

**BECOMING AN EFL TEACHER: CHALLENGES IN A DISTANCE MODALITY
BACHELOR'S PROGRAM**

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Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras

Inglés

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Decanatura de División de Educación Abierta y a Distancia

Facultad de educación

Bogotá, 2024

Table of Contents

Abstract	6
Resumen.....	7
Contextualization	8
Research Statement	10
General Objective.	12
<i>Specific Objectives.</i>	12
Literature Review.....	13
Distance Education	13
EFL Bachelor Programs at Distance Education.....	19
<i>Resilience</i>	21
Teacher's Identity	22
Research Design.....	25
Research Approach	25
Type of Study	26
Participants.....	27
Data Collection Tools	29
<i>Written Narrative</i>	30
<i>Focus Group</i>	31
<i>Survey</i>	32
Ethical Considerations (Trustworthiness).....	32
Data Analysis and Discussion.....	33

BECOMING AN EFL TEACHER: CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION	3
Data Organization Procedure	34
Category 1- Challenges	37
<i>Subcategory 1.1- Situational, institutional or dispositional challenges</i>	37
<i>Subcategory 1.2 challenges associated with EFL learning</i>	39
Category 2 - Strategies	39
<i>Subcategory 2.1 - Establishment of heterodox communication with academic community actors.</i>	40
<i>Subcategory 2.2 - Resilience</i>	41
Category 3- Teacher's identity	42
<i>Subcategory 3.1 - Personal and external factors.</i>	43
<i>Subcategory 3. 2 - Personal reflection about teacher's role.</i>	43
Category 4. EFL bachelor's program contributions	47
<i>Subcategory - Students' perceptions regarding their EFL learning process at distancemodality.</i>	47
<i>Subcategory 4.2 - Areas of improvement in the EFL bachelor's program</i>	48
Conclusions	50
References	54
Annexes	59

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program (2019-2022)</i>	15
Table 2. <i>Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program in the pre-pandemic period</i>	16
Table 3. <i>Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program in the pandemic period</i>	16
Table 4. <i>Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program in the post-pandemic period</i>	16
Table 5. <i>Comparison of prices for the program bachelor's degree in English language teaching in three different Colombian universities</i>	18
Table 6. <i>Data collection instruments</i>	29
Table 7. <i>Application of instruments schedule</i>	30
Table 8. <i>Recurrent themes</i>	34
Table 9. <i>Data categories</i>	35
Table 10. <i>Data organization chart</i>	36

List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Number of Students Enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's Program During the Pre-Pandemic, Pandemic, and Post-Pandemic Periods.....</i>	<i>17</i>
Figure 2. <i>Step-by-step model for data interpretation.....</i>	<i>36</i>

Abstract

This study looks into the challenges faced by three undergraduate students at Santo Tomas University while coursing the bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching (English as a Foreign Language) through distance education. Three data collection instruments designed were: firstly, a written narrative; secondly, a questionnaire (lead by the researcher); and finally, a survey. The study objective was to identify the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they implemented to overcome the difficulties along with how these experiences helped them constructing their identities as teachers.

A qualitative research approach was employed to explore in depth the most relevant challenges faced by students. Data was collected through a personal narrative, a questionnaire with researcher intervention, and a self-administered questionnaire. The analysis revealed significant insights into the challenges faced by students in this field and how, through resilience, they were able to overcome these difficulties. The results also provide important information for both students of the bachelor's degree and those in other distance education programs, as well as for teachers and coordinators of these programs, who can use this information to recognize the challenges and develop strategies to help students overcome obstacles and achieve success in completing their professional careers.

Key words: Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching at distance education, resilience, teacher's identity.

Resumen

Este estudio investiga los retos que enfrentaron tres estudiantes de la universidad de Santo Tomas al cursar la licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera - Ingles a distancia. Se diseñaron tres instrumentos de recolección de datos: en primer lugar, una narrativa escrita; en segundo lugar, un cuestionario (dirigido por el investigador); y, en tercer lugar, una encuesta. El objetivo fue identificar los retos que encontraron mientras cursaban sus estudios, las estrategias que implementaron para superar las dificultades y cómo estas experiencias contribuyen a su perfil como docentes.

Se utilizó el enfoque de investigación cualitativo para profundizar en los retos más relevantes enfrentados por los estudiantes. Los datos se recolectaron mediante una narración personal, un cuestionario con la intervención del investigador y otro cuestionario administrado autónomamente. El análisis reveló resultados significativos sobre las dificultades que enfrentan los estudiantes de la carrera y cómo, a través de la resiliencia, logran superar esas dificultades. Los resultados también proporcionan información importante para los estudiantes de la licenciatura y otras carreras profesionales con dificultades en la educación a distancia, y para los docentes y coordinadores de estos programas, quienes pueden reconocer los desafíos y generar estrategias que ayuden a que los estudiantes superen los obstáculos y alcancen el éxito en la culminación de su carrera profesional.

Palabras clave: Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera - Ingles a distancia. como lengua extranjera a distancia, retos, resiliencia, identidad del profesor.

Contextualization

The present research aims to portray the challenges that three undergraduate students from the Distance Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Santo Tomas University faced in becoming English teachers. Two key aspects are initially tackled, first, the description of the challenges faced by the three pre-service teachers, and second, inquiring how they overcame these challenges. These aspects lead the study to explore how both the challenges and the strategies used by the participants might influence the development of their professional identity.

This was achieved by following a series of steps: firstly, through the identification of the student's background to better understand their life story; secondly, by pointing out the challenges that these students faced during their learning process in the framework of distance education; finally, by describing how the undergraduate students constructed their identities as English teachers as they overcame various types of challenges.

Since participants shared their experiences during their learning process at distance modality through interviews and autobiographic documents, it was necessary to carry out a narrative analysis of the information to identify not only relevant events, challenges, strategies to overcome them but also the participant's thoughts regarding the whole experience during their bachelor studies.

The three participants are Colombian women between 26 and 55 years of age. One of them lives in a rural area while the other two live in urban areas. All of them belong to

Bogotá's Distance Education Branch (known as CAU in Spanish and within Santo Tomas University organizational scheme).

As it will be presented at a later stage, the participants had various reasons to choose distance learning mode over face to face one. The participants have already completed their mandatory pedagogical practicum, which gives means they are in the final stage of their studies, therefore, they have not only an overview of the program but also a great deal of experiences to share in their journey to become English language teachers.

Based on the taxonomy of Bonilla et al. (2017), this project is under the Research field 2: The study of the English Language and its contexts. It can also be classified under the Research Microproject 2: Understanding and characterizing EFL in the LLEI (Licenciatura en lengua extranjera Ingles) Experiences and phenomena in the Pre-service Teachers' Educational Context. Finally, it is part of the Research Subproject 2: Giving voice to the LLEI realities: Life Stories and Experiences. This study describes and analyses the experiences of three students when coursing the bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching as EFL at Santo Tomas University.

Research Statement

In recent years, researchers have begun to recognize the importance of paying attention to the perspectives of educational actors, and teachers are one of them. Barkhuizen (2020) elaborating on teachers' identity has stated that teachers were seen as machines in the past, who had to only assess students, but now, they are seen as thinking and feeling people with their own teaching theories.

This point of view is echoed by Bonilla et al. (2017) who highlight the importance of listening to future EFL teachers, their realities, life stories, and experiences. During the present study, it was possible to hear the voices of some students who are on their way to becoming EFL teachers by pursuing a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching (EFL) in a distance modality. As each modality of education comes with challenges, specific challenges also become a focal point of this research.

On the other hand, since the existence of challenges cannot be avoided and must be dealt with somehow, it is only natural, people find ways to cope with them, even if they are not aware of the strategies they are creating while being challenged.

Being able to identify both the challenges and the strategies used to overcome them becomes relevant first for students who are on their way to becoming professionals in English Language Teaching through a distance modality program. It can contribute to softening and partly face some of the shocks teacher students may experience at certain points of their career. Also, the difficulties and strategies described in the narratives of the three participants of the present study may serve as a silver lining that invite present student teachers to adapt and create their own strategies to keep striving for their professional titles.

The outcomes of this research may also bring to light aspects that can be improved in the EFL bachelor programs to give student teachers better chances to become professionals. Decreasing dropout rates for the programs is not only a current institutional objective but also the execution of any educational program main social objective. Furthermore, the outcomes may also show the programs successful practices that have been implemented and can be replicated, adapted and even improved. Additionally, programs could find ideas on strategies implemented by individuals that can be fostered and made part of wider students support plans.

Finally, this research may help teachers, who are the ones in direct contact with the students, address possible difficulties faced by student teacher in a more effective way. Understanding what students face may encourage teacher to find strategies to foster students' resilience or to implement strategies to help students finding more effective and efficient action plans during their time in the undergraduate program.

To better explore, describe, and understand the challenges that three participants faced, a narrative design was chosen to approach the participants' experiences. The instruments used to collect information about their experiences, challenges, and strategies included personal narratives, a focus group, and a survey.

The interest in studying this problem emerged from the researcher's own experience as a student teacher of the bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching (EFL) program at Santo Tomás University, as well as from hearing the voices of fellow students over the years. When sharing experiences while pursuing the program, it was evident that students face many challenges in their personal and academic lives to become professional English teachers in a

distance modality. These sometimes-shared challenges prompted an interest in exploring what all these experiences mean in the present and future paths of the participants.

Research Question

What were the challenges that three undergraduate students from a bachelor's degree in English language Teaching (EFL) at distance modality faced to become English teachers?

Research Objectives

General Objective.

To identify the challenges that three undergraduate students faced while coursing the bachelor's degree program in English language teaching at Santo Tomas university.

Specific Objectives.

- To describe participants' experiences and challenges as undergraduate students of the bachelor's degree in English Language teaching as EFL at distance modality.
- To characterize the strategies used by the participants to overcome the challenges when coursing the bachelor's degree.
- To examine how the challenges faced by the participants in the EFL Bachelor's degree influenced the construction of their identity as a teacher.

Literature Review

This section has the objective of contextualizing the relevant constructs for the present research, which are distance education, EFL bachelor program at distance modality, resilience, and teacher's identity. First, a description of distance education, its definition, characteristics, historical context in Colombia, benefits and challenges will be presented. Next, a concrete historical review with the depiction of the EFL bachelor programs at distance modality and its implementation at Santo Tomas University. Third, the concept of resilience, its importance in the learning process of pre-service teachers and university students, and its application to participants will be discussed. Finally, the concept of teacher's identity, its relevance nowadays, and its construction through teacher's professional, pedagogical, academic and personal experiences will be explored.

Distance Education

Distance education is defined as the education provided without the teacher and students being physically present together (Knott, 2023). According to Salgado (n.d.), distance education has been in Colombia for at least seven decades. It began in 1947 through radio broadcasts, specifically from station *Radio Sutatenza*, whose objective was to educate farmers (who represented 70% of the Colombian population) using booklets and printed materials. This initiative generated a significant impact on the rural sector and was a worldwide example of offering numerous courses to farmers at distance modality.

Due to the positive impact of distance education in Colombia, National Open and Distance University (2022) states that in 1982, during the government of Belisario Betancourt, the first university offering distance education, known as UNISUR (University Unit of Southern Bogotá), was established. It was later renamed UNAD (National University

Open and at Distance). This institution pretended to satisfy the regional, local, national, and international necessities of 21st- century society and continues to be active in Colombia nowadays.

As distance education evolved, so did the technology supporting it. According to Simonson & Berg (2024), in distance education, technology facilitates communication between teachers and students. This facilitation is further detailed by Szatar (2022) who explains that communication can be asynchronously (i.e., non-real-time communication) by using electronic media or printed information, or synchronously by using the technology to communicate in realtime.

Since distance education is by nature technology-mediated, Ogara (2021) explains that communications platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams can easily substitute face-to-face classes. These platforms enable teachers to record their lessons, allowing students to access material and study at the most convenient moment based on their schedules.

While the communication tools mentioned before facilitating real-time or asynchronous interactions, Learning Management systems (LMS) “allow the centralization of all educational materials” (Smith, 2023) and “facilitate online learning and enable trackable progress” (Jain, 2023). Kirvan & Brush (2023) describe LMS as web-based technologies that support the assessment and management of the learning process by providing access to students, administrators, and educators. Fenton (2018) highlights some of the most popular LMS platforms. Moodle, for instance, “was born from a desire to give educators a way to create quality education experiences over the internet” (Moodle, n.d). Released in 2002, it enables students to manage their learning progress, organize their tasks,

and check deadlines for sending their assignments. Similarly, Blackboard, now known as Anthology, is an LMS created for “modern teaching and learning”, which allows to organize inclusive environments and digital content (Blackboard, n.d.), and provide “Users with privileges to create messages, guides, and tutorials for Blackboard Learn features for instructors and students” (Anthology adopt, n.d.). The many possibilities offered by technology avoid the requirement that students attend face-to-face classes in a physical location, allowing them to can take their classes virtually from anywhere. This flexibility is a reason why Altunay (2019) states that distance education eliminates barriers and provides the opportunity to learn without time and place constraints.

This, in turn, has enabled greater access to education for people located in urban along with rural areas (Singh, 2023). This shows how distance modality programs have contributed to the professional career development of more than 3.076 students around the country, as detailed in the most recent *Statistical Bulletin* of Santo Tomas University released in 2022. The bulletin illustrates the number of enrolled students in the bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching (EFL) belonging to the CAU around Colombia from the first semester of 2019 to the second semester of 2022, as shown in the following chart.

Table 1

Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program (2019-2022)

Division of Open and Distance Education									
Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching (EFL)									
Year	2019-1	2019-2	2020-1	2020-2	2021-1	2021-2	2022-1	2022-2	Total
Students	365	364	359	349	404	399	367	469	3.076

Note. Adapted from Santo Tomas University (2022), Statistical Bulletin.

After COVID-19 pandemic, and due to the temporary restrictions to go to universities or schools' facilities, distance education became more popular because it was the available

modality of education (Masalimova et al., 2022). As a result, enrollment in distance education increased after the pandemic, as explained by Knott (2024). The following chart displays the statistics of enrolled students across different periods: the pre-pandemic years (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018), the pandemic years (2019, 2020, and 2021), and the post-pandemic year of 2022, which is the most recent data available.

Table 2

Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program in the pre-pandemic period

Division of Open and Distance Education					
Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching (EFL) Pre-pandemic Period					
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of enrolled Students	910	926	583	765	735

Note. This table is based on consolidated databases from the National Information System for Higher Education (SNIES) for the years 2014 to 2018.

Table 3

Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program in the pandemic period

Division of Open and Distance Education			
Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching (EFL) Pandemic Period			
Year	2019	2020	2021
Number of enrolled students	729	711	795

Note. This table is based on consolidated databases from the National Information System for Higher Education (SNIES) for the years 2019 to 2021.

