


# Autobiographical analysis of the autonomy development in English learning and teaching /

## *Análise autobiográfica do desenvolvimento da autonomia na aprendizagem e no ensino de língua inglesa*

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### ABSTRACT

This study presents the autobiographical analysis of a multimodal narrative about the English learning journey of an English teacher, aiming to identify elements that demonstrate the autonomy development through the learner-to-teacher process. The corpus of the analysis consists of a multimodal narrative, from which selected excerpts were chosen to deepen the discussion on autonomy. The narrative is analyzed based on Oxford's model (2003), developed to systematize the analysis of autonomy in language learning. Among the perspectives described in the model, this study adopts the political-critical perspective for the analysis, mobilizing elements related to context, agency, motivation and learning strategies. These elements allowed us to identify the limitations and potentialities in the development of autonomy in ESL learning, such as the impact of public policies and technological advances and the Internet on this process. In addition, the study highlights the transformative potential of autobiographical analysis as a tool in training for reflective teaching practice.

**KEYWORDS:** Autonomy; Language learning; Autobiographical research; Narrative research; Multimodal narrative.

### RESUMO

Este estudo apresenta a análise autobiográfica de uma narrativa multimodal sobre o percurso de aprendizagem de língua inglesa (LI) de uma professora de inglês, buscando identificar elementos que evidenciem o desenvolvimento da autonomia da aprendiz que se torna professora. O corpus da análise é composto por uma narrativa multimodal, com a seleção de trechos que permitem aprofundar a discussão sobre a autonomia. A narrativa é analisada com base no modelo de Oxford

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(2003), desenvolvido para sistematizar a análise de autonomia na aprendizagem de línguas. Dentre as perspectivas descritas no modelo, este estudo adota a perspectiva político-crítica para a análise, mobilizando elementos relacionados ao contexto, agência, motivação e estratégias de aprendizagem. Esses elementos permitiram identificar as limitações e potencialidades no desenvolvimento da autonomia na aprendizagem de LI, tais como o impacto de políticas públicas e do avanço tecnológico e da internet nesse processo. Além disso, o estudo evidencia o potencial transformador da análise autobiográfica como ferramenta na formação para a prática docente reflexiva.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Autonomia; Aprendizagem de línguas; Pesquisa autobiográfica; Pesquisa narrativa; Narrativa multimodal.

## 1 Introduction

The concept of autonomy and its relationship with learning have been the object of extensive research and debate in recent decades, as has its meaning in the field of language acquisition. Moving away from definitions primarily associated with self-instruction, which do not fully capture the complexity of the topic (Little, 1991), Holec's (1981, p. 3) concept of autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" remains relevant. Building on this definition, Benson (2007) highlights Little's (1991) work as an important development in the field, emphasizing the learner's psychology. These definitions, though comprehensive, also point to other factors that affect the learning process (Paiva, 2006; Benson, 2007), and the concept has been contested by authors who argue for a more critical perspective, one that accounts for variables such as gradations as well as cultural and contextual variability.

Another aspect of the discussion concerns the relationship between autonomy and learning inside and outside the classroom, which has led to the understanding that it is also applicable to teachers' practices aimed at fostering autonomy (Benson, 2007; Little, 2022). Nicolaidis, Braga, and Vargas (2021) extend the discussion of autonomy beyond the school setting to digital literacy, arguing that access to digital environments broadens learners' opportunities for practice.

Drawing on a theoretical framework considered ideologically conflicted, inconsistent, and fragmented, Oxford (2003) proposes a systematic model for analyzing autonomy in language learning, with the aim of refining these concepts in the field. The model presents four perspectives on autonomy, technical, psychological, sociocultural, and political-critical, and classifies them according to four themes: context, agency, motivation, and learning strategies.

The political-critical perspective, which serves as the foundation for this study (Table 1), considers autonomy to involve access to cultural alternatives and power structures, as well as the capacity to develop and articulate one's own views in the face of competing ideologies. Within this framework, context is defined as an arena where different ideological positions convert, emerging from interactions, relationships, and specific settings, including communities of practice, defined by Lave and Wenger (1991) as groups of people who share a common interest that develops into collective learning through regular engagement and interaction, developing a shared repertoire and sense of identity. Agency refers to the possibility of acting, understood as the power to control one's own process and to make choices free from oppressive forces, thereby becoming the "author of one's own world" (Pennycook, 1997, p. 45). Motivation is conceived as the freedom to express oneself, to articulate one's own voice and ideological stance, to gain access to cultural alternatives, and to seek redress for inequalities. From this political-critical perspective, Oxford (2003) argues that learning strategies are of limited relevance, except as supportive tools for enabling access to power structures and cultural alternatives for learners.

**Table 1: The Political-Critical Perspective of Autonomy.**

Definition	Theme			
	Context	Agency	Motivation	Learning Strategies
Autonomy involves gaining access to cultural alternatives and power structures; developing and articulating voice amid competing ideologies.	Context is an arrangement of ideological positions, instantiated in a specific interaction, relationship, or setting.	Agency is power to control one's situation, be fully heard, be free from oppression, and have choices.	Motivation is associated with becoming free to have one's own voice, ideological position, choice of cultural alternatives. The individual is also motivated to seek redress from social inequalities of race, gender, class, etc.	Learning strategies are hardly discussed in the political-critical perspective, except to say that they do not belong there (see Pennycook, 1997). However, learning strategies can help open access within power structures and cultural alternatives for learners.

**Source:** adapted from Oxford (2003) by the author.

This study adopts the political-critical perspective as the basis for an autobiographical analysis of my own process of learning English as a Second Language (ESL), investigating elements in this trajectory that reveal the development of autonomy in learning. According to Moita (1995), autobiographical research shows how identity is shaped not only by intraprofessional contexts but also by the interactions established between the professional sphere and other sociocultural worlds. Identity thus emerges from the dialogue between context and individual, mobilized by knowledge, values, and energy, allowing a perspective on the subject situated within a plurality of worlds. Through the narrative, it becomes possible to grasp “[...] theories and practices of education, teaching, personal and institutional relationships, and identity construction, of being an educator, related to different sociopolitical, economic, and cultural moments and contexts” (Abrahão, 2003, p. 81). This work, therefore, is built on the intersection between lived experiences and theoretical discussions developed about and from these learning experiences, tracing a journey that evolves from learning to teaching, culminating in the trajectory of a student who becomes a teacher.

## 2 Methodology

The ESL learning narrative analyzed in this study was produced by me while taking a course on digital technologies and autonomy in language learning, offered as part of the Graduate Program in Linguistic Studies to which I am currently enrolled. As part of the requirements for completing the course, the professor assigned the creation of a narrative describing additional language learning experiences, followed by an analysis of these narratives, which could be conducted either by peers or by the author of the narrative.

The writing process resulted in a first-person text, complemented by visual elements and presented in PDF format. In addition, hyperlinks were embedded throughout the document that directed readers to videos available on YouTube. In these videos, the narrator expands on the information presented in the written text, either by providing additional details or by clarifying passages from the narrative. It is important to note that the video links, although referenced in the original document, are not accessible within the body of this article. They were used exclusively for methodological purposes,

serving as part of the record and organization