have make impact in their life, the most relevant decisions, their personality and the expectations regarding English major. The average age of the participants was 18 years old. All of the girls agreed to participate in the research.

This first instrument was applied to get familiarized with the participants and to know about their thoughts, the internal and external factors (decisions and their past life) that influenced them to choose the major in order to perceive their perspectives about their empowerment in the ELT field. The first phase of the study analyses the participants’ important decisions that they have made, family with a professional degree and the people who have supported them. Role models are important for motivational processes because

they help to indicate particular goals and to suggest the path that one should follow to achieve those goals (Collins, 1996; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

Table 4. A brief introduction to participants.

	Brenda	Sofia	Ofelia	Maria	Diana	Guadalupe
Personality	Sociable	Responsible	Responsible	Introverted	Shy	Low self-esteem
Important decisions		Continue studying	To choose the major	To choose the major	To choose the major	To be myself
Expectations studying an ELT	The ELT will open many doors	Teach English and travel around the world	Become a great teacher and travel around the world	Get empowerment through English Language	Finish the ELT and teach English	Help people to learn English

In table 4, some information about the six final participants is presented. The participants were randomly selected as an example of the information gathered from the first and second narratives. The concepts that describe their personality were mentioned by themselves and not interpreted.

4.2.1 Participant 1

Brenda described herself as a sociable girl and having a team spirit. Her parents, friends and teachers support her.

“This major will open many doors for the future.”

Learning English can bring about endless possibilities and enhanced access to the world of science and technology, for both men and women.

“From my personal point of view, we need education to have a good job and to improve quality of life.”

In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity. It is a prerequisite. President Barack Obama (2009).

“I would like to inspire and motivate my brother to continue studying and support him in his education.”

Brunson and Vogt (1996) also closely related the empowerment of an individual to that of the group structure or community to which they belong. They described empowerment as a growth process of an individual supported and encouraged by the group structure within which he or she is working to promote learning, empowerment can be initiated by oneself or by others intervening. Empowerment grounded on sharing, not only values and traditions, but especially knowledge and experience and fostering a process of a mutual influence through which it is possible to be reciprocally enriched.

“To become a teacher means to look for new generations to be well prepared and teach them good values. That’s why I love this career.”

She focuses on education interpreted not just as simple academic seed, but more broadly, she sees that education is to enable people to achieve their learning goals, of any kind. The exchange of knowledge can stimulate innovation or hidden capabilities.

Fig 1. Brenda's perceptions through the first semester studying English.

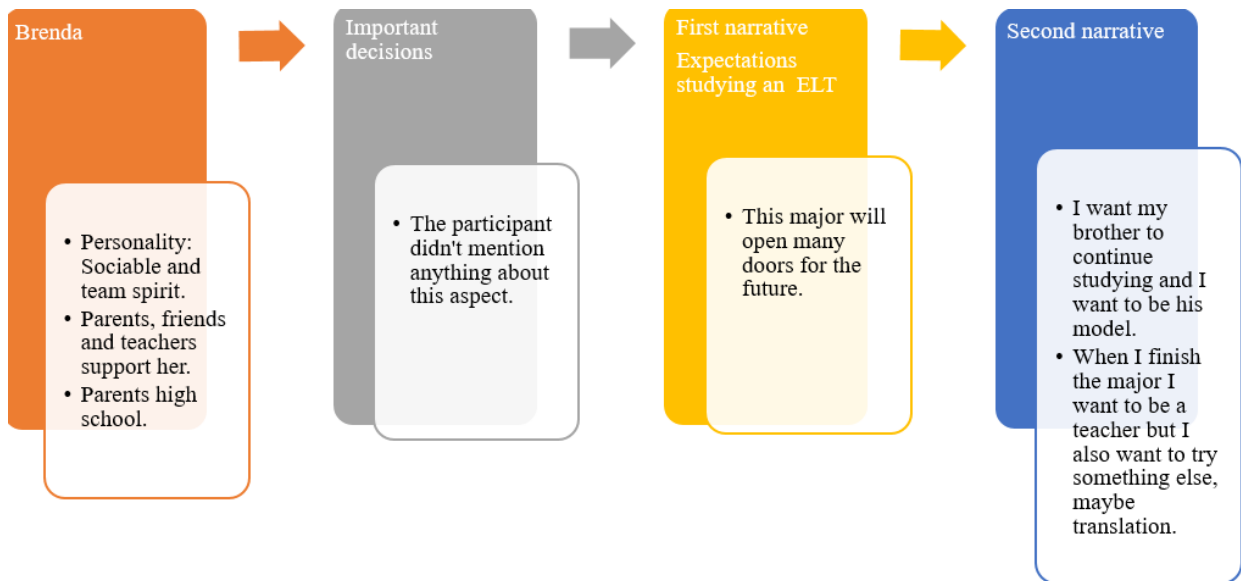


Fig. 1 shows that Brenda has a great hope that learning English language will broaden her options and expand her opportunities. She also describes herself with positive adjectives such as sociable and team spirit. She also shared that her parents only studied high school and that is why she wants to be a role model to her brother. Finally, she has support from people around her: parents, friends, and also teaches.