Table 4

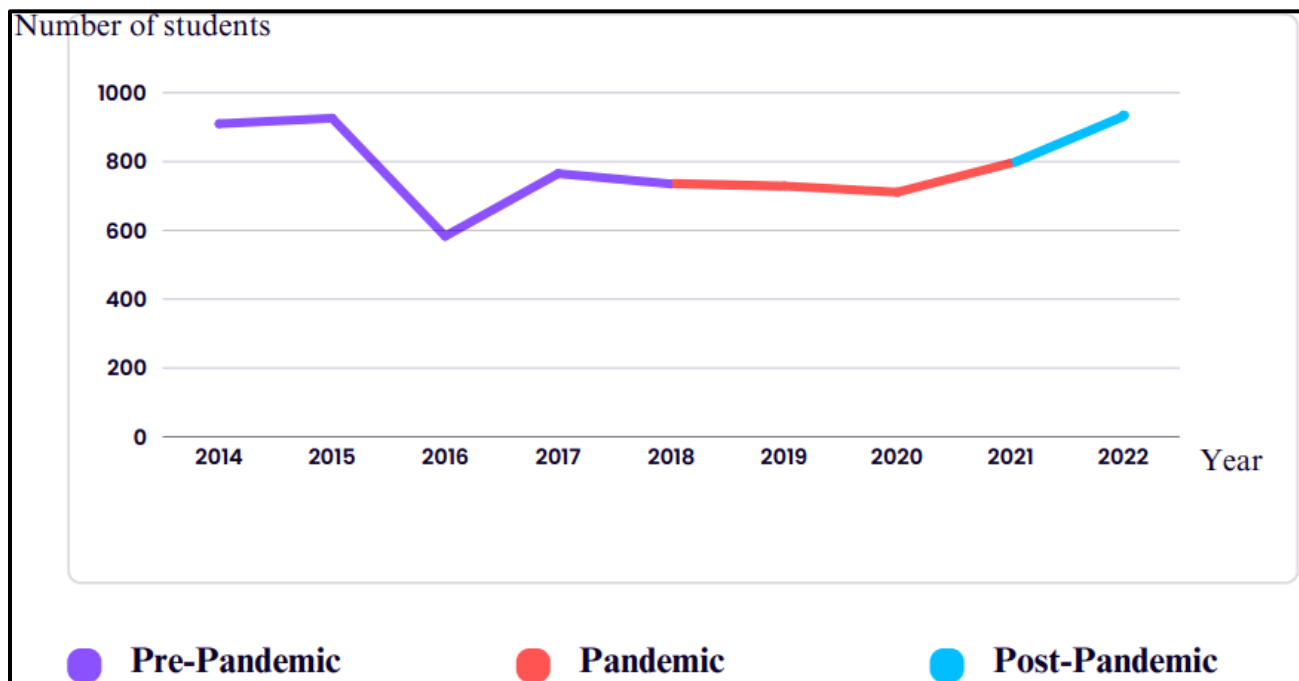
Number of students enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's program in the post-pandemic period

Division of Open and Distance Education	
Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching (EFL) Post-pandemic Period	
Year	2022
Number of enrolled students	935

Note. This table is based on consolidated databases from the National Information

Figure 1

Number of Students Enrolled in the EFL Bachelor's Program During the Pre-Pandemic, Pandemic, and Post-Pandemic Periods



Note. This table is based on consolidated databases from the National Information System for Higher Education (SNIES) for the years 2014 to 2022.

In addition, distance education is a good option for those who are looking for budget friendly options, since, in some cases, distance education is cheaper compared to conventional education due to the lower costs in tuition, transportation or campus maintenance as explained by Krakoff (2019). Since distance education is cheaper compared to conventional education as can be seen in a few examples extracted from the official webpages of the universities mentioned in the chart below for coursing the bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching in Colombia.

Table 5

Table of prices for the program bachelor's degree in English language teaching in three different Colombian universities

Table of Prices	
Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching	
Modality	Price (COP)
Distance education	
Minuto De Dios University	\$2.404.600
Corporacion Universitaria Del Caribe	\$1.976.733
Face-to-Face	Price (COP)
Minuto De Dios University	\$3.468.200
Universidad Catolica de Oriente	\$3.833.300

Note. Data were obtained from the Universities official web pages. Uniminuto. (n.d.).

Universidad Minuto de Dios. <https://www.uniminuto.edu/>, CECAR. (n.d.). *Centro de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos de la Costa.* <https://cecar.edu.co>, Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia. (n.d.). *Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia.* <https://www.uco.edu.co>.

Although the benefits of distance education include being cheaper, not requiring a physical place to access classes, and allowing students to study based on their schedules, there are still challenges associated to coursing a career at distance modality. These challenges can be found at three levels; situational (home and job responsibilities that affect the quantity and quality of time to study), institutional (poor logistics system, such as quality of technical equipment), and dispositional (students' attitudes and feelings), as explained by Cross (1981).

Altunay (2019) found additional difficulties related to these three levels, which are:

Lack of continuous Internet access, lack of technical equipment such as computers,

mobile tools, cameras, technical problems, students' or teachers' lack of technological skills, computer anxiety, students' or teachers' negative beliefs about distance education particularly for distance language learning and teaching, transferring some habits from traditional settings to online settings, lack of orientation sessions or training, lack of continuous technical or administrative support for the teachers or students and students' reliance on the teacher rather than being autonomous learners (p.122).

All these difficulties mentioned constitute challenging aspects of distance education and were mentioned by the participants at some stage of their narratives. That is why the present study allows to look at the challenges that three pre-service teachers experienced and also to characterize some of the strategies that they implemented to overcome these situational, institutional or dispositional challenges. This research will then examine both the challenges and the strategies that the three participants adopted along with how the interaction of both impact their identity as teachers.

EFL Bachelor Programs at Distance Education

Considering that one of the most important aspects of this research is constituted by learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) when coursing a bachelor's degree in English language teaching at distance, it is appropriate to start describing the implementation of the program in the university where this research was carried out.

Santo Tomás University started to offer distance education Bachelor programs in 1975, but it was not until July 2nd of 1996, when the university created the department of Open and Distance education, known as USTA for its initials in Spanish, this means that officially this modality is 27 years old. Many degrees were offered by the university at

distance modality, and one of them was the bachelor's degree in English language teaching program. Its main objective was to train future teachers in the humanistic, education research skills and languages (English) fields (Santo Tomas University, n.d.).

Due to one of the main objectives of the program is to train teachers in the Languages field, it is necessary to turn to the learning process of English as a foreign language (EFL). Learning English as a foreign language is intended to learners who are not located in a country where English is the primary language or that are not immersed in an English-speaking environment (Quimosing, 2022) which means English is not even a second language for them. This is the case of Colombian students who enroll in the Bachelor programs referenced in this study. As Hibatullah (2019) states international EFL students may face different challenges when learning English in a non-English speaking country. Some of those challenges are associated to the lack of practice due to poor exposure to the language outside the classroom. Akbari (2015) explains that the deficient roles of English in the society creates an unnecessary feeling of learning English, furthermore, the lack of confidence to use English in the community increase the difficulty to learn the language. On the other hand, when learning English, students must practice their skills which are: listening, reading, speaking and writing (Cho & Krashen, 2019) but due to the lack of practice issues in pronunciation, grammar (Habatullah, 2019) and even the speed of speech, the accent, or the inadequate use of vocabulary (Hamouda, 2013) can trigger. These are some of the aspects that will be considered in the present study when analyzing the participants' experiences. In the same line of thought, Quintero's (2019) research on the challenges when learning English as a foreign language mentions focused on students' perceptions regarding their EFL learning process at

distance modality in Santo Tomas University. Quintero's research becomes relevant because it is not only focused on the challenges of learning EFL but also on the challenges of learning EFL at distance modality. This study offers a view on the type of challenges the participants may have encountered in their learning path. For example, Quintero (2019) found two main challenges when learning EFL at distance modality: first, the lack of opportunities to practice the language skills and second, the difficulties that students have to transition from the traditional teaching to the learning mediated by technology.

The present study also explores the strategies that students of the bachelor's programs at Santo Tomas University may have come up with in order to overcome the different challenges. Quintero (2019) mentions two strategies, the first corresponds to students' learning to plan their path to learn (this includes the accurate manage of time to send the activities on time and to practice). The second is the establishment of heterodox communication between them and teachers, or between them and classmates with advanced English level of different university branches known as CAU. Quintero's research becomes a reference for the present study because it not only explores the challenges that students faced while learning EFL at distance in Santo Tomas University, but additionally it examines the strategies students used to overcome those difficulties. Both aspects align with the focus of this study and open the door to the identification of some new challenges and strategies in the participant's narratives.

Resilience

In addressing challenges, resilience plays a critical role. Resilience is defined as the process of successfully adapting mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally to challenging life experiences (Chbeir & Carrion, 2023). This adaptive process "is something that every single

human being has” (Runner & Marshall, 2003). Thierer (2023) states that “humans are remarkably resilient species” who learn from the trial-and-error experimentation. This learning process allows them to find the equilibrium and to incorporate values into their lives, thereby shaping their identity. These insights illustrate how resilience helps pre-service teachers navigate adversities and construct their identity amid challenges as seen in the narratives of participants in this research.

Due to participants of this study are university students, it is necessary to analyze the role of resilience for them. Cassidy (2015) affirms that resilience helps university students to handle academic pressure, “which instead relates to the capacity to overcome significant adversity that threatens a student's educational development”. Based on this affirmation, in the data analysis section it is possible to better analyze how resilience played an important role in participants to overcome difficulties, as explained by Le Cornu (2013) who affirms that early career teachers who cope well are seen to have a “resilience factor” that allows them to create their own network support and persevere over the time. Furthermore, Boon (2020) states that teachers must develop resilience to become more tolerant even in difficult work conditions, which sets off positive professional outcomes.

With that said, the present research will detail the challenging situations that the three participants faced in their learning process, challenges such as stress, lack of motivation, and lack of time among others. It will also describe how the resilience was crucial for them to achieve their goals and successfully complete the EFL bachelor's degree at Santo Tomas university.

Teacher's Identity

Teacher's identity is an important construct for the present research and is one of the

most interesting aspects that has been explored. To better explain this construct, it is necessary to analyze, first, what identity is and, second, based on that definition, what teacher's identity is.

This is necessary because teachers are human beings, and their identity as educators stems from their own identity as individuals. To analyze the concept of identity, Esquivel et al. (2021) affirm that identity includes values and beliefs, cultural experiences, and even childhood experiences. To build that identity, it is necessary to have a deeper understanding of oneself to foster empathy and understand other people, which is a key element in a teacher's job.

On the other hand, Jhonson et al. (2014) also define teacher's identity as the development of one's awareness and the understanding of self as teachers, considering that definition, it is possible to affirm that teacher's identity is constructed throughout life, based on significant experiences (whether positive or negative), as the participants of the research carried out experienced in their pedagogical practices and based on their own conception of teaching. It also involves the decision to become teachers, discovering personal reasons that made them take the decision, choosing the university that best fits their necessities, studying the career, reacting to difficult or maybe frustrating situations, and the capability to face and overcome those difficulties. Thus, teacher's identity is a path to self-recognition. Esquivel et al. (2021) state that "the teaching profession is a journey of reflection to learn more about ourselves in this role"; every teacher learns more about their own teaching philosophies and that only comes from the interaction with students.

Additionally, Mateus et. al (2021) explains the importance of beliefs in the construction of teacher's identity and its role in the self-image teachers, which is further

González & Mateus (2021) affirm that teacher's identity is constructed or deconstructed based on "observations, interactions and reflections" throughout the academic and professional life. It is constructed when it is influenced by personal factors of the student (e.g., culture, beliefs, values) but deconstructed when influenced by external factors (students' expectations, curriculum), thus, professional teacher's identity "is not a subjective concept but is a social construction". Based on this affirmation, it was possible to better comprehend the teacher's identity conception of each participant, and to identify how it has been constructed over time in the data analysis section. During the study the three participants have described how they perceive themselves as teachers and how their personal and educational experiences have helped them establish their identity as teachers and they have described how the challenges faced along the undergraduate studies contributed to constructing their identity.

Research Approach

The present research is classified as qualitative one. According to Tenny et al. (2021), qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real- world problems; it also gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors.

Furthermore, Ahmad et.al (2019) defines qualitative research as a process that helps to understand social phenomena in their natural setting and responds to the question “why” instead of “what”. It relies on the direct experiences of human beings as meaning-making agents in their everyday lives. This concept is also explained by Tenny et. al (2022) as a methodology concerned focused on answering “Whys” and “Hows” instead of how many or how much of the phenomenon in question. In the case of the present study, using the qualitative research paradigm and instruments such as a focus group, a personal narrative, and a survey makes it possible to understand the point of view of the participants based on their experiences and perceptions.

Also, the chosen paradigm aids in the exploration of the phenomenon addressed in the research question which deals with the describing of the challenges that the three pre-service teachers faced while completing their undergraduate students and examining how they overcame these challenges along with identifying any influence on their construction of a professional identity.

Type of Study

In words of Creswell (2006), qualitative studies have a variety of approaches, classifications and typologies. However, he summarized them within five types of approaches for a qualitative research design: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Because of the nature of this research, which aims to deeply indagate and analyze participants' experiences, narrative research has been chosen. Narratives can be both written and spoken (Ingov, 2022), focusing on stories of people's lives as told by them in their own words and worlds (Ntinda, 2019). Ntinda (2018) states that people utilize narratives to compose and order their life experiences, which is a key point of the present study. Besides, Pinnegar & Dannes (2007) argue that narrative can be seen as a method and a phenomenon of study, both of which are considered here.

To begin with, the term narrative as a phenomenon is considered here since as said by Radiajati (2021) "any problem, issue, or topic that is chosen as the subject of an investigation can be consider a research phenomenon and may have its origins in the real world, a theoretical discipline or a personal experience or insight"

On the other hand, Narrative as a method is clearly presented in Creswell (2006) when he argues that

"As a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals...the procedure for implementing this research consist of focusing studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences and chronologically ordering (or using life course stages) the meaning of those experiences" (p. 54)

Creswell (2006) also outlines the procedures for conducting narrative research as

- Determine if the research problem fits in the narrative research considering that it is focused on detailed life experiences of one or more individuals,
- Select the individuals and start gathering the data by using the most convenient instruments.
- “Collect information about the context of the stories”
- Analyze the information by re-storying, which is “the process of reorganizing the stories in a general type of framework, organizing them in sequence or chronologically”

Participate with and involve the participants in the research to better understand their experiences. The present research will encompass both interpretations. Narrative as a phenomenon, because it collects the participants' experiences to be later analyzed and interpreted in order to answer the data collected and its implications in the research question and satisfy the objectives and as a methodology because it will follow the step-by-step process further detailed in this section to gather and analyze the data. Therefore, the narrative research approach because it allows retrieving the most relevant data and interpret it to better understand the challenges the participants faced, how they overcame them, and how that shaped the construction of their identities as EFL teachers.

Participants

The participants in this research are three students of the bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching (EFL) who are described below.

The participants come from different backgrounds as described below:

Participant 1 is a 53-year-old woman who was born in Paipa. At the time of studying for the career, she was living in the same city where she was born. When she began the career, she owned her own business, which remains. Additionally, she is a single mother. She started studying for the career in 2018 and, at the same time, was pursuing another career at Santo Tomas University with the goal of opening her own school. She had some prior experience teaching private classes, which she continues to do. Currently, she has completed her career and is awaiting her diploma.

Participant 2 is a 26-year-old woman who lives in San Francisco, California. She was born in Carmen de Carupa. At the time of studying for the career, she was living on a trail called Motiño in the same town. Before starting her career, she had no prior work experience; she worked on her father's farm, taking care of livestock and potato crops. Later, she moved to the United States to work as a babysitter. She studied for the career from 2016 to 2023. She has completed the B.D. and has enrolled in a master's degree in bilingual environments. She recently returned to Colombia to apply for a student visa to study a career in marketing.

Participant 3 is a 30-year-old woman who was born in Bogotá. At the time of studying for the bachelor's degree, she was living in an urban area, and her occupations were English student and housewife; she had to take care of her two children. She was a member of Bogotá's CAU throughout her career because she was living in Bogotá. Additionally, she completed a technical degree in a different field unrelated to teaching. She spent 6 years completing her bachelor's degree at Santo Tomas University and graduated in August 2023, earning a diploma in English Language Teaching (EFL). Currently, she works as an English teacher in a private school in Bogotá.

Data Collection Tools

Based on the nature of the research, the instruments chosen are briefly described in the following chart.

Table 6

Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments		
Techniques	Instruments	Tool to collect data
1. Written narrative	Personal narrative	Word document with the guide question to make the narration.
2. Focus group	Questionnaire (lead by the researcher)	Video recorder Written questionnaire
3. Survey	Self-administered questionnaire	Office form online

Note. The data presented in this table have been collected and analyzed by the researcher.

As shown in the chart above, the techniques chosen were a written narrative, a focus group and a survey. In the first technique (written narrative), the instrument used was a personal written narrative, provided information related to the description of the participants' profiles, such as their age, social context, living environments (urban or rural), and their desire to become English teachers (Annex # 1). It also gathered information on those positive or negative experiences, and challenging moments they lived while coursing the EFL program, and how they overcame those challenges (Annex # 2).

In the second technique (focus group), the instrument used was a questionnaire with interference of the researcher. his instrument allowed to explore the experiences that the three undergraduate students faced when coursing the B.D in English Language Teaching (EFL) at Santo Tomas University's Distance Learning program. It sought to find out information related

to the challenges they faced, their perceptions regarding how they built up their identity as EFL teachers while coursing the career, and the strategies they used to deal with the dares (Annex # 3).

Finally, in the third technique (survey) the instrument used was a self-administered questionnaire. This instrument aimed to retrospectively inquire whether bachelor's degree students of the EFL program overcame the challenges regarding their professional development as English teachers upon completing the course through distance learning modality.

Manawis (2023) defines data collection techniques as methods used to collect and analyze data. This data can be qualitative (non-quantifiable traits of a subject) or quantitative (quantifiable or countable data). In this case, the data is considered qualitative because it is not countable; it is considered as non-quantifiable (Annex #4).

To collect the data, instruments were applied on the following dates.

Table 7

Application of instruments schedule

Instrument	Date and time
Personal narrative	March 24 th , 2024
Focus group	April 25 th , 2024
Survey	May 21 st , 2024

Note. The data presented in this table have been collected and analyzed by the researcher.

Written Narrative

Guerrero (2011) states that “narrative is a system of understanding used to construct and express meaning in the daily lives”. She says that narratives help to express how identity is constructed within society and culture and can also be used in academic environments such

as schools or communities. Guerrero asserts that narrative and identity serve to constitute each other and are not separated. Burner (1991) claims that when people talk about their lives, it becomes autobiographical narratives. Based on this, it was decided that participants write their personal narratives based on the objectives of the research.

Personal Narrative. As stated by Guerrero (2011), personal narratives require to follow a structure to hold them together. Based on this, the model of Mateus et al. (2021) was followed (Annex # 1). Some of these questions were used to create the model of personal narrative for the present research, for students to have specific guidelines to tell their stories.

Due to the close relationship between the researcher and the participants, it was possible to send the personal narrative chart format, located in the appendices section, via WhatsApp.

Participants answered the questions in each section as expected. The process was structured and formal, and it took only a week to recover the completed forms (Annexes, 8,9,10).

Focus Group

Kitzinger (1995) explains that focus groups are a form of group interview that allows to keep a conversation and idea-sharing to generate data. Additionally, people can share experiences and points of view with one another.

The focus group was conducted via a virtual meeting on Microsoft Teams on a Saturday at 6:00 p.m. Colombian time. It was decided to do it virtually because the participants were far from each other: one was in San Francisco (United States), another in Paipa (Colombia), and the third in Bogota (Colombia). Paipa and Bogota cities are approximately 4 hours apart. The meeting started at 6:15 p.m., and the moderator requested permission to record the meeting, participants agreed. Since participants already knew each

other, the environment was relaxed and familiar. They answered questions and engaged in discussions with each other. During the meeting, emotions emerged from participants' oral narratives, both positive and negative emotions. Disagreement between participants was evident, but also, there were positive emotions when discussing future plans and how university shaped in the construction of dreams for the future. The meeting lasted for one hour and thirty minutes. At the end, participants expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to be heard (Annex 11).

Survey

Mccombes (2020) defines a survey as a form to collect information from a sample of participants by asking them questions and to analyze the results. Tanner (2002) explains that surveys include a variety of data collection techniques, such as questionnaires, interviews, and observation. In this case, a questionnaire was chosen as the most appropriate technique. Goddard III & Villanova (2006) state that "questionnaires are written surveys that contain items that address the goals of the project" and they can be self-administered or administered by someone else. In this case, a self-administered questionnaire was chosen.

The survey was created using Microsoft Teams forms and distributed via WhatsApp. Students did not have any difficulty in understanding or answering it. Information was collected in approximately three days (Annex 12).

Ethical Considerations (Trustworthiness)

This research project focuses on the narratives three participants from the Bachelors' Degree in English Language Teaching Program (EFL). Each participant signed an informed consent form before collecting the data (Annex 5). They were informed of their right to withdraw, and it was made clear that the collected information was only for the nature of the

present research. The collected data is stored in the researcher's personal Microsoft account, which is protected by two security steps: entering the password and a security code sent to the researcher's cellphone. These measures make authorized access to the information difficult. Participants were allowed to use their first names and first initial of their last names, allowing them to keep their full names confidential. Participants also can read the research and give feedback, if necessary, which demonstrates the trustworthiness and veracity of the information provided and analyzed.

Data Analysis and Discussion

To give consistency to the present study, recurrent themes were identified in the research question and the objectives, these topics in turn were developed in the Literature Review section. The following chart shows the themes identified.

Table 8

Recurrent themes

Research question	Research general objective	Specific objectives
What are the challenges that three undergraduate students from a distance bachelor's degree in English language teaching have faced to become English teachers ?	To portrait the challenges that three undergraduate students faced while coursing the distance bachelor's degree program in English language teaching at Santo Tomas university in order to become English teachers .	1. To describe participants' experiences as undergraduate students in a bachelor's degree in distance learning. 2. To characterize the challenges that the students faced regarding their learning process and the strategies they used to overcome them when coursing the bachelor's degree. 3. To describe how the undergraduate students constructed their identities as English teachers coursing the EFL bachelor's degree.

Note. The data presented in this table have been collected and analyzed by the researcher.

Then, the model of Barkhuizen et al. (2013) color-code (common pattern) was used to categorize the data to be collected (Annex # 6). This means the categories were established a priori.

Data Organization Procedure

Based on the results obtained from the color-code, three main aspects became apparent, first the need of identification of the challenges that the three undergraduate students faced to become in English teachers, second, how they overcame those challenges, and finally, how their teacher's identity construction was influenced by previous two. According to this, the three instruments to collect data were selected, designed and applied. Each instrument explored aspects presented in the specific objectives of the research, which means that some of the categories of how information was organized were decided beforehand (Annex # 6).

The categories identified are challenges, strategies, teacher's identity and EFL bachelor's program contribution. Then, keywords found in information collected with the instruments were assigned to each category, though no emerging categories were identified, these keywords were the base for the subcategories as shown in the following chart.

Table 9*Data categories*

Category	Subcategory
Category 1. Challenges	Subcategory 1.1 Situational, institutional and dispositional challenges Subcategory 1.2 Challenges associated with EFL learning.
Category 2. Strategies	Subcategory 2.1 Establishment of heterodox communication with academic community actors. Subcategory 2.2 Resilience
Category 3. Teacher's Identity	Subcategory 3.1 Personal and external factors. Subcategory 3.2 Personal reflection about teacher's role.
Category 4. EFL bachelor's program contributions	Subcategory 4.1 Students' perceptions regarding their EFL learning process at distance modality. Subcategory 4.2 Areas of improvement in the EFL bachelor's program

Note. The data presented in this table have been collected and analyzed by the researcher.

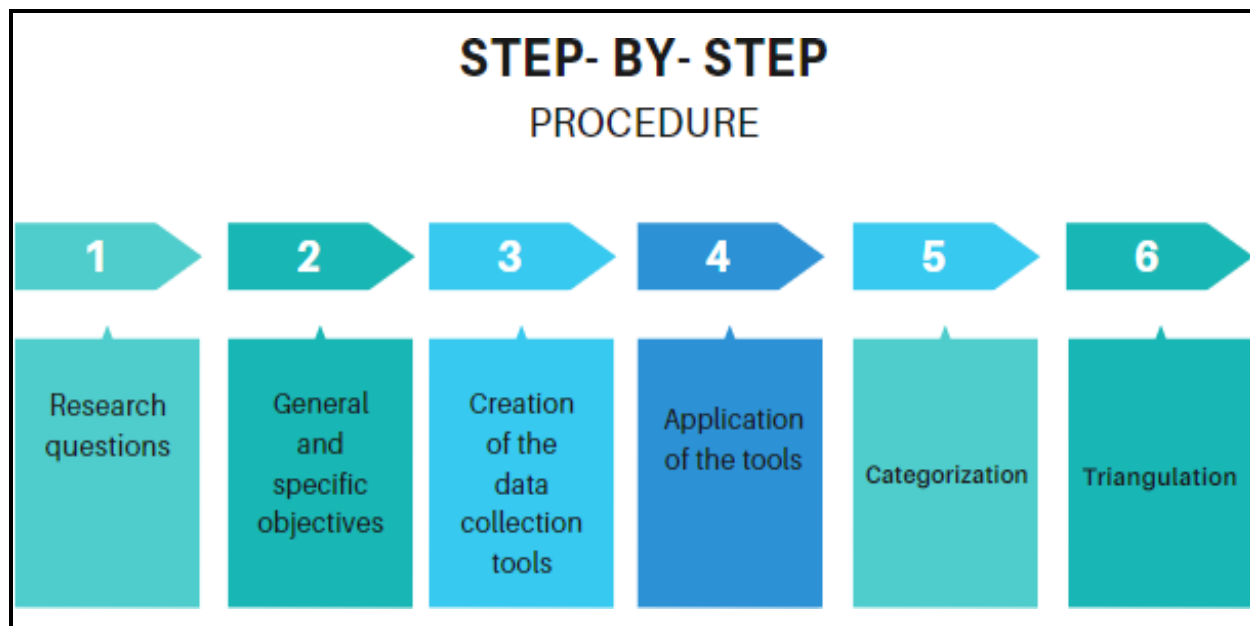
The next step was organizing data obtained following Creswell's model (2013), a matrix with the categories decided before hand and the contributions obtained from the information collected with each instrument was created (Annex #7). Again, data were organized using a color-code as suggested by Barkhuizen et al. (2013). The following table shows the model followed for creating the chart.

Table 10*Data organization chart*

DATA ORGANIZATION CHART								
Techniques	PERSONAL NARRATIVE		FOCUS GROUP				SURVEY	
Category	Challenges	Identity	Strategies	Identity	Challenges	EFL bachelor's program	Identity	EFL bachelor's program
Participant 1								
Participant 2								
Participant 3								

Note. The data presented in this table have been collected and analyzed by the author.

Finally, a triangulation process of the data helped the researcher to better comprehend the results and correlation between every category. Furthermore, it helped the researcher to draw some conclusions and to find unexpected information that may be relevant for future research.

Figure 2*Step-by-step model for data interpretation*

Note. The data presented in this figure have been collected and analyzed by the author.

Category 1- Challenges

To better analyze the challenges students faced, the category was divided into two subcategories: First, the situational, institutional or dispositional challenges as explained by Cross (1981), and second, the challenges associated with EFL learning as explained by Quintero (2019) in the literature review.

Subcategory 1.1- Situational, institutional or dispositional challenges

When analyzing the participants' narratives, it was clear that situational challenges were significant. Participant 1 mentioned in the instrument 1: “Like the timetable... as a mother, as a housewife... I faced many difficulties. It wasn't just the challenges but also health, money, and time. At my age, it was a bit more difficult” (Annex 8). Similarly, Participant 3 said: “Time was very challenging because I have other roles, such as being a mother and working. I need more time to study” (Annex # 10). Based on this, it was evident that lack of time and organization are key factors, as Quintero (2019) found in her research, where students reported difficulties in managing their time.

When discussing institutional challenges, participants referred to various difficulties related to their pedagogical practices. Participant 1 in instrument 1 states:

“As I did my practice remotely, not being able to see the students' faces was quite unsatisfactory. Not being with students directly was disheartening because I couldn't share all the real material to work with. My big weakness was using all the ICT tools and presenting different lesson plans. For me, this was a significant learning topic”. (Annex #8).

However, Participant 2 notes: “The first challenge was creating the lesson plans since I didn’t have enough experience. I struggled to find resources that matched the students' needs and to identify activities that would be effective for students of different ages and grades” (Annex #9). On the other hand, Participant 3 mentions: “One of the biggest challenges for me was balancing my role as a mother, my job, and university. I felt that time was never enough for all the responsibilities I had” (Annex #10). Based on these narratives, each participant faced different difficulties: one related to using ICT tools for online teaching, another with creating lesson plans, and the third with managing time and multiple roles. Therefore, it is important to address these issues by training and supporting students, to teach students regarding how to use and take advantage of ICT tools for teaching remotely and Offering Time Management Workshops whether online or physical ones, providing workshops or resources on time management and work-life balance can assist students to better managing their multiple roles and responsibilities.

Finally, regarding the dispositional challenges, Participant 2 states: “Presenting classes remotely was hard and tough for me. I struggled with self-control and self-motivation” (Annex #9). Based on this, it is necessary to address these issues by firstly, developing self-motivation techniques. Offering training on self-motivation strategies, such as goal setting and self-reflection practices, can help participants improve their motivation and self-discipline. Additionally, taking advantage of the psychological resources that the university has or involving pre-service psychologists in their practice to address this issue and implement strategies to help distance students may be beneficial.