4.2.2 Participant 2

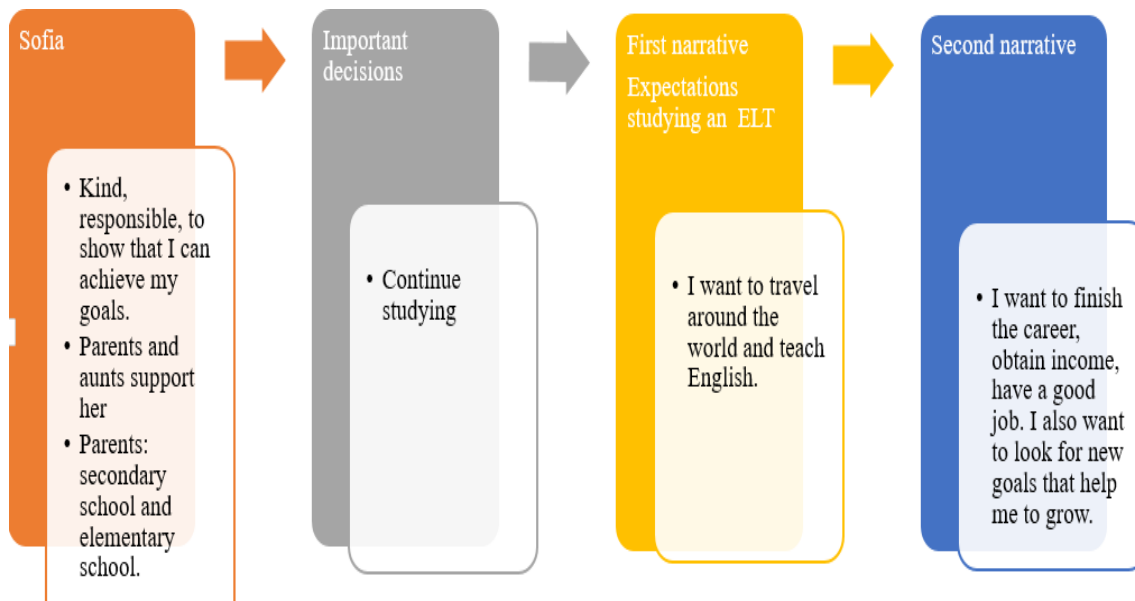
Sofia described herself as a kind and responsible girl who wants to show that she can achieve her goals. The people that has always supported her in the pursuit of education are her parents and her aunts. In terms of education, her parents only studied elementary school. One of the important decisions that she had made was to continue studying:

“In my family the education aspect has to be better. Most of my family want to become a professional because that would help to be prepare in the world and it would be an example that everybody can achieve what they want. Most of my family

work as employees and in the place where I come from; there are a lot of people who don't get out of their comfort zone”

It can be said that Sofia would serve as role model so that young women from her locality place can identify her as source of inspiration for them to further their education.

Fig 2. Sofia's perceptions through the first semester studying English.



In timeline 3, there is information about the participant: personality, people who have supported her, past and future expectations. She is a girl with focused goals because in her personality she describes herself with positive adjectives. Despite the fact that her parents studied elementary school.

She also wrote some goals:

“I want to be independent and I have some aspirations of professional success. I also want to help other generations to learn English so they can change their thoughts. Travel around the world and teach English.”

She also wants to be a role model for other people:

“My family is a role model for me because they make a great effort day by day and because of that I want other people to follow my example like to make a real effort, to fight for their dreams and maybe to follow some other good models.”

Sofia is very willing to achieve her dreams through the career she is studying. She shows a positive attitude. She wants to empower others and she sees every action as a series of steps on the road towards success and leadership.

4.2.3 Participant 3

Results show that Ofelia is a responsible, respectful and natural girl. People around her, like her parents, uncles and grandparents support her. Her parents have a professional degree. If students have role models, they most often are relatives like parents, uncles and aunts, or neighbours (Zinnecker, 2003).

The expectations that she had at the beginning of the career were to become a good teacher and travel around the world. After some months and by studying the major her mind changed and she had new goals:

*“I have many goals, first I want to become a teacher, then a flight attendant, at the same time I want to learn many languages and when I cannot continue working as a flight attendant, I want to go back teaching. **I also want to be independent and to have a good job.**”*

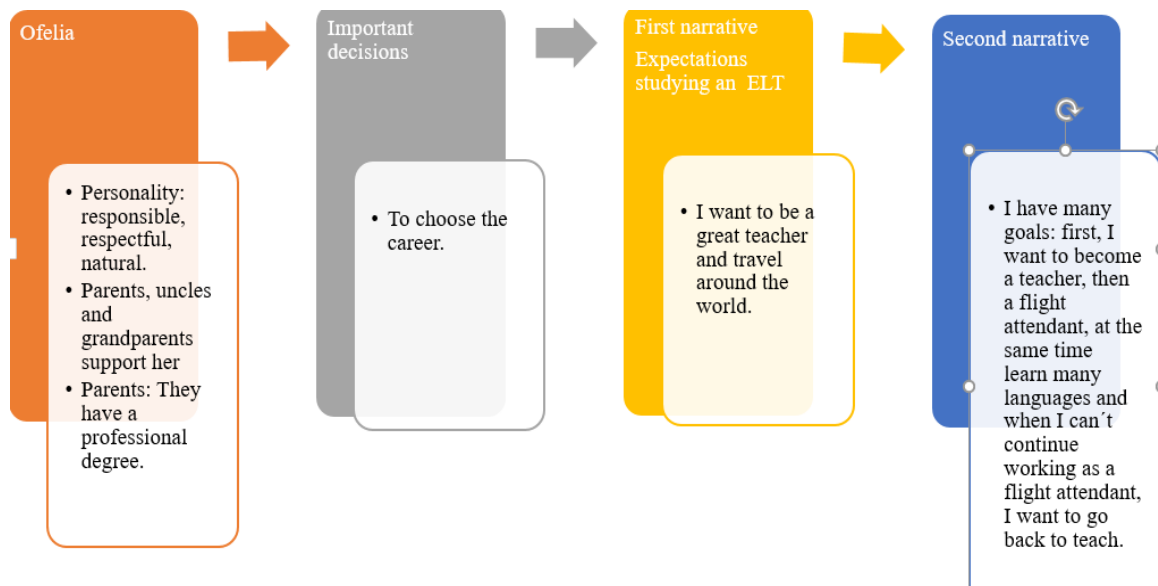
In this part, the perceptions about her empowerment in the ELT became wider after some months in the faculty of languages.

She had also the support of people around her and role models were important because she was following those steps:

“My mom is a lawyer, my grandma is an English Teacher and my grandpa is a cook.”

Parents who have attained college education are able to model and facilitate the transition of their daughters to higher education level. Parents want their daughters to be prepared and to be able to support themselves financially and emphasizing that having a high level of education is one major requirement for getting top positions as Loyola (2016) affirms.

Fig 3. Ofelia’s perceptions through the first semester studying English.

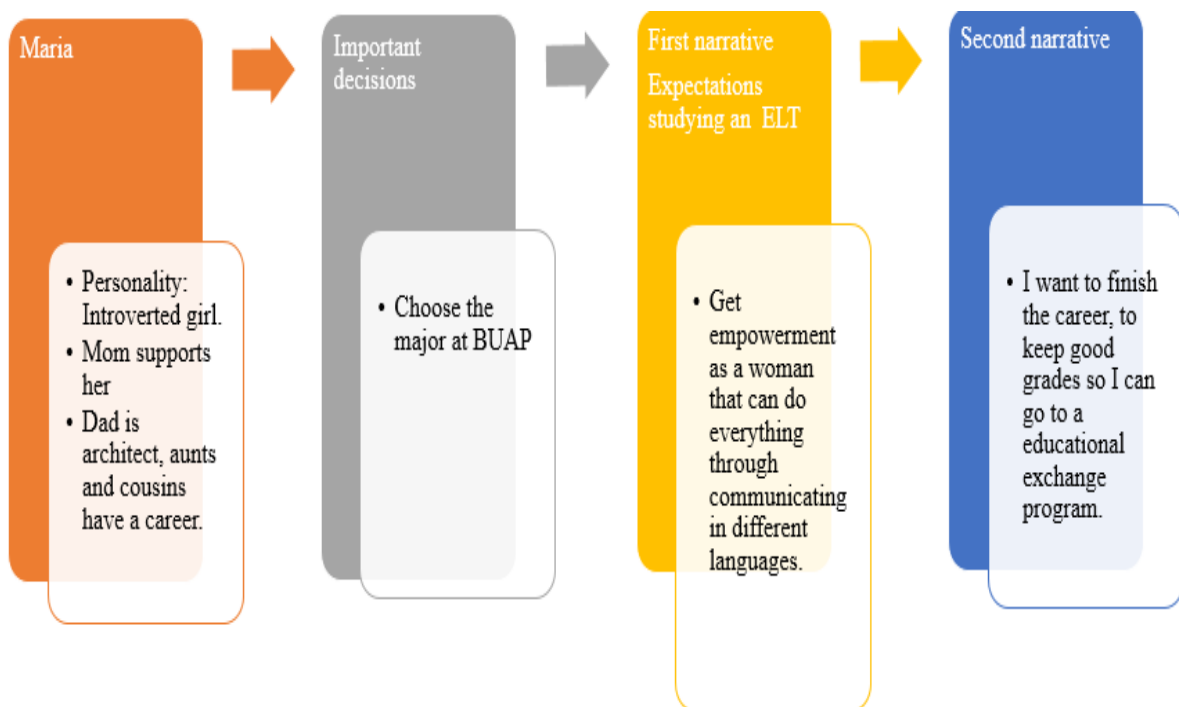


In figure 3, there is information about Ofelia and she described her personality with confident and firm words. She described herself as responsible and respectful girl. She points out that her parents support her and that they studied a professional degree. When she refers to the expectations regarding English language in her life, she says she has many goals, and one of those is to become a teacher and travel around the world and work as a flight attendant. One of the most important decisions that she has made is to choose the career. Ofelia is a girl with set goals.

4.2.4 Participant 4

Maria showed to be a determined girl. From the first instrument, she shared confidence on herself. When she wrote the first narrative, she used an important word: “empowerment”.

Fig. 4. Maria’s perceptions through the first semester studying English.



Discussion of Fig. 4:

The participant considers herself as an introverted girl. She says that her mom is the person that supports her. However, past teachers, the principal of the secondary school where she attended and her mom are people that have made impact in her life. The most relevant decision that she has made is to choose the major at BUAP.