Subcategory 1.2 challenges associated with EFL learning

Based on the narratives of the two students, it is evident that their experiences with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning at the university differed significantly. Two participants did not experience difficulties because they had opportunities to learn English independently. Participant 1, for instance, spent time in another country, studying and living with the community at "Foyer de Charité" in France, where they interacted with many foreigners (Annex #8).

Participant 3 also studied English independently, stating, "I decided to study English to improve my skills for getting a job" (Annex #10). However, Participant 3 also noted challenges, saying, "I didn't have enough friends or people around me to practice English. To be honest, I was living in the countryside. During the course, I was about to quit because my English was very bad" (Annex #9).

These narrative highlights that while two participants did not face significant language difficulties, one participant did experience challenges. This supports Quintero's (2019) findings on students' difficulties with language learning, as one participant's struggle let us identify the necessity for universities to enhance their English teaching strategies. This need for improvement is also referenced in the last part of this data analysis section in the results of instrument 3, where 11% of the votes manifest that university should strengthen the EFL training, but the 30% think that their EFL process improved (Annex #12).

Category 2 - Strategies

To cope with the challenges, students developed strategies to overcome challenging experiences while studying their bachelor's degree. Those strategies are differentiated in two subcategories. First, Establishment of heterodox

communication with academic community actors, and second, resilience. Each one is described below.

Subcategory 2.1 - Establishment of heterodox communication with academic communityactors.

When talking about the establishment of heterodox communication, it refers to going beyond regular communication methods. Some participants engaged in heterodox communication with the university. For example, Participant 1 states in instrument 2:

“For me, I am very grateful to the university because it took a long time to finish my two degrees. The university gave me the opportunity to pay for each semester by taking only two subjects at a time. They were kind and helpful, always telling me, ‘Don’t give up,’ ‘You can do it,’ ‘Let’s pay for only two subjects,’ ‘Never stop.’ So, I am very grateful”. (Annex # 11).

Based on her description, it is evident that she went beyond conventional communication by using the university’s flexible payment arrangements, which supported her in completing both degrees.

Participant 3 in the instrument 2 also states:

“Well, I feel like the support of the university came from some teachers who helped me improve, while others were like a torture for me. However, there were other teachers who were very understanding of the situations that arose during the career, and I’m very thankful to those teachers” (Annex #11).

This statement indicates how some faculty members provided critical support and understanding, highlighting the importance of personalized support and the impact of individual teachers on the student experience.

These reflections underscore the value of heterodox communication—where going beyond standard interactions can greatly benefit students. Participant #1's experience illustrates how flexible and empathetic communication with the university facilitated her academic progress. Meanwhile, Participant #3's experience highlights the diverse ways in which faculty support can affect students, emphasizing the importance of understanding and responsiveness in academic settings.

Subcategory 2.2 - Resilience

Participant 1 states in instrument 1:

I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to have the diploma to prove my dream is to have my own school very soon. So that was the motivation inside of me. I wanted to sleep, but in my mind, I was conflicted. I thought, 'I cannot do it. I'm going to give up.' That was half of my mind. The other half said, 'You can do it. It's almost finished. Let's go. Let's start, finish.' And it was like the motivation to be a teacher. So, I never gave up" (Annex #8).

This describes how resilience plays an important role as Thierer (2023) stated in the literature review section "humans are remarkably resilient species" and despite of the difficulties the participant was able to navigate them and overcome them.

Similarly, Participant 2 stated, "At that point, I didn't have enough friends or people around me to practice English. To be honest, I was living in the countryside with cows and couldn't practice. It was pretty tough. I enrolled in a course at a university to practice, which helped me improve my English conversation a little. I always made a big effort to make my mother and myself proud" (Annex #9). This affirmation describes how resilient the participant was to overcome the difficulties of learning a language, as explained by

Habatullah (2019) students who are in a non-speaking English country have difficulties to practice the language due to the poor exposure to the practice, however, the participant wanted to make her mom proud and that was a resilience factor to her.

Finally, Participant 3 stated that her strategy to overcome challenges was:

“Probably crying a lot alone... Yes, of course. Family support is very important because it serves as motivation. In some cases, they don’t have to tell you that you are doing well, but their presence is motivating. For me, my kids were a big part of that support” (Annex #10).

This description puts in evidence some dispositional challenges that participants may face, but also, how family is important when overcoming difficulties.

Based on the participants' narratives, it is possible to infer that their strategies for overcoming challenges were deeply linked to personal motivation and support systems. Participant #1's determination to achieve a long-term goal and not give up despite internal conflicts highlights the power of self-motivation. Participant #2's effort to improve English through external courses despite isolation shows resilience and dedication. Participant #3's reliance on family support and personal motivation underscores the importance of emotional support and external encouragement. Collectively, these strategies reflect how personal goals, persistent effort, and support networks contribute to overcoming challenges and achieving success.

Category 3- Teacher's identity

To analyze the category of teacher's identity, it was decided to first identify what motivated participants to make the decision to become English teachers, by analyzing how the personal and external factors shaped on their identity, which became the first

subcategory. Then, their personal reflections regarding teacher's role was pointed out, this gave origin to the second subcategory.

Subcategory 3.1 - Personal and external factors

Based on the narratives of participants, some personal and external factors that influenced their decision to become English teachers were as follows: Participant 1 states, "Since I was a child, living, studying, and sharing life with the community Foyer de Charité from France, interacting with many foreigners, and hearing other languages, here in my hometown I fell in love with other languages" (Annex #8). On the other hand, Participant 2 mentions, "Since I was a kid, I started to feel interested in teaching and sharing my knowledge with others" (Annex #9). Additionally, Participant 3 notes that "I realized that I was good at English due to my performance in the institution and recommendations from some teachers" (Annex #10). Based on this, it is possible to identify that each student has their own personal experience that influenced their decision to become an English teacher, whether it was their interest in foreign languages, their passion for teaching, or the realization of their proficiency in English over time.

Participant 2 expressed that "Before I started my career, I use to respect my language teachers because I knew how hard was to have their language management, I was always focus on their ways to teach and interact with us in English" that affirmation, puts in evidence the affirmation of Herrera et. Al (2021) who explains the importance of beliefs in the construction of teacher's identity and its role in the self-image teachers. Participant 2 had an image of her English teacher and based on that she wanted to reply to it, it helps her in the construction of the teacher they wanted to become.

Subcategory 3.2 - Personal reflection about teacher's role.

When discussing personal reflections on the teacher's role, it is necessary to first identify their conceptions before and after their pedagogical practices. Based on the information from Instrument 1, before their pedagogical practices, students had the following views:

Participant 1 stated, "For me, teaching must be in context, always trying to improve and taking advantage of the use of TICs." (Annex # 8). On the same subject Participant 2 in instrument 1 shared:

"Before I started my career, I used to respect my language teachers because I knew how hard it was to manage their language. I was always focused on their ways of teaching and interacting with us in English. I also knew that being an English teacher is tough because most students relate their disinterest in the English language to the teacher's ability to impart knowledge. It is hard to say, but a high number of students really dislike the language teacher, and most of the time, teachers just try their best to follow the curriculum and provide students with the resources to succeed." (Annex #9)

Participant 3 mentioned:

"Before starting my career, I thought teachers had more tools to teach different kinds of populations to attend to inclusive classrooms. Because of my child's special learning needs, I realized it was necessary to prepare teachers who understand the importance of this by creating awareness among teachers and their work." (Annex #10)

Based on their narratives, it is evident that participants had distinct conceptions about teaching before their pedagogical practices. Participant #1 focused on the integration of TICs

and continuous improvement, Participant #2 emphasized respect for teachers and the challenges they face in engaging students, and Participant #3 expected teachers to be well-equipped for inclusive education. These reflections highlight a range of expectations and understandings about the teaching profession, which likely evolved as they gained practical experience.

After their pedagogical practices, the participants stated the following:

Participant #1 said, “No, I haven’t changed the way of teaching a language. For me, it must be in context, always trying to improve and taking advantage of the use of TICs” (Annex # 8).

Participant #2 mentioned:

“At this point in my life, I still think the same. People continue to believe that only the teacher can immediately improve their language skills as if by miracle. They don’t realize that if they don’t focus and work constantly on it, the process can take time, or they can easily get stuck at the same level. As a holistic view of my teaching performance, it was a great opportunity to understand many aspects of a real class where I could reflect on experiences, observe, and compare myself with the pedagogical practices I have experienced with other teachers and their teaching strategies” (Annex # 9).

Participant #3 observed, “During the pedagogical practicum, I identified that as pre-service teachers we lack knowledge about students with different needs. This made me reflect constantly on how, from the teaching role and based on our own experiences, we could contribute to a better learning process to promote real classroom inclusion. I learned some strategies from other teachers to improve my teaching experience” (Annex

The narratives from the participants reveal significant insights into their evolving views on teaching after their pedagogical practices. Participant #1 maintains emphasizing the importance of contextualized teaching and TICs (Information and Communication Technologies). This indicates a commitment to integrating technology and context into language instruction and highlights a potential area for exploring new methods or adapting to changing educational needs.

Participant #2 shows a critical view of the unrealistic expectations often placed on teachers. Despite holding the same belief as before, this participant recognizes the necessity for students to engage actively and consistently in their language learning process. This perspective underscores the importance of setting realistic goals and fostering student accountability, alongside recognizing the value of continuous self-improvement in teaching strategies.

Participant #3 points to a crucial area of growth: understanding and addressing the diverse needs of students. This participant's experience highlights the lack of knowledge about inclusive education. Their focus on improving classroom inclusion suggests a commitment to enhancing their ability to meet varied student needs and adapt their teaching methods accordingly.

In summary, these reflections emphasize the need for teachers to continuously adapt their practices, embrace new technologies, set realistic expectations for student progress, and deepen their understanding of inclusive education. Addressing these areas can lead to more effective teaching strategies and better learning outcomes for students.

Category 4. EFL bachelor's program contributions

To look into the last theme, information into students' perceptions of the program was analyzed. This analysis was organized into two categories, first, Students' perceptions regarding their EFL learning process at distance modality, and second, Areas of improvement in the EFL bachelor's program. Both of them described as follows.

Subcategory - Students' perceptions regarding their EFL learning process at distancemodality.

The study analyzed the students' perceptions of Santo Tomás University and its contributions. When they enrolled, they chose the university because they believed its curriculum provided all the necessary elements to help them become the teachers they aspired to be.

Therefore, their perceptions of the B.D. in EFL at Santo Tomas University were examined.

Based on that, Participant 1 states, instrument 1, "I chose Santo Tomas University because of the higher education, also the schedule, and the location for me. Also, the level of the language is large and wide with good quality" (Annex # 8). Participant 2 states:

"The financial and geographic situation at that time were the most significant factors in choosing a career in the distance modality to continue working on the farm and not affect my studies. Santo Tomás University was the closest one to my hometown that offered English as a professional career, which allowed me to have flexibility and access to the resources" (Annex #9). Participant #3 stated, "I decided to start my

studies at Santo Tomas University due to the distance education, which gave me the possibility to fulfill my professional and personal goals” (Annex #10).

Based on their narratives, it is possible to recognize that the distance modality meets the needs of students, allowing them to achieve their goals. As explained in the literature review, distance education provides opportunities for both rural and urban students, as demonstrated by this case where one participant was in a rural area and the other two in urban areas.

Subcategory 4.2 - Areas of improvement in the EFL bachelor's program

Additionally, in the focus group, Participant #1 stated that “to have more room in the exchange, the more opportunities for the students to have real practice. [Uh] maybe with native people or something like that, the difficulties. That's the only thing that I maybe I could see now. I would like to have another subject, like a more pedagogical practice” (Annex # 11). However, in the instrument 3, 31% of participants believe that university must strengthen pedagogy and education training as stated by participant 1 “I believe it's not time enough. To be well prepared and ready to start working the new professional must show at least their 2 or 3 years of experience” and participant 2 “I feel I have not enough pedagogical experience” (Annex # 12). Participant 2 instrument 2 stated:

“For example, English can be improved if they implement, for example, English conversation or English blah blah, but something related to practice. Yeah, let's say, for example, this semester, English conversation only focuses on that. Here, for example, we have three classes in San Francisco focused on different aspects like grammar, conversation, speaking, listening, or something like that. But, yeah, that would be great” (Annex # 11).

Participant 3 in the instrument 2 suggested that “spaces can be created in which students can be heard and interact with teachers. For example, I don't know, a café or sharing some ideas, or brainstorming some ideas, probably making those distances shorter” (Annex # 11).

Based on the participants' narratives, some areas of improvement should be established, such as providing more practical opportunities for students to interact with native speakers, offering additional pedagogical practice subjects, focusing English courses on specific skills like conversation, and creating informal spaces for student-teacher interactions.

Conclusions

The challenges students experienced are multifaceted and can be categorized into those encountered while completing the program, which are divided into situational, institutional, dispositional, and EFL learning challenges. Participants faced many obstacles, such as balancing responsibilities between personal and academic life. Health issues and financial stress were also significant challenges. For example, two participants who were mothers found it difficult to balance their time between their responsibilities as mothers and their academic duties, leading to health problems and financial stress. Other participants struggled with managing ICT tools accurately. Additionally, participants faced challenges with EFL learning, adapting from a face- to-face environment to a virtual one, and a lack of English practice due to limited exposure to the language in their communities.

Participants also encountered difficulties during their pedagogical practices. One participant expressed dissatisfaction with not having the opportunity to conduct face-to-face classes. Furthermore, two participants were unfamiliar with ICT tools for teaching, which represented a significant challenge, while another participant struggled to balance personal life with the responsibilities of pedagogical practices and her own job.

To address these issues, training in the use of ICT tools and implementing psychological strategies to help students better organize their schedules and receive emotional support are necessary. Despite these difficulties, participants employed various strategies to overcome their challenges. Personal resilience and family support were crucial factors in their success. Their commitment to their degree, self-confidence, and desire to

The exploration of how participants constructed their identities through the distance education bachelor's program reveals several insights. Motivations on wanting to become English teachers came from their interest in the language and the culture, as well as their strong belief that learning English would give them more opportunities for the future. Furthermore, one participant expressed her interest in teaching people and helping them to learn, which is fundamental in the overcoming of challenges associated with distance education and it is strongly related with the construction of their self-image as teachers. Before undertaking pedagogical practices, students had conceptions about teaching and some fears of being exposed to a classroom setting. For example, one of the participants said that a challenge for her was that she had never taught before, so she did not know how to handle a class, but the other two felt comfortable because she already had some teaching experience.

Participants' perceptions on teaching evolve after their pedagogical practices. For example, one participant recognized the importance of incorporating technologies and the use of TICs when teaching, and she had to learn about it to improve her practices. Another participant highlighted the importance of knowing about teaching students with disabilities and realized that teachers are not well prepared for those kinds of cases.