In the first phase of the study, she said that her expectations in the ELT were:

“Get empowerment as a woman that can do everything through communicating in different languages.”

Kumar (2016) says “Women empowerment is empowering the women to take their own decisions for their personal dependent. Empowering women is to make them independent in all aspects from mind, thought, rights, decisions, etc by leaving all the social and family limitations”. In relations to learning and knowledge, Esch (2009) mentions that empowerment through English is as a means of making people aware of their capacity for personal development and potential for learning further and to assess new forms of knowledge, which open the mind and benefit society.

At the end of the first semester, the participant had an additional goal:

*“I want to finish the career and to **keep good grades** so I can go to an educational exchange program.”*

Zubair (2006) finds that the wider exposure to English at an institution of higher education opens up windows to the world.

4.2.5 Participant 5

Diana identifies herself with the next words: shy, honest, sensible and polite. She also points out that her parents support her:

*“My parents and my uncles did not have the opportunity to study and that’s why **I want to do my best**. My dad is mechanic and my mom is a housework.”*

Fan (2001) demonstrated that parents' educational aspiration for their children proved to be strongly related to students' academic growth. Some dimensions of parental support may

have more visible effects on students' academic achievement than others. Gonzalez-Pienda et al. (2002).

The participant said she wanted to finish the career and then to become an English or Spanish teacher. Later, she had more defined her expectations in the ELT:

*“To learn a language is a difficult task because it is not enough with the lessons you take at school. It depends on my own. I think that **we need education in life to achieve goals and to become who you want to be.**”*

Education has a profound effect on girls' and women's ability to claim other rights and achieve status in society, such as economic independence and political representation. Having an education can make an enormous difference to a woman's chances of finding well-paid work.

“I'm a student that wants to change the mind and thoughts of our future generations and there is nothing better than doing it through teaching an international language.”

Esch (2009) finds that the benefit of learning foreign language refers to opening mind, which can access to information that makes us knowledgeable in new domains.

Finally, she made emphasis in the aspect of being an independent girl:

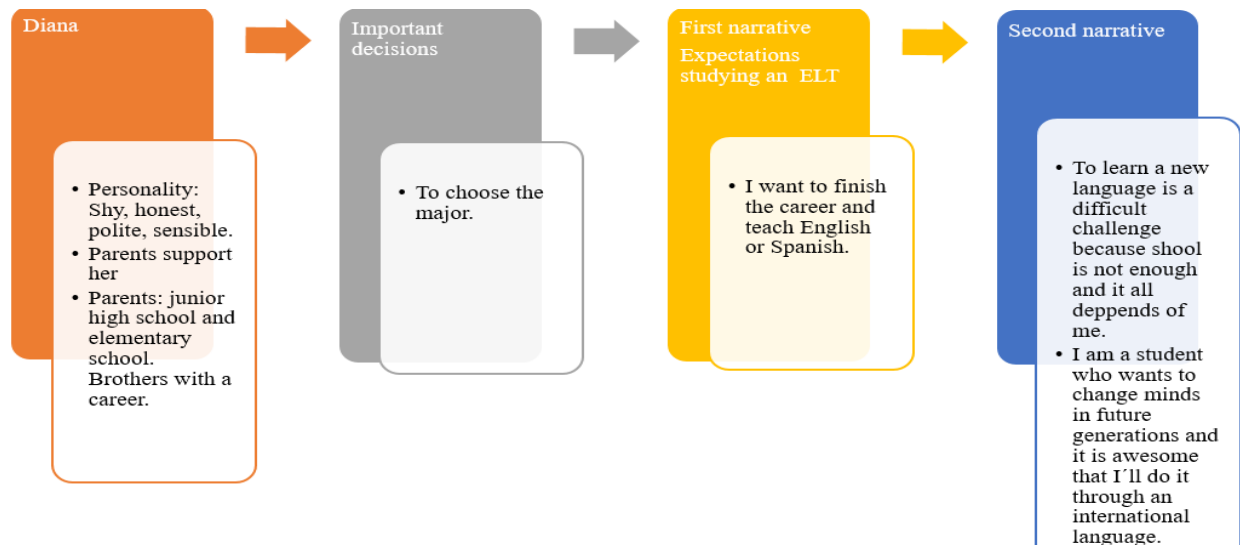
*“My biggest dream is to **be independent** and to work in what I really love.”*

*“My parents give me money, that's why **I really want to be independent** and teach in a school”*

A person is not formed only by heredity and conditions of growth and care, but also by opportunities and experiences in the world around him. Among these, especially important to us is the ability to make decisions and to act in order to attain goals. This ability (or its

absence) shapes the person’s character and influences the degree to which she will be the effective actor in her life as Pinderhughes, (1983) says.

Fig. 5. Diana’s perceptions through the first semester studying English.



The table shows a better example of Diana’s perceptions. To sum up it can be said that she has support from her parents even though they did not attend to university. She was able to choose the major and attend to university to become a teacher. Either Spanish or English, she would like to teach when she finishes the career and she got clear that learning a new language is not that easy but it all depends on herself. What means, she has the opportunity, and it is up to her to go ahead.