Academically, and based on the last category, participants took advantage of the benefits of distance education to organize their schedules. One of the participants expressed gratitude to the university for allowing her flexible payment options, while other participants expressed that most of teachers were very helpful and were there for them in cases of questions, or even gave them the opportunity to submit activities beyond the deadlines.

Some areas for curriculum improvement were identified. Despite students' overall satisfaction, they suggested increasing opportunities for pedagogical practices, incorporating diverse learning materials, and more English practice, if possible, with native teachers. Additionally, it should be more contextualized with the reality of nowadays and with strategies for teaching special needs students.

After students identify the challenges and strategies used to overcome them, it is important for both students and teachers to continue strengthening internal processes and helping students achieve their goals. The outcomes of this research highlight important aspects that may be improved, which could lead to a decrease in dropout rates.

As a researcher, conducting this study helped me to improve my abilities as researcher, by following the steps to create an investigative study. Additionally, I deepened my understanding of the complexities of distance education, and the challenges that student face, as well as the strategies that help students overcome those difficulties. As a teacher, this research project helped me to recognize the importance of pedagogical practices in the shaping of a teacher's identity.

This design, which involves qualitative methods, was pertinent as it allowed an in-depth analysis of the perspectives and personal experiences of the three participants. The focus on undergraduate EFL students contributes to a deeper understanding of their specific challenges.

Several limitations were found during the study. The research involved only three participants, which limited the findings to the perspectives of only three people. Additionally, this study may not apply to other institutions because it was conducted based on Santo Tomas University and the challenges of distance education.

For future research, it may be possible to expand the sample size, to analyze other challenges and more strategies to overcome those challenges. Also, it can be conducted a comparison between the EFL bachelor's degree offered by Santo Tomas University and other universities in Colombia or in other countries.

Finally, an important aspect to consider is that the program should adopt more robust practices for students and strengthen strategies to overcome challenges, which could be a future research area focused on the strategies that the program uses to enhance students' study skills or resilience.

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Annexes**Annex #1. Model followed to create the written narrative.****Guidelines for Autobiographical Narrative before the Practicum**

You are almost ready to start your professional practice. There are many events and people that you have lived and known to become the preservice teacher you are now. We would like to know the experiences, people and situations that have had impact on you. Write your autobiography as it was a story.

Guidelines

- Write your story in English or Spanish
- Your autobiographical narrative should not only be descriptive. It must show a good level of reflection towards the different situations you are describing.
- Be sure all the required aspects below are fully covered, you do not need to write them in order.
- Length is not a problem, feel free to write as much as you want, but be sure you express all your feelings and thoughts about your experience.

Information to include in your autobiographical narrative

1. Give a title to your story
2. Describe the most remarkable teachers and professors you have had (school/university): characteristics, the way they influenced you (positively or negatively), what you learnt from them, what you would imitate or not from them.
3. Describe meaningful language learning situations or activities you experienced (positive or negative). Write how you felt and what you think of them. Would you repeat them? why? if they were negative, how would you make them better?
4. Think of the way you have learnt English. What resources have teachers used? How have you learnt vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and the language skills?
5. Do you think the teacher used an appropriate methodology? why? why not? Would you use it?
6. When did you decide to become a language teacher? why? Write if someone influenced you, how did you make the decision? was it a right decision?
7. Write what you think about teaching a language, what approaches/methods/strategies you would like to use, what changes you think you can do in the language teaching profession.
8. What is the most rewarding aspect of teaching for you?
9. What were your perceptions of the teaching profession before you started your career?
10. Based on your school and university experiences, what changes have you noticed in the EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching profession?

11. Finish your story describing the qualities you would like to have to be what you consider a good teacher.

Guidelines for Autobiographical Narrative after the Practicum

You finished your first professional practice. Now, we would like to know if could do all you wanted and expected before your first teaching experience.

Before writing the last part of the story, read and reflect about the observations you did and the first part of your story you wrote before your professional practice.

Along your story respond the following questions or statements

- Think about the beliefs of English as a powerful language. Are they the same now? Explain.
- Describe if your beliefs about the advantages that English offers were confirmed or altered? Why?
- Explain if the attitudes you have (as a teacher) towards the language in the classroom are the same your previous teachers had or are they different? Why? Which ones?
- Describe the way you promote the use of the L2 in the classroom? Is it different from the way your previous teachers, did it?
- Describe the way your students are learning the foreign language. Is it similar to the way you learnt it? Could you affirm that is the best way to learn? Are you promoting positive experiences for your students' learning process? Which ones?
- According to the way you are promoting learning, can you notice if your beliefs about the appropriate way of learning were altered or confirmed?
- Could you teach the language using the materials, resources and methodologies you considered appropriate to promote learning? If not, what obstacles impeded it? Are they the best way to teach a foreign language? Were they innovative? Does this way to teach confirm your initial belief about teaching?

Note. Taken from Mateus, C. H., González, Á. M. G., Alzate, L. V. C., & De Los Ángeles Lalle, C. (2021). Exploring pre-service teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning: a Narrative study. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 45(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.61871/mj.v45n1-13>

Annex # 2. Written narrative format.

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS
PRIMER CLAUSTRO UNIVERSITARIO DE COLOMBIA

WRITING MY PERSONAL NARRATIVE

You are almost to finish your career and some of you have recently finished. There are many situations that you faced before, during, and after being a student of the Santo Tomas University (in case you finished the career), situations that made you stronger and more resilient and helped you to become a teacher or preservice teacher you are now. I would like to know those experiences, they can be positive or negative, but also, I would like you to describe those challenging moments and how you overcome those challenges. Write your personal narrative as if it was a story.

Guidelines

- Write your story in English or Spanish (The language you feel more comfortable with).
- Your personal narrative must be as descriptive as possible but also show a good level of reflection.
- Make sure that all the aspects below are fully covered, they must not be covered in order, but you must cover all of them. **In each section, feel free to narrate the information and interlink the answers in the way you want. The questions are there to guide your thoughts and help the researcher explore aspects of interest in your life stories.**

PERSONAL BACKGROUND	
• What is your name? • Where do you live? • How old are you? • Where do you live? • Have you graduated from your EFL teaching career? • Where were you living at the moment of studying you the EFL program? • What was your occupation before starting the EFL program? • How long have you been studying for the EFL program?	Your answer goes here.

MAKING THE DECISION OF STUDYING THE CAREER

• Can you remember what influenced you to become an English teacher? • Think about that moment in your life when you wanted to start your studies. Can you mention why you chose Santo Tomas University to carry out your studies? Was it the distance learning possibility? Was it the curriculum the career has? What other aspect, if different, motivated you?	Your answer goes here. (No more than 200 words)
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PROFESSIONAL / TEACHING BACKGROUND

• Did you have any teaching experiences prior to the pedagogical practicum carried out in the B.D program? • What did you use to think about teaching English before starting your career? Have you changed your opinion about teaching English nowadays after being a student of the B.D in EFL at the Universidad de Santo Tomas?	Your answer goes here. (No more than 200 words)
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UNIVERSITY'S CONTRIBUTION

• What were the two main challenges you faced during your pedagogical practicum and how did you handle them? • How would you describe your pedagogical practicum? Do you remember a vivid positive or negative experience? • Describe three weaknesses you identified in your teaching during your pedagogical practicum.	Your answer goes here. (No more than 300 words)
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• Describe three strengths you developed after your pedagogical practicum.	
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Idea taken from: Mateus, C. H., González, Á. M. G., Alzate, L. V. C., & De Los Ángeles Lalle, C. (2021). Exploring pre-service teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning: a Narrative study. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 45(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.61871/mj.v45n1-13>

Annex # 3. Focus group protocol.**FOCUS GROUP**

The following focus group pretends to explore the experiences that the three undergraduate students had when coursing the B.D in English Language Teaching at Santo Tomas University's Long Distance Learning program. It seeks to find out information related to the challenges they faced, their perceptions regarding how they built up their identity as EFL teachers while coursing the career.

The Focus group will be carried out through a virtual session with the three participants, considering that they already know each other. The session will take 90 minutes, and the moderator will be the researcher, Paula Toledo.

Positive experiences

- Tell us the best experience that you have had while studying for the B.D in EFL at the Universidad de Santo Tomas.

Distance struggles

- What challenges have you faced while studying EFL at a distance?

Overcoming difficulties

- How did you handle that difficult/ frustrating experience? Did you have a friend, family member, or teacher that supported you to overcome that situation?
- How do you think that the Universidad de Santo Tomas helped you overcome the challenges of distance education?
- Did the EFL program give you the tools you need to handle the challenges you face in a real English class? Which were those tools and how did you apply them?

Achieving goals

- Do you consider that the Universidad de Santo Tomas has helped you to achieve your personal and professional goals? Why?
- Has the program influenced your professional goals to long term?

EFL program analysis

- Do you think that the curriculum is appropriate for the challenges that English teachers face in the day to day of the pedagogical practices?
- Based on your path in the EFL program, which are the main strengths and weaknesses of the EFL at distance program and how do you think the university can strengthen those weaknesses?
- If you had to add a subject which would be that and why?

- Do you have any innovative ideas that can help to improve the EFL program of Santo Tomas university?

At the end of the focus group, the participants will be able to share their final thoughts, and the researcher will let them know the importance of their time and disposition.

Annex # 4. Survey questions.

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS
PRIMER CLAUSTRO UNIVERSITARIO DE COLOMBIA

1. Full name:
2. Do you feel satisfied with your academic process while pursuing the EFL program?
Please justify your answer.
3. Do you feel satisfied with the support provided by the university during your learning process? Justify your answer.
4. Select the three main areas of formation that you think the university strengthened.
 - ❖ Humanities education/ training
 - ❖ Communication education/ training
 - ❖ English as a foreign language (EFL) education training.
 - ❖ Formative research education/ training
 - ❖ Pedagogy education/ training
 - ❖ ICT (information and communication technology) and TAC (technological and audiovisual communication education/ training)
5. Can you explain why?
6. Select the three main areas of formation that you think the university did not strengthen or did not strengthen enough.
 - ❖ Humanities education/ training
 - ❖ Communication education/ training
 - ❖ English as a foreign language (EFL) education training.
 - ❖ Formative research education/ training
 - ❖ Pedagogy education/ training
 - ❖ ICT (information and communication technology) and TAC (technological and audiovisual communication education/ training)

Can you explain why?

Link of the virtual survey: <https://forms.office.com/r/PMh3W7vEpt?origin=lprLink>



INORMED CONSENT LETTER

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF PURSUING A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN EFL THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION.

Paula Andrea Toledo Ramírez
EFL program
Paulatoledo@usantotomas.edu.co

PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to portrait the challenges that three undergraduate students faced while coursing the distance bachelor's degree program in English as a foreign language at Santo Tomas university in order to become English teachers.

STUDY PROCEDURES

The study will be divided into three main stages, and it is important that you are aware of and agree with the treatment of the data.

Instrument 1 - The aim of this activity is for you to create a personal narrative.

Instrument 2 - The aim of this activity is to conduct a focus group with two other partners from the EFL program.

Instrument 3 - The aim of this activity is for you to complete a short survey related to your experience while pursuing the EFL program.

By signing this document, you agree with the researcher to allow the data collected in the three instruments to be used for data analysis purposes in the development of the inquiry.

Participant's Initials: _____

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents

· Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher and the bachelor's degree judge and teacher of Santo Tomas University.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

During some parts of the document only your first name and age may appear.

Participant's Initials: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Note: Please delineate the "Consent" section of the Informed Consent Form by drawing a line across the page (like the one above this paragraph). This delineation is important because the consent form grammar shifts from second person to first person, as shown in this example.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the information provided and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Participant's Initials: _____

Annex #6. Inductive categories

Research question	Research general objective	Specific objectives
What are the challenges that three undergraduate students from a distance bachelor's degree in English language teaching have faced to become English teachers?	To portrait the challenges that three undergraduate students faced while coursing the distance bachelor's degree program in English language teaching at Santo Tomas university in order to become English teachers.	1. To describe participants' experiences as undergraduate students in a bachelor's degree in distance learning. 2. To characterize the challenges that the students faced regarding their learning process and the strategies they used to overcome them when coursing the bachelor's degree. 3. To describe how the undergraduate students constructed their identities as English teachers coursing the EFL bachelor's degree.

Annex #7. Matrix of findings (keywords)

PARTICIPANTS	NARRATIVE		FOCUS GROUP				SURVEY	
	CHALLENGES	IDENTITY	PERSONAL / UNIVERSITY STRATEGIES	IDENTITY	CHALLENGES	EFL program at distance	IDENTITY	EFL PROGRAM
Participant 1	-Remote practice dissatisfaction -Feeling of disconnection // limitation -Taking advantage of digital tools	-Passion for languages and foreign cultures -Teaching in context // taking advantage of digital tools -Self-confidence when teaching	Self-motivation -University assisted in her questions about pedagogy and administrative tasks Resilience (Self-motivation)	Satisfaction with her learning process to become a teacher -Desire of having an own school	Difficulty to organize the timetable business woman / housewife -Personal issues (health/money /time) Overcome challenges related to the age	Satisfaction with the teachers - Convenient schedule	Agree with the learning experience, sufficient but it can improve -Increase opportunities for real practice, possibly with native speakers. -Advocate for universities to validate practical experience for job preparation.	strengthening in Humanities education training -EFL -ICT -Lack of strengthening in pedagogy /education training On time feedback and help of teachers

Participant 2	Education at distance challenge // self-motivation Not prior teaching experience Lack of experience to create lesson plans Difficulties to find appropriated resources Management of class time Lack of technological knowledge Organization and concentration in the finality of the lesson	Passion for teaching Life project Resilience Teaching English career as something praiseworthy Class management Holistic view of teaching Interpersonal relationships	Enrolled in a course to improve the English level -feedback of teachers -resilience	Confidence from knowledge. - resilience - Continuing master's in bilingual education at same university	Transition from face to face to distance learning -Lack of self-motivation /self-control -No people around to practice English -Location -Considering leaving due to poor English level -Course the same subject many times -Frustration with lack of teacher feedback and evaluation fairness.	Support of the teachers -Good learning resources	Desire for diverse, meaningful learning experiences with real-world applications. More time for pedagogical practice in classroom. -Focus in the specific English skills -More English practice needed	Program completion led to career reflection. -Strengthening in EFL, research, ICT - Lack of strengthening in pedagogy and humanities education /training	Moved from regional to central CAU for support and better grades.
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Participant 3	Salary vs extra hours -Quality of life -Balance between personal, academic and -professional duties -Autonomous learning -Doing a research project -Lack of time to implement the lesson plan -Schedule crossing	Fondness for the English language -Importance of vocation -Committed teachers with the teaching labor -More preparation for Special education needs -Lack of knowledge about special needs education -Learning from colleagues	Cry to decrease frustration -Family support as motivation -support of the teachers	Need more tools for diverse student needs in universities -Desire of continue studding - Universit y inspired confidenc e, expanded aspiratio ns.	Balance between the different roles / mother and worker -Lack of time to study more -Difficulties with the research project -Societal challenges, diverse student needs.	Support of the teachers	Advocating for a more relevant, humanistic curriculum at Santo Tomas. -meaningful pedagogical practices -Propose integrating special education needs subject across university degrees. - Create interactive spaces like cafes or brainstorming sessions for students and teachers to foster collaboration and improvement.	Satisfaction with the personal overcoming of challenges -Satisfaction in learning; emphasizes self -commitment. -Strengthening humanities education/traini ng, EFL, research (identity of investigators) -Lack of strengthening communication /education training, pedagogy education training, ICT
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Annex #8. Participant 1 – Personal narrative

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS
PRIMER CLAUSTRO UNIVERSITARIO DE COLOMBIA

WRITING MY NARRATIVE

You are almost to finish your career and some of you have recently finished. There are many situations that you faced before, during, and after being a student of Santo Tomas University (in case you finished the career), situations that made you stronger and more resilient and helped you to become the teacher or preservice teacher you are now. I would like to know those experiences, they can be positive or negative, but also, I would like you to describe those challenging moments and how you overcame those challenges. Write your narrative as if it were a story.