4.2.6 Participant 6

In August 2018, Guadalupe described herself as a girl with low self-esteem and she mentioned that she had two brothers with a professional degree. Because of their holistic character, role models serve as examples of successful professional life careers that are worth

copying (Makarova & Herzog, 2014). However, she did not consider anyone as a person that has influenced her life. She identified herself with values like respect and kindness. After some months studying in the Faculty of Languages, it seems she continue with the low self-esteem because most of the things she wrote were negatives: When she was asked about her decisions, she said:

“I haven’t established clear goals and because of that I still have to make decisions.”

About the major in ELT, she said:

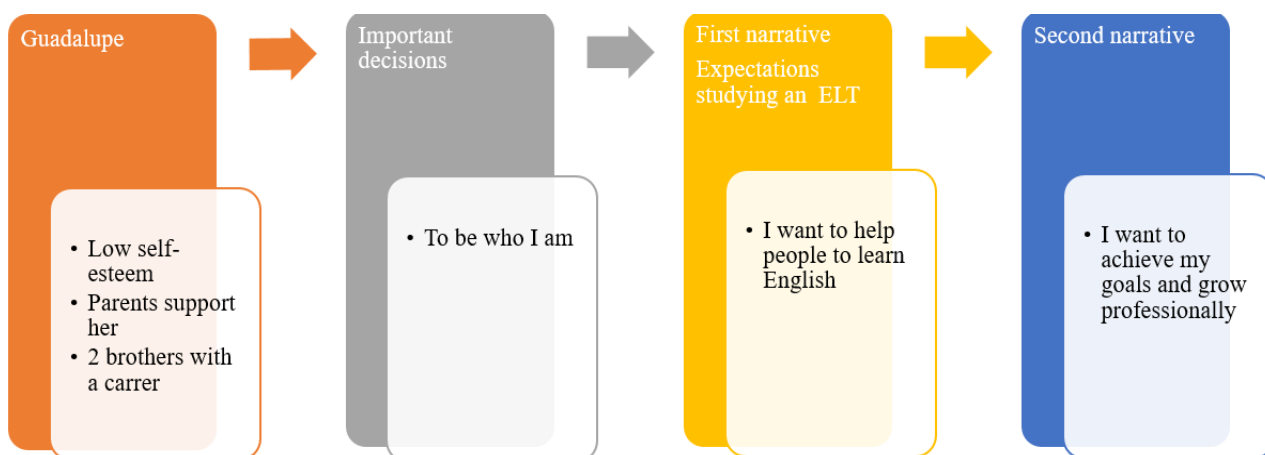
“I don’t want to be a teacher and I would like to work by my own but still don’t know what that would be.”

When talking about education she answered:

“They have nourished me with education since I was born and I know it would help for the future”

Narratives are, thus, elements that carry a strong personal meaning and articulate the present, past and future, instigated by remembrances, telling not a life as it really happened but a life remembered by the ones who lived it, (Abrahão, 2008).

Fig. 6. Guadalupe’s perceptions through the first semester studying English.

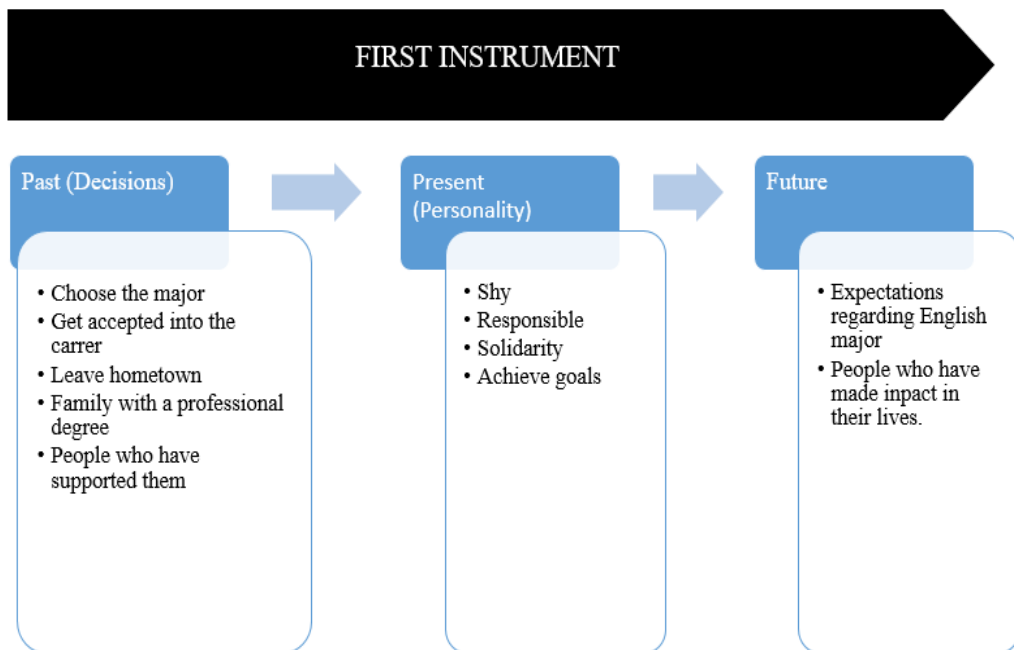


In this timeline, it can be seen that Guadalupe did not share many aspects related to her. First, Guadalupe consider herself as a person with low self-esteem and self-esteem is very important in a person's life because it helps to develop confidence on his/her personality. However, Guadalupe wants to learn English because someday she wants to help people to learn English and she also said she wants to achieve her goals.