Guidelines

- Write your story in English or Spanish (The language you feel more comfortable with)
- Your narrative must be as descriptive as possible but also show a good level of reflection.
- Be sure that all the aspects below are fully covered, they must not be covered in order, but you must cover all of them.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND	
• What is your name? • Where do you live? • How old are you? • Where do you live? • Have you graduated from your EFL teaching career? • Where were you living at the moment of studying you the EFL program? • What was your occupation before starting the EFL program? • How long have you been studying for the EFL program?	PARTICIPANT 1 I AM 53 YEARS OLD. I WAS BORN IN PAIPA I LIVE IN PAIPA. I WILL HAVE IT THIS SEMESTRE. I WAS LIVING IN PAIPA AT THE MOMENT OF STUDYING. I HAVE EVER BEEN A BUSSINESS WOMAN AND TEACH ENGLISH IN PRIVATE ONLINE OR FACE TO FACE CLASSES. I STUDIED FOR THE PROGRAM FOR 10 YEARS.

MAKING THE DECISION OF STUDYING THE CAREER	
• Can you remember? what influenced you to become an English teacher? • Think about that moment in your life when you wanted to start your studies. Can you mention why you chose Santo Tomas University to carry out your studies? Was it	Since I was a child, living, studying, and sharing life with the community foyer de Charite from France, interacting with many foreigners, and hearing other languages, here in my hometown I fell in love with other languages.

the distance learning possibility? Was it the curriculum the career has? What other aspect, if different, motivated you?	I chose Santo Tomas University because of the higher education, also the schedule, and the location for me. Also, the level of the language is large and wide with good quality.
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PROFESSIONAL / TEACHING BACKGROUND

• Did you have any teaching experience before the pedagogical practicum carried out in the B.D program? • What did you use to think about teaching English before starting your career? Have you changed your opinion about teaching English nowadays after being a student of the B.D in EFL at the Universidad de Santo Tomas?	Indeed, since I learned a second language, I Have been informally teaching English, in private lessons. No, I haven't changed the way of teaching a language, for me it must be in the context, All the time trying to improve, taking advantage of the use of the TICs. Now thanks to the pedagogical process from the university our lessons are much more organized, putting in practice all the sources, much more enjoyable, and with more didactics environments.
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UNIVERSITY'S CONTRIBUTION

• What were the two main challenges you faced during your pedagogical practicum and how did you handle them? • How would you describe your pedagogical practicum? Do you remember a vivid positive or negative experience? • Describe three weaknesses you identified in your teaching during your pedagogical practicum. • Describe three strengths you developed after your pedagogical practicum.	• As I distantly did my practice, the fact that does not see the faces of the students was quite unsatisfactory. • Not being with students directly was sad because I couldn't share all the real material to work with. • I handle all the material from the different computer programs. • I do have great souvenirs from my practices, I had the best students. • My big weakness was the use of all TICs and the tools to present the different lesson plans, for me was a great learning topic. • Now my strengths are. • Well use of the different TICs in teaching a second language.
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	• The self-confidence on the lessons teaching. • Be practical in organizing the lesson plans and how to apply it.
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Annex #9. Participant 2 – Personal narrative

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS
PRIMER CLAUSTRO UNIVERSITARIO DE COLOMBIA

WRITING MY PERSONAL NARRATIVE

You are almost to finish your career and some of you have recently finished. There are many situations that you faced before, during, and after being a student of the Santo Tomas University (in case you finished the career), situations that made you stronger and more resilient and helped you to become a teacher or preservice teacher you are now. I would like to know those experiences, they can be positive or negative, but also, I would like you to describe those challenging moments and how you overcome those challenges. Write your personal narrative as if it was a story.

Guidelines

- Write your story in English or Spanish (The language you feel more comfortable with)
- Your personal narrative must be as descriptive as possible but also show a good level of reflection.
- Be sure that all the aspects below are fully covered, they must not be covered in order, but you must cover all of them.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND	
• What is your name? • Where do you live? • How old are you? • Where do you live? • Have you graduated from your EFL teaching career? • Where were you living at the moment of studying you the EFL program? • What was your occupation before starting the EFL program? • How long have you been studying for the EFL program?	My name is Participant 2; I am 26 years old. I live in San Francisco California. I am egressed of the EFL bachelor's degree in the Santo Tomas University, distance modality. I enrolled in a master's degree in Bilingual environments in the same University, virtual Modality. I am from Carmen de Carupa. Before starting the career, I had no any prior working experience, I was working in my dad's farm growing crops and cows. The bachelor's degree was my first professional career and I took me 7 years to finish it.

MAKING THE DECISION OF STUDYING THE CAREER	
• Can you remember what influenced you to become an English teacher?	Since I was a kid, I started to feel interested in teaching and sharing my knowledge with others. Over the years through my education process, I found out that being a teacher was my vocation and the way I can learn every day

Think about that moment in your life when you wanted to start your studies. Can you mention why you chose Santo Tomas University to carry out your studies? Was it the distance learning possibility? Was it the curriculum the career has? What other aspect, if different, motivated you?	from others and help people find different strategies to learn. Once I finished high school, I immediately started to find out what to study according to my resources and reality as a rural student. The first clue choosing the career was identifying my strengths and what would be the best way to get better opportunities in the future. Having clear mind about that I decided to look for a profession related with the use of English in the real context. The financial and geographic situation at that time were the most significant factors in choosing a career in the distance modality to continue working on the farm and don't affect my studies. The Santo Tomas University was the closest one to my hometown that offered English as a professional career which allowed me to have flexibility and access to the resources. Moving to the distance modality was a big challenge at the beginning because I didn't have enough self-motivation and autonomy to advance. Over the years I had to find different strategies to improve my target language and complete my career objectives. I consider that studying a career at distance modality has increased my confidence and autonomy to create and look for opportunities to grow personal and professional. In terms of motivation, I had in mind that at some point of my life I would be able to speak English fluent and I would be able to interact with different cultures, find more job opportunities and my greatest motivation was always my family and being an example for them of resilience and personal improvement.
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PROFESSIONAL / TEACHING BACKGROUND	
Did you have any teaching experiences prior to the pedagogical practicum carried out in the B.D program?	I didn't have experience teaching prior the pedagogical practice which represented a huge challenge for me. Something interesting about Pedagogical practice is that I was living abroad and the only option to do it was virtually, having as a result a wonderful experience

What did you use to think about teaching English before starting your career? Have you changed your opinion about teaching English nowadays after being a student of the B.D in EFL at the Universidad de Santo Tomas?	teaching using the different technological tools. Before I started my career, I use to respect my language teachers because I knew how hard was to have their language management, I was always focus on their ways to teach and interact with us in English. I knew also that being an English teacher is taught because most of the student relate their disinterest for the English language with the capacity of the teacher to share the knowledge and this is hard to say but a high quantity of students really hate the language teacher and most of the time the teachers just try their best to follow the curriculum and provide the student the resources to reach. At this point of my life, I still think the same, people continue with the idea that only the teacher is the one who can improve their language right away as a miracle, but they don't realize that if they don't focus and they don't work constantly on it this process can take time or easily they can get stock in the same level.
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UNIVERSITY'S CONTRIBUTION

- What were the two main challenges you faced during your pedagogical practicum and how did you handle them? - How would you describe your pedagogical practicum? Do you remember a vivid positive or negative experience?	The first challenge was creating the lesson plans since I didn't have enough experience, I had a hard time looking for the resources according to the student needs and identifying what kind of activities would give better results having students from different ages and grades. coordinating the times for each activity. At the time to teach it was hard for me to follow the document and manage the time as well. Over time I was getting better when planning and organizing the activities according to the teacher's feedback. As a holistic view of my teaching performance, it was a great opportunity to get to know many features of a real class where I can reflect the experiences, observe and compare myself with the pedagogical experiences that I have lived throughout my life with other teachers and their teaching strategies. Beyond the teaching-
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• Describe three weaknesses you identified in your teaching during your pedagogical practicum. • Describe three strengths you developed after your pedagogical practicum.	learning experience it was a good time to relate to the students how is living abroad and using the language as a tool to communicate every day, they were motivated by the idea that learn English is not only with the purpose of getting good grades at school and finally we closed the pedagogical practice with amazing conversations giving voice to the students to express their thoughts. One of the weaknesses I could identify was lack of technological knowledge in some of the tools I used in the lessons. Another one was the coordination and guidance for the development of the activities, I still must prepare more to give clear instructions for each activity, that way the students won't have trouble to figure out what to do. Finally, I noticed that I can be too much spontaneous and this fact affects my concentration in each activity because I started to distract showing the student something else not related with the activity or maybe talking about different topics with the students allowing them to break the ice but also losing the focus in the actual activity. As strengths I develop my organization before and during the lessons. Also, I recognized that I can be very creative and versatile to design activities using different resources and finally but not less important is that I can be very emphatic with the students trying all the time to listen and provide them motivation and developing critical thinking giving them examples of real-life situations.
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Annex #10. Participant 3 – Personal narrative

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS
PRIMER CLAUSTRO UNIVERSITARIO DE COLOMBIA

WRITING MY PERSONAL NARRATIVE

You are almost to finish your career and some of you have recently finished. There are many situations that you faced before, during, and after being a student of the Santo Tomas University (in case you finished the career), situations that made you stronger and more resilient and helped you to become a teacher or preservice teacher you are now. I would like to know those experiences, they can be positive or negative, but also, I would like you to describe those challenging moments and how you overcome those challenges. Write your personal narrative as if it was a story.

Guidelines

- Write your story in English or Spanish (The language you feel more comfortable with)
- Your personal narrative must be as descriptive as possible but also show a good level of reflection.
- Be sure that all the aspects below are fully covered, they must not be covered in order, but you must cover all of them.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND	
• What is your name? • Where do you live? • How old are you? • Where do you live? • Have you graduated from your EFL teaching career? • Where were you living at the moment of studying you the EFL program? • What was your occupation before starting the EFL program? • How long have you been studying for the EFL program?	My name is participant 3. I live in Bogotá, and I was born in Bogotá also. I live in an urban area. I am 30 years old, and I graduated for my B.D in the first semester of 2023. When I was studying, I was living in Bogotá. Before starting the career, I had studied English in an institute, and I was taking care of my children since I have a kid with an special condition. It took me 6 years to finish the career.

MAKING THE DECISION OF STUDYING THE CAREER	
• Can you remember what influenced you to become an English teacher?	I remember when I was a child I used to listen to music in English and I tried to repeat the songs to learn some words, I also remember that I used to seek at the dictionary the words I identified to

Think about that moment in your life when you wanted to start your studies. Can you mention why you chose Santo Tomas University to carry out your studies? Was it the distance learning possibility? Was it the curriculum the career has? What other aspect, if different, motivated you?	know the meaning in Spanish and then I looked at the phonetic alphabet to pronounce the words. Time later, I decided to study English to improve my skills for getting a job. Even though, I had already a career as flight attendant I couldn't get a job because I became a young mother. When I was studying there, I realized that I was good in English due to my performance in the institution and as recommendation from some teachers. I decided I wanted to continue in a career in which I could study meanwhile I continued with my role as mother. As my kid has a disability it was difficult to take him to his rehabilitation while I studied, so, I decided to start my studies at Santo Tomás University due to the distance education, which gave me the possibility to fulfill my professional and personal fields.
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PROFESSIONAL / TEACHING BACKGROUND

- Did you have any teaching experiences prior to the pedagogical practicum carried out in the B.D program? - What did you use to think about teaching English before starting your career? Have you changed your opinion about teaching English nowadays after being a student of the B.D in EFL at the Universidad de Santo Tomas?	I had short previous teaching experiences before my pedagogical practicum carried out in the B.D. program. One of them was in a private school teaching English during the pandemic to students from third grade, at the begin it was mediated by virtuality and then it was in alternance with some students in the classroom and the others from home through technological devices. The other experience I had was giving some virtual English lessons in an institute for adults. For me, those were meaningful but challenging experiences for me, working in a private school made me question about those institutions and the role of teachers, versus the quality of life, the time dedicated to the teaching practice and extra job versus the salary. Before starting my career, I thought teachers had more tools to teach to different kinds of population to attend inclusive classrooms, because due to my kid's special learning needs, I understood it was necessary to prepare teachers who understand the importance of it by creating awareness among teachers and their labor. I also could identify that during the pedagogical practicum there is not well evidenced how to follow a procedure when facing a situation with special education needs' students.
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UNIVERSITY'S CONTRIBUTION

	One of the biggest challenges for me was to handle my role as a mother, my job and the
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• What were the two main challenges you faced during your pedagogical practicum and how did you handle them? • How would you describe your pedagogical practicum? Do you remember a vivid positive or negative experience? • Describe three weaknesses you identified in your teaching during your pedagogical practicum. • Describe three strengths you developed after your pedagogical practicum.	university as the same time because I felt that time was never enough for me and for all the responsibilities I had. Besides, study autonomously because of the nature of the B.A. degree was hard when I didn't understand a topic and I had to go to internet, watch videos and read to get a clear idea and to try to understand. It was challenging too when I did my research project because I didn't know how to do research or how to contribute to my teaching experience throughout my investigation. I had the opportunity to develop my pedagogical practicum at Jordan De Sajonia School, it was an interesting experience. The school is located in Rosales neighborhood. At first, it was meaningful due to the context and the population of the students, the socioeconomic stratum, and the facilities they have regarding ICT tools and because the fluency of English level most of them have. It was shocking too because my few previous experiences had been in totally different contexts even in poor conditions and evident inequality. During the pedagogical practicum, I identified that as pre-service teachers we lack knowledge about students with different needs and it was one of the things that made me reflect all the time on how from the teaching role and from own experiences we could contribute to a better learning process of students to promote a real classroom inclusion. On the other hand, I had to do class preparation before the implementation of the classes but in some cases due to the schedule of the school in some cases it was not possible to implement the complete lesson plan or I had to improvise taking account the activities that appeared suddenly. Finally, the schedule crossing was also a difficult for me because I was working as the same time and I had to reschedule the days I went to the school, also, the distances between my job and the school. I learned some strategies from other teachers to improve my teaching experience, I had the opportunity to observe other teachers experiences and learn from to improve my own practices them catch students' attention, I also identified that depending on the context I was able to reinvent or to adapt some activities depending on students' needs .
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Annex #11. Focus group transcription**Participant 1 (P1):****Participant 2 (P2):****Participant 3 (P3):****Researcher R:** Paula Toledo

R: [0:05]. (Stuff) Hold on just one second please. I'm gonna share my screen. Give me Just onemoment.

P1: [0:16]. It's OK.

Researcher: [0:18]. Thank you. OK. This one. OK, so let's start with this focus group group the the first of all before I start with this focus group, I would like to know if you agree with me. [Eh] recording this meeting. If you agree, I record this meeting and the conversation we are gonna have. Do you agree with that?

P1: [0:56]. Totally agree.

P2: [0:57]. Agree.

P3: [0:59]. Agree.

R: [1:02]. OK. Thanks, [inaudible]. OK, let's just start. The main objective of this focus group is the following. The following focus group pretends to explore the experiences that the three undergraduate students had when cursing the bachelor's degree in English language teaching at Santo Tomas University, long Distance Learning program. It's seeks to find out information related to the challenges they face it, their perceptions regarding how they build up their identity as EFL teachers, while cursing the career. So that's the main objective of this activity and, and to

start I'm gonna start with the first question here. And the first question or the first like thing is tell us the best experience that you have had while studying for the bachelor's degree in EFL at the Santo Tomas University. So, the idea is that you think in the best experience, the best experience that you had when you were studying in the in the university, the bachelor's degree. So ,I'm gonna stop sharing in. You can start and let's go Participant 1.

P1: [2:17]. Thank you so much for the invitation and for (...) [uhh] Be a part of your project. [ehh] one of one of the best experience that I had with the university was the (..) my teachers were the best. Always there, kind. Attend with all [ohh] the information that I needed when I was in a [uhh] in a neat when I had any questions or any problem, they always were there. Of course, we needed to write them to search for them, but for me I had the best teachers from them, OK.from the university and also some of my partners. Or my [uh] students and partners were also wonderful. The schedule, the schedule was very good, Or maybe because I choose it or I was arranged so I I had a good deal with that.

R: [3:29] OK. OK, perfect. Thanks a lot. And now, what about you, yourself, Participant 2 , would you like me to repeat the question? or ..?

P2: [3:39]. No, No Ohh fine, I can see the questions. Thank you, Paula for the invitation and according to what Participant 1 said and I think, yeah, the one of the best experience was the support that the teacher gave us. Some of the teachers, some of the teachers [emphasis] gave us [ehh] in somesituations where I was feeling really frustrated. They were there to support me in and [ehh] they didn't let me. How do you say like no? [Inaudible]

P1: [4:14] Clarify ideas?

P2: [4:15]. I [Inaudible] they, they behind and I I really appreciate that and some and thereresources that the university bring us there were really helpful for me.

R: [4:31]. OK, perfect. Before I continue, you said that there were resources that the Universitythe University gave you, Do You remember? Maybe some of those resources and just Alonso.

P2: [4:43]. Ohh yeah, for example the ,the workbooks were helpful. The platform at some point it was helpful because I think it needs a little bit of [uh] improvement, but I think it's helpful because you can practice at home in, in, in some of the books they have like the answers at the atthe end. So I was able to, to see to correct my own mistakes and the that was great.

P1: [5:12] [uh], the, it's true.

P2: [5:16]. Yes.

R: [5:17]Ok Thank you both for your insights and what about you participant 3?

P3: [5:23]. OK [ehh] well I have some meaningful experiences and but I think that [ehh] going with the idea of my classmates, my partners, I can say that it was really important. The support of teachers and As for me, being part of the research mentorship program, because I had the opportunity to and like to represent that that program and I could notice the support from the teacher and but from that side, yes and it was really meaningful to be part of that of that program.

R: [6:10]. OK. Thank you so much for your answers. And now let's move on. Let's continue withthe next question. The next question is the following. I will share it with you for you to better know, and this one. OK, ohh sorry. OK. Can you see my screen?

P2: [6:41]. Ohh.

P3: [6:41].Not yet.

R: [6:43] Yep, when they're. OK. The next question is, what challenges have you faced, faced

while studying EFL at distance. What?, I'm gonna repeat it again. What challenges have you faced while studying EFL at distance? The English foreign language at distance.

R: So let's start with Participant 1.

P1: [7:18] [hmm] [...] [uff], I don't know what to say, really. Like the timetable, like the time.

Because uh, as a mother, as a housewife and a business. [Uh] runners always was a struggle with the time table.

R: [7:43]

OK. Like the timetable, OK. And what about yourself Participant 2?

P2: [7:51]. Ohh, I think if it's in many challenges I don't know which one mention in this moment. But I think [uhh] one of the things that at the beginning was the transition from like press [eh] present classes to distance classes. It was really hard and tough for me. I don't know, but, but it was a I don't know. I didn't have enough self control or self motivation to to start studying in a this modality and you was it was really hard for there like the first semesters that was That's why I decided to move from the CAU Chiquinquira to CAU Bogotá to have a more [eh] support from the national teachers.

R: [8:42] OK. OK. And what about thank you Thank you so much, Participant 2. And what about participant 3?

P3: [8:52] OK, I agree with Participant 2 because how it with the time was too difficult because I also have some other roles like Being Mother and like working and, and those other things were really difficult and and yes, we had to handle with the time and it's in some cases we had to do things as until the end you know like all the tasks probably it was difficult because in like considering some cases you need more time to study well like the I don't know the readings or some other tasks that teachers let us.

R: [8:53]. OK, OK, Thank you so much. Now I'm gonna move with the next question. The next question is. Hold on just one moment. And.

P1: [10:11] You are not sharing your screen. We don't see it.

R: [10:15] You don't see it. OK, OK.

P1: [10:17]. Not yet.

R: [10:19] Ohh OK.

P1: [10:31] Thank you. Ohh it's gone.

R: [10:37] Can you see it now?

P1: [10:38] Not yet.

R: [10:40] No. OK, I'm gonna stop sharing. Maybe for my Internet and I'm gonna read it to you.

P1:

[10:48]

ok

R: [10:49]. OK, uh, how did you handle those difficult or frustrating experiences when coursing the career? Maybe did you have a friend, family member or teacher that support you to overcomethose situations and you can start Participant 1?

P1: [11:13]. Well, uh, I said before that I had many, many difficulties. No Only for the challenges, but also health, money, time, but for my mind, it was always that I wanted to be a teacher. I want to have the, the, the, the diploma, to show, to prove my dream is to have my own school very soon. So that was the motivation inside of me on my mind that I would have it. I cando it. Nothing is [uh] as impossible or difficult, of course. Takes time. This. Umm, so it's a bit of worry everything but in my mind there was a wheel power that I could do it. I could make it evenif it was a midnight and [uh] tired with the with the [umm] sueño

with the with the ¿Cómo se dice?, se me olvidó.

P2: [12:18]. [inaudible]

R: [12:19] A little sleepy. [Ah], Participant 2, thank you. You know more.

P1: [12:23] Yeah. when I wanted to sleep, but in my mind I'm crazy. I cannot do it. I'm gonna give up. That was half of my mind. And the other half that was you can do it. Is almost finished. Let's go. Let's start, finish. And it was like the motivation to be a teacher. So, I never give up and I see it as you know, for my age, it was a little bit more difficult, but once you have the idea that you want to be a teacher and you, you work hard for your dream and that's it. Just to have a wheel power to make it to do it.

R: [13:06]. OK. Thank you so much. And what about you Participant 2?

P2: [13:12] Ohm. OK. At that point I didn't have enough like friends or or person or around me to practice English to be honest, I was in living in the countryside and with the cows I couldn't practice, but it was. It was a it was pretty tough. I didn't. I was. I enrolled in a course in the and the street that university to practice and that way I could improve a little bit my English conversation at that point. And, and yeah, I always I was always trying to make A and big effort to make my mother proud of me and also myself.

R: [13:58] Thank you. Thank you. That's nice. And what about Participant 3?

P3: [14:03] I'm so sorry, Paula. Can you repeat the question again please?

R: [14:06] Absolutely no problem. The question is, how did you handle those difficult or frustrating experiences? Maybe did you have a friend, family member or teacher that support you to overcome those situations?

P3: [14:25] Probably crying a lot. Alone. No. Yes, of course. Your family support is very

important because this is like the motivation and in some cases they don't have to tell you, you are doing well, but they are your motivation. Or for me, my kids and so yeah.

R: [14:53] OK. Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. Thank you so much for sharing those like thoughts about your life. I appreciate and thank you so much. OK, I'm gonna continue with the next one is how do you think that the Universidad de Santo Tomas, Santo Tomas University helped you to overcome the challenges of distance education, so we are gonna be like focused in distance education.

OK, And go ahead Participant 1.

P1: [15:28] For me, I am very grateful with the university because it took a long time to finish my 2 degrees [uh] As I said before, I have many difficulties with them, money and time,. So the university gave me the opportunity to pay each semester like 2 le 2 subjects, So they, they were really kind with me, really helpful, always telling me "Don't give up", "You, you can do it", "let's pay only 2 subjects", "never stop". So, I am very grateful and I say that was one of the best opportunities that the university gave me to finish my, my two careers.

R: [16:20] OK. Yeah. OK. Would you like to share something else?

P1: [16:25] No, that's it. Thank you.

R: [16:26] Wonderful. Thank you, Participant 1. I appreciate. OK, go ahead Participant 2. Would you (...) do you prefer I call you Participant 2? OK, I can't. I can't hear you. The silence, So you have your microphone turned off.

P2: [16:49] [ohh] I'm sorry. Can you please repeat questions?

R: [16:54]. Of course, no problem, It's OK. The question is, how do you think that the Santo Tomas University help you to overcome the challenges of distance education?

P2: [17:09]. Well, I don't know what to say now, but how did the incidence program OK. You know when this when this program you have a lot of the flexibility, you have I [yeah], I was able to move to different from two different cities from the town to the city and explore different other resources. That's, that's interesting. And I was able to go to different environments, not only for example, when you study in person, you only know that one environment and you finish your career in that classroom or, or something. But in the distance education is is different because you can go and explore in different indifferent environments As I said in in, it's really. Yeah. It's really.

P1: [17:56] Yeah. A great advantage.

P2: [18:02]. Yeah, it's really how you say.

P1: [18:04]. Advantage.

P2: [18:05]. Right, it's. Yeah, it's that's the advantage of being in this program.

R: [18:13]. OK. OK. Thank you so much. And what about you Participant 3?

P3: [18:18]. OK. Well, I feel like the support of the university that came from some teachers and in some way some of them [uh] helped me to improve and some of them [uh] they were like a torture for me, it was too difficult and above all [eh] when I did my research project, he was like a nightmare. [Uh], but also there were no, there were other features that were very comprehensive with some situations that appeared [eh] along the career and I'm very thankful with those teachers that also were very [umm] umm yes. They gave me like the opportunity to present again probably another task, have some something like that. So, it was like the way in which the university helped me.

R: [19:23]. OK. Thank you. Thank you so much. OK, I'm gonna continue with the next question. And hold on. OK, now. [Uh], just one.

P1: [19:37]. How many questions still left?

R: [19:40]. [Uh] Uh, let me tell you. Six more questions.

R: Thank you so much for your answer. And what about you, Angie?

P3: [37:32]. Well, I consider that even though is not easy, that an university as Santo Tomas change their mind. I consider that is not a... Well, it's appropriate, but it's not enough, [clear throat] that because I agree with Irene. In some point, because it should be more focused on real context and also due to the character of the university, the humanistic character, yes, and it would be necessary to recognize also other issues that are happening in our society nowadays, and probably the curriculum is very focused on some things of the past. I know that it's difficult due to the nature of the degree due to the distance, but it's not impossible and Santo Tomas university could be a pioneer recognizing some other important aspects in inside the curriculum and for be more specific, considering a some other kind of contexts, students or population. Also, and recognizing the population of Preservice teachers and the needs that we have and when we are studying that that degree, that's my point.

R: [39:22]. OK. Do you want to add something else maybe?

P3: [39:27]. Me.

R: [39:28]. You, or maybe Participant 2 or Participant 1.

P3: [39:32]. No, no.

P2: [39:32]. Yes. Ohh then maybe you will be nice for example, I was waiting for my

practice. If I got you got practice the whole time because now when, like when I I didn't have a good practice as a teacher. I mean, I didn't have a job as a teacher, so I was like, I don't know if I'm gonna be a teacher because I don't know how to be a teacher and only the practice, the practical practice I can. But only two semesters. I think it's not enough. Well, for me, for example, because I didn't have a practice as a teacher, but maybe other as you Paula you have like you were working on that teachers in the schools but not for me.

R: [40:01]. OK. OK. Participant 1 would you like to say something else?

No.

P1: [40:23]. OK, fine and good.

R: [40:23]. OK. OK. OK. The next question is, Umm, hold on. Not this one. They had in the EFL program, which are the main strengths and weaknesses. Of the EFL at distance program and how do you think the university can strengthen those weaknesses?

P1: [40:55]. [Umm] Behalf is [Uh] to have more room in the strange, the more opportunities for the students to have a real practice. [Uh] maybe with native people or something like that, the difficulties, That's the only thing that I maybe I could see it now.

R: [41:32]. OK. And what do you think, Participant 2?

P2: [41:37]. Well, for example, I was always afraid of me for example, when I was not in the CAU Bogotá, I was I was always looking for a feedback from my teachers. But because the teachers, the teachers in the checking that they didn't have any voice to say anything, and I was like, what should I do? And I just started to move because they didn't have and yeah, they didn't have any power there. And I was like, why you are here? Why are you getting paid? If you can have, you can not have any decisions. You cannot evaluate me. Give me feedback, only for me, only for the platform is not. That's what that was my, always like I

was. [Umm] how do you say? [Umm] knows I was angry, but we are doing the angry because it is not. Is not the. It's not fair with the other. Students are students that are in different CAU. It's not fair.

R: [42:46]. OK, OK. I understand that in what about you, Participant 3? What do you think?

P3: [42:54]. OK, well. Umm. I think that, well, do you think? Those experiences and weaknesses are mine, yes.

R: [43:11]. Sorry repeat it.

P3: [43:11]. Well, the strengths and weaknesses are mine, yes.

R: [43:13]. Like. Yeah.