4.3 General participants' results

This study aimed to look at students' perceptions in terms of how English is able to empower their life. In the First Instrument, 14 female students agreed to participate in the research. In the Second Instrument, only 12 students participated.

Fig. 7. Information classified from the first narrative



In the first phase of the study. The aspects that were taking into account were categorized in three stages: Past: what had to do with important decisions that students had made. Second the Present: what was related to participants' personality. Finally, Future: which may lead to the perspectives of studying the career.

Past:

Seven participants agreed that the most important decision they had made was choosing the major, one of the participants said that the most important was to get accepted in BUAP and finally, one participant said that leaving her hometown was the most important.

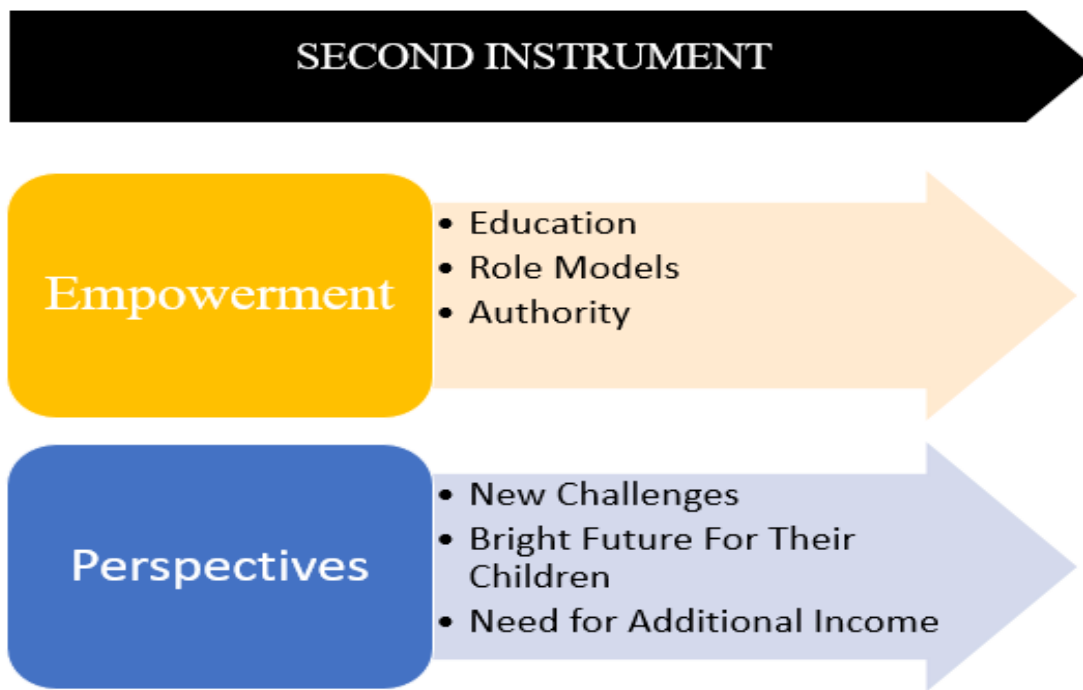
In this classification, it was also important to know the people around the m with a professional degree. Out of the fourteen students, nine said that family whether they are parents, brothers or cousins. The rest, six girls said that family only studied junior high school and elementary school.

Finally, in relation to the people who have supported them: Family (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts) twelve different participants mentioned this factor, Friends one mention, a teacher, one mention and all the people around them, mentioned by one participant.

In the category "present", four participants described their personality as shy: three students used the word: responsible, two more said they are solidarity and two girls said they like to achieve their goals.

The second instrument allowed having a clearer idea of participants' perspectives of empowerment and English Language education. In this research, the learning of English needs to be related to the role of English as a tool for educational development.

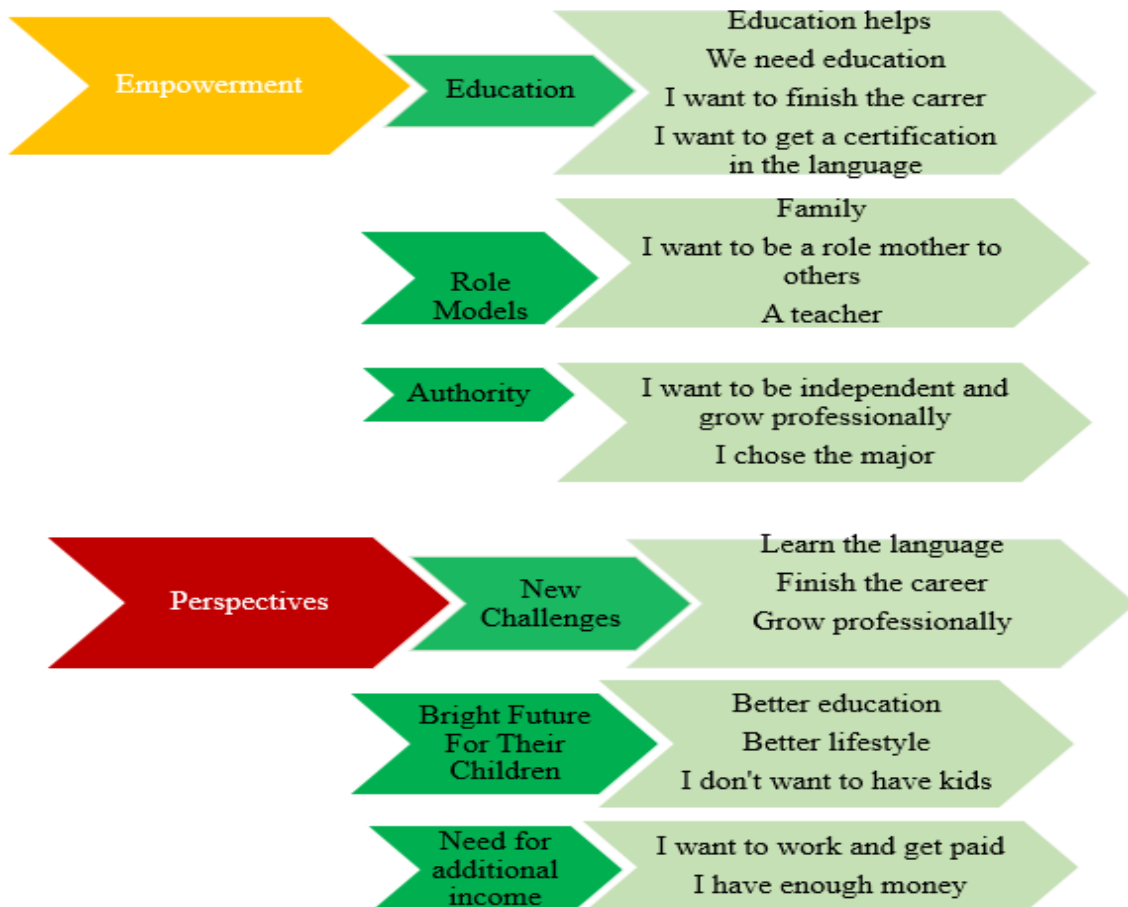
Figure 8. Second Instrument information



Two important points were taken from the second instrument. First, empowerment. Aspects like education, role models and authority guided to the main topic. The second one was perspectives and the aspects are new challenges, bright future for their children and the need for additional income.

Knowing English language allows participants to talk to others in an international language. The participants' comments show how education can expand their possibilities, even though, when there may be no immediate economic benefit. In order to continue analyzing the second instrument, another timeline was created.

Fig. 9. Contents from the Second Instrument information



It can be seen that the there are two main features that involve some other specific fields.

Empowerment has three subtitles, which are:

- Education: In this area, it was found that three girls said that “Education helps” two more participants said: “We need education”, two more expressed; “I want to finish the career” and two more: “I want to get a certification in the language”. Female students gave these four different answers when they had to read and think about some factors and the way they have influenced their personal and professional life. Then, they were asked to write a short description.

- **Role Models:** five participants said “Family”; five participants expressed the idea: “I want to be a role model to others” and three participants said they wanted to be like “A teacher” they had had.
- **Authority:** two different answers were identified: five participants said “I want to be independent and grow professionally” and two participants agreed that “to choose the major” was the most relevant decision.

Perspectives. There were three points that guided to this main aspect.

- **New challenges:** In this part of the narrative, participants showed three different answers: “Learn the languages” 4 participants, “finish the career” was written by four participants and finally “Grow professionally” written by two of the female university students.
- **Bright future for their children:** In this part of the narrative, the participants wrote their answers thinking of their future because none of them have babies. Only two different answers were found: “Better education” that six participants pointed out and “Better lifestyle” that only one participant wrote. They said:
“In the future, I want to ...”
“I haven’t got any children yet but when I’ll do...”
“First, I want to work and then I’ll have babies...”
- **Need for additional income.** This was the last aspect that was taken into account to go deeper into the subject. Six participants expressed: “I want to work and get paid” and 2 participants said “I have enough”.

Taking into account these categorization of the answers, it can be said that most of the participants have high motivation, high self-esteem, very high spirituality, and very strong will power. The results indicated that with remarkable values, one can achieve a need to accomplish things they have set for themselves. They need first to believe in their human potential, to conceive it on their mind what they want to achieve, either for themselves or for others. Their very strong willpower also helped them to become responsible persons because they chose not to be influenced by other people and environment in choosing whatever goals they want to pursue

4.4 Conclusion

The findings of the study show the expectations girls have regarding English Language major. Most of them are studying English because English language has become the language of empowerment in education and it will open doors in their professional lives. Results also show that these female students are able to change their potentials and capabilities by making good choices. Based on the results, findings of this study embody the lived experiences of a particular group of students in a specific context. It can be said that the results are representative of those interviewed and provide insights for future consideration of female students in an ELT program and their subsequent empowerment through their experiences and the learning of the English language.

These aspects were taken into account all along this research based on the decisions and perspectives that girls had at the very beginning of their university life manifested through the instruments applied.

Chapter 5: The Conclusions of the Study

5.0 Introduction

The chapter provides the conclusions of this research. A brief explanation of the research is presented, and findings of the study are discussed and interpreted. The significance of this research in the context of female students at School of Languages is examined. The possibility of the following conclusions is limited by the context and characteristics of the participants. Recommendations for further research end the chapter. Still, these conclusions are relevant to the process of progressive development projects.

5.1 Answering the research questions

The main purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of female students about empowerment when studying an ELT. This study demonstrates that social factors as well as girls' own beliefs can influence female empowerment. This research explored students' perceptions about their empowerment when studying a major in ELT

1. In regard of the research question:

What are LEI female students 'perceptions and expectations to learn English in their first semester?

According to the participants' answers, the main expectations were categorized into three significant aspects that are: new challenges, bright future and need for additional

income. They stated that they want to learn the language because they want to be independent and grow professionally. It can be concluded that the participants decided to study a major in ELT because they related the language with empowerment and bright opportunities for the future. Some examples regarding this information as it was previously discussed in Chapter Four, when Brenda, one of the participants commented: *“This major will open many doors for the future.”* In agreement, participant Diana said: *“I want to be independent and I have some aspirations of professional success. I also want to help other generations to learn English so they can change their thoughts. Travel around the world and teach English.”*

2. The second research question:

What are the main factors that influence the participants’ process of empowerment through English learning?

According to participants’ answers, three main factors were identified: education, role models, and authority and independent decision-making. Most of the students have a role model in their family that is why they decided to continue studying to get a degree. However not all role models are between the family. In the research, it was discovered that some students found a role model when they entered to the School of Languages because they admire a teacher and someday they want to become just like her. Role models lead students to look for education due to the fact that they had a close person to them who inspired them to become better. Being in the same path, they have to have authority by making their own decisions since they decided continue studying and to make the important decisions they will have to make related to their professional life.

As an example in Education, Brenda said; *“From my personal point of view, we need education to have a good job and to improve quality of life.”* In relation to Role Models,

Sofia showed that she has had role models and someday she, herself, would like to be a role model for other people. She affirmed: *“My family is a role model for me because they make a great effort day by day and because of that I want other people to follow my example like to make a real effort, to fight for their dreams and maybe to follow some other good models.”* Finally, a good example to share related to authority is the one that Maria wrote: *“Get empowerment as a woman that can do everything through communicating in different languages.”* This statement follows what Kumar (2016) have said, “Women empowerment is empowering the women to take their own decisions for their personal dependent.

5.2 Limitations of the study

This study was subjected to several limitations. All data collected for the present study were self-reported by a group of fourteen participants. However, for the second instrument, only twelve students participated. In addition, the data used for the present study limits any general conclusions that can be made about the direction of the relationships between knowledge, social support and empowerment. In this sense, it is possible that students with higher perceived social support feel empowered and in control of their environment, or that students who have a higher sense of empowerment view their social support as a positive interactive resource.

5.3 Directions for further research

For future research, it would be useful interview all the new enrolling female students in the ELT. It would be important to apply the instrument to more participants to have more

generalizable results regarding why choosing an ELT is related to empowerment. Moreover, having participants that graduated from an ELT and to know how English language has empowered them in their professional life will be helpful to the research. Similar projects may be carried out in different contexts.

5.4 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter presented the closing discussion of data previously analyzed in chapter four. The key findings from the present study emphasize the importance of role models, social support and the way these factors lead women to empowerment through education. Further research should continue to examine the relationship among these elements. . I can say that the perspectives that students have related to English language and teaching are very positive about learning the English Language. The participants agree that through teaching English they want to change minds with new generations, getting a better income when they started working, setting a good example for their family and even for their students and most of them want to travel outside the country so that they can learn about other countries cultures and grow personally and professionally.

This study has provided with a first step in making clear that the relations among role models, social support and the way these factors lead women to empowerment through education in a specific community of students. In addition to its effects on economic development and public health, education contributes to women's empowerment through the following pathways: First, empowerment helps female students develop skills and capabilities such as critical thinking and communication skills, which lay the foundations for decent livelihoods and equitable relationships in adulthood. Second, to increase girls' self-

confidence, agency, and ability to express their hopes and make decisions about their own lives. Third, empowerment might increase women's likelihood of obtaining better-paid work. Finally, female empowerment might develop gender-egalitarian attitudes among the members of the society who can see what language learning and education do for women. The perceptions and expectations of these female university students prove that they have hope for a bright future through English and education.

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Appendix A

English as a tool for leadership in women

We would appreciate if you could write a story/narrative considering the following aspects:

- a) Your hometown
- b) Your educational background
- c) Your family values
- d) People who have supported you in the pursuit of education
- e) People who have made an impact in your life
- f) The most relevant decisions you have made
- g) Your personality
- h) Your expectations regarding your English major (LEI)

Appendix B

Read the sentences and think about these factors and the way they have influenced your personal and professional life. Write a short description.

-NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-FULFILLMENT

-EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATION

-SUPPORT FROM THE FAMILY MEMBERS

-ROLE MODELS TO OTHERS

-BRIGHT FUTURE OF THEIR CHILDREN

-NEED FOR ADDITIONAL INCOME

-FAMILY OCCUPATION

-AUTHORITY AND INDEPENDENT DECISION MAKING

-EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

-INNOVATIVE THINKING