P3: [43:19]. OK. Umm, some strengths were that I, I had the opportunity to observe some teachers. Uh about world when I did my practices, my pedagogical practices, I have the opportunity to learn a lot and I agree with Irene because she said that she didn't have the opportunity to do the practical, pedagogical practicum, So I did have, and I can say it was really meaningful and I knew and some different types of population and was pretty interesting to work with other type of population, I hadn't work in. I had never worked with that population so and having the opportunity to see the job of other teachers, how they work, the strategies they have is very, is very meaningful for me and probably some weaknesses or a weakness is the lack of time. It was always hearing with the time. For example, I heard that teachers in some cases it had a or give you very few time for a given like a task or something like that, and in some cases you didn't have the opportunity to read well or to do the job very. I don't know if it was difficult the time and it was a weakness for me and. I don't know it. Probably the university can strengthen that witness and I don't know, trying to create some other strategies because it it becomes a very repetitive and [Umm] yes it's very repetitive and

and probably some in some cases boring to do tasks like because you have to do, not something that you probably you can choose a topic, probably you can, I don't know, you can say the teacher, yes, I would like to do this or this, no, not something mandatory that you have to do, I mean, it's because of the time because of a grade, probably that could be a way in which the university could strength that kind of [inaudible].

P2: [46:03]. Yes. Yeah.

R: [46:08]. OK, I have just two more questions and one of those is if you had to add a subject which would be, which would be, that subject and why if you had to add if subject to the curriculum and like to it to the, to the curriculum of the university, let's start with Participant 1.

P1: [46:39]. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm umm, I would like to have another subject like a more practice. As I said before, like a being more involved in a real situation as a teacher, like also beguiled on [Umm] supporting by a teacher? [Uhh] to show us how to deal with a real lesson in a real life.

R: [47:23]. OK. OK. What about you? Participant 2. Thank you. Participant 1. What about you Participant 2?

P2: [47:31]. Can you hear me?

R: [47:33]. Yes, we can hear you.

P2: [47:37]. OK, maybe I have to leave to pick up the kids, And so I I I change for example maybe no a new subject, but for example English can be good if they implement for example English conversation or English blah blah, but something related to practice, Yeah, let's say, for example, this semester, English conversation only focus on that, like here for example, here we have three classes in San Francisco and is focused in different aspects like can be

grammar or can be only conversation only speaking only listening, something like that. But.

Yeah, yeah, that would be great.

P1: [48:19]. In a real context

P2: [48:22]. Yes.

R: [48:24]. OK. Thank you. And what about you Participant 3? [inaudible]

P1: [48:28]. Interesting.

R: [48:29]. What do you think?

P3: [48:29]. OK, I could add probably subjects. No, I think that I could add one subject, not only for our bachelor's degree, but also for all the degrees in the university, in all the careers, all the bachelor's degrees, and it could be special education needs. It could have a theoretical part, but also a practical part in which we can, if we can notice our context, our country, we can see many special education needs in general, but that all students, when we finish and our career, we notice and we realize that there are more education needs of what we think that there exist.

R: [49:30]. Thank you.

P1: [49:30]. I would like to. I would like to add that now how in my children's uh, with a degree already and they want to work and they are applying for these jobs and they say they ask them, you must have at least two years of experience but they ask me, we only have like 1 semester or two semester maximum or experience something that the university will [Umm] show or proof that the student are prepared to start working that they have already like one or two years experience that will be valid as a professional.

R: [50:19]. OK. OK.

P2: [50:20]. OK.

R: [50:20]. Thank you. This is OK. I'm gonna ask you the last question. This is the last question and it is. Do you have any innovative ideas that can help to improve the EFL program of Santo Tomas University?

P1: [50:48]. In my case. [Umm] , I've been working as I said before as some like independent or not formal teacher [Uh] it's been teacher here in my own house in my own business. So it's like no formal. [Umm] I'm teaching the language in a real context, So what I mean what I would like to mean by that is the when I have the kids here in my shop. [Umm] for them is more easy to learn. There's something with the language because they are immerse with the subject or what I'm teaching about so you could not only be a teacher or in a formal school or something like that, you can also be a teacher like in another context, like in my case, I had a good experience and also my students are at a good level of English that can be also another way of teaching the language.

R: [52:05]. OK. Thank you. Thank you so much for your ideas. What about you Participant 2? We can't hear you.

P2: [52:21]. OK, OK, so idea for everything? [Umm], maybe. Wait, what ideas can I give to the program?

R: [52:33]. Yes. And if you have any no problem, you didn't know that everything.

P2: [52:34]. Well, there was the question I don't remember.

R: [52:39]. Do you have any innovative ideas that can help to improve the EFL program of Santo Tomas University?

P2: [52:51]. Well, you know what? You. I'm not very creative. Well, any ideas about? Well, is definitely more practice, more practice, because as you see, for example, the students that have more opportunity, for example, to speak every day. I'm doing right now. I can see the

progress, I can see the progress every day practicing every day, but in Colombia I was not. I was practicing maybe one or two days? Maybe. But you it's not enough. You really take a long time and your English is not really good when you don't practice. So, even if you want or you have that as you go, but you don't practice every day, it's three to five, Yeah, that would be like I know, I don't know how you could help the program, but that's my idea.

R: [53:43]. OK. Thanks. It's OK. No problem, it's OK.

P2: [53:55]. Yes.

R: [53:55]. OK. And Participant 3 and what do you what what is your innovative idea, maybe to improve the program?

P3: [54:02]. Well, yeah, I think that I know it's it's difficult to make people be near because of the nature of our degree, bachelor degree and many people are in very in upper places of Colombia or even outside Colombia, but it can be created some spaces in which students can be heard and also can interact with teachers. For example, I don't know. a cafe or sharing some ideas? Or bring brainstorming some ideas, probably making that those distances being short. I know that it is difficult, I repeat again because of the distance, but probably we didn't have that opportunity. For example, I am from CAU Bogota and I know some partners from CAU Bogotá and we never had any opportunity to interact [Eh] like outside the class or the task. Although all the all the opportunities we have where because we had to do what you're a task or something like that but not something free, something for leisure, no, and that could be a good idea to create some spaces in that also are helpful for the university because those are and in those people can share their own ideas and improve of the university.

R: [55:47]. OK. Thank you. Thank you so much. OK. And to finish, I just want to thank you.

You 3 girls, because I really appreciate your time and maybe you were doing something different and you took some minutes of your life to to answer those questions and participate in this focus group and before. Would you like to add something else maybe? Before we leave.

P1: [56:17]. No, it's OK. Thank you. That was, a great pleasure. Thank you so much.

R: [56:22]. OK. Yeah.

P2: [56:23]. No, I just wanna thank you. Thank you, Paula for develop some some something like you help the that university because they really the university really needs some improvement and I think with with this kind of a projects you can really support the university.

P3: [56:46]. Yes, Paula. Thank you for taking in. Taking us into account and for your project, I hope you can finish with a success and OK, it's OK. Thank you.

R: [57:02]. Like, I'm not sure I'm. I'm gonna stop recording. Hold on. Thank you.

Annex # 12. Survey answers.**Question 1: Participants**

Participant 1

Participant 2

Participant 3

Question 2: Do you feel satisfied with your academic process while pursuing the EFL program? Please justify your answer.

Participant 1

Yes I am, because my tutors were engaged with my learning process and always had a good feedback and also a great support. of course, for all the gained knowledge achieved through all processes.

Participant 2

After I finished the program I started to rebuild all my experience through the career and I found out at some points I feel like I didn't really have enough experience to make deeper reflections and decisions about the practice in classroom. I got good resources and knowledge that I can apply in my professional development most of it in the online field.

Participant 3

I consider that, taking into account all my responsibilities I had a good performance as student of the EFL program, even in some cases I considered I could have done better, hurrying with the time and the daily activities as the same time I overcame my academic expectations the best way I could.

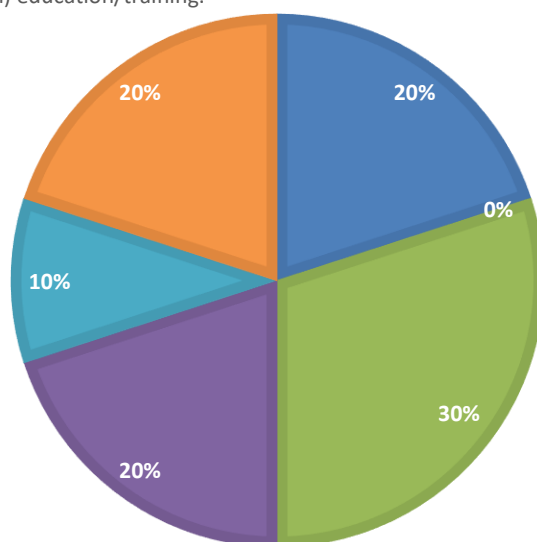
Question 3: Do you feel satisfied with the support provided by the university during your learning process? Justify your answer.

Participant 1	Sure, the university were always immersed into my academic process bringing to me an excellent support. I am so pleased with all the feedback, and support. tutorials, materials, that I had from my teachers.
Participant 2	First of all, I started my career in the CAU Chiquinquirá which is a nice location and accessible to the province population. After the first semesters I started to feel how the regional CAU didn't have much support for the student. Reason why I decided to move to the Central CAU in Bogotá Where the National Teacher are located. Afterwards I had better grades and the teacher knew in deep my context and needs as a rural person.
Participant 3	I feel satisfied because accompanied by the University support, I made the most of my own process of learning. I understand that even though the university would want to give us everything in order to improve our learning process, it depends a lot of ourselves as students and it depends on our commitment to learn. However, I consider, it's pretty important that the EFL program be in continuous research to understand better emergent students' needs.

Question 4: Select the three main areas of formation that you think the university strengthened.

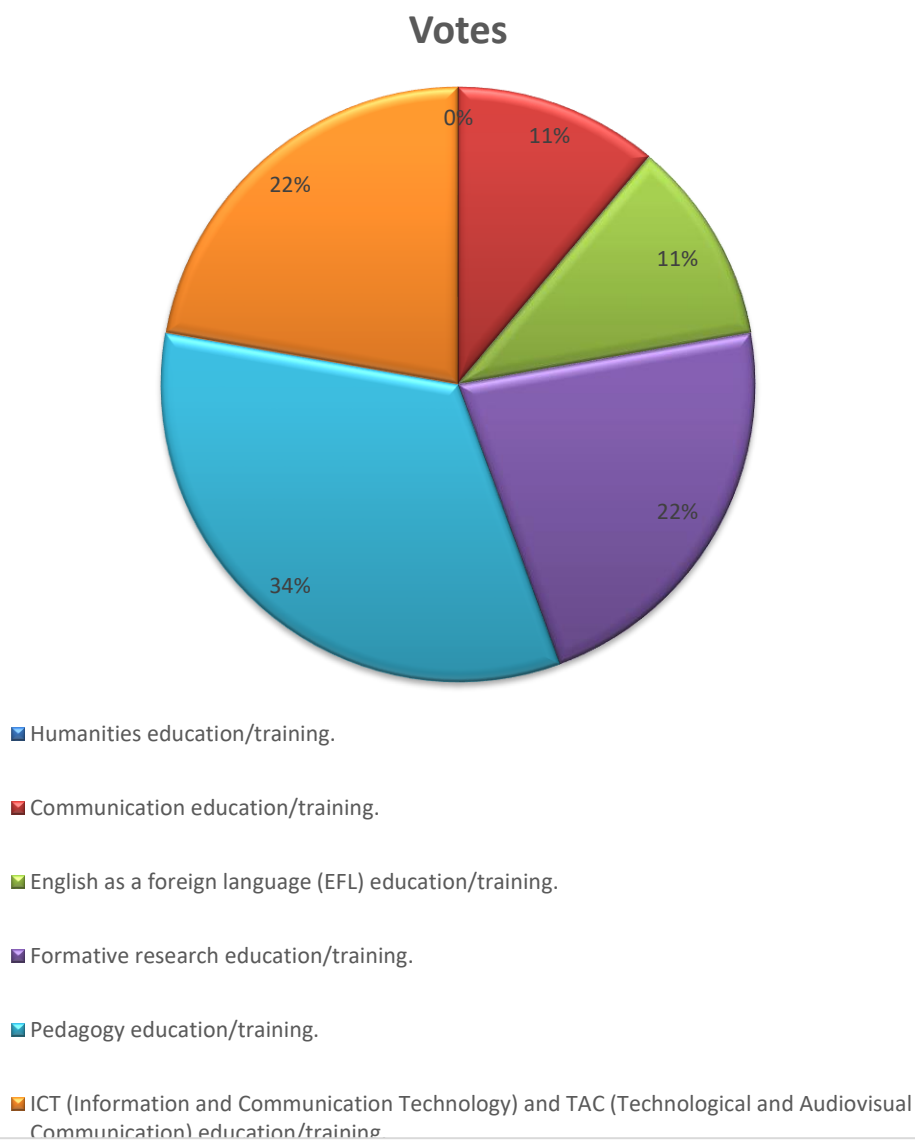
VOTES

- Humanities education/training.
- Communication education/training.
- English as a foreign language (EFL) education/training.
- Formative research education/training.
- Pedagogy education/training.
- ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and TAC (Technological and Audiovisual Communication) education/training.



Question 5: Can you explain why?	
Participant 1	It really helps to improve. Nowadays students must have lots of practice and experience in all those areas because once the bachelor wants to find a job they must show at least 2, or 4 years of experience.
Participant 2	Since my whole process was mostly online, I got better in the ICT management and also I was part of the research group that helped me a lot to comprehend the Bilingual languages and how to use the knowledge to create new ideas.
Participant 3	I consider that due to the nature of the bachelor degree, the main purpose from the beginning was to reinforce research and creating among students an identity of investigators, also taking into consideration the humanistic field, also characteristic of the University it was evident the training and knowledge in that. Finally, the most relevant for me was the study of English as a foreign language because from the beginning until the end of the major the University focuses on improving students English language skills, even, the research project and the majority of the subjects were in English which help students to be into the English language skills.

Question 6: Select the three main areas of formation that you think the university did not strengthen or did not strengthen enough.



Question 7: Can you explain why?	
Participant 1	I believe it's not time enough. To be well prepared and ready to start working the new professional must show at least their 2 or 3 years of experience.
Participant 2	I felt like I had not enough pedagogical experience and also I was not able to put in practice my pedagogical knowledge while I was learning the theoretical concepts. When I got to the practice a few years later I had forgotten most of the theory that I have learned at the beginning when the subject where in Spanish and I was more able to understand deeply.
Participant 3	I consider that even though I cannot say that the University does not have subjects which requires the consideration of those areas of knowledge, those should be wide for future pre-service teachers due to the challenges of new generations and the increasing of technology, moreover, there is always important to reinforce the necessity of understand students learning styles or special necessities, in order that pre-service teacher in most of the cases don't know how to handle different context from students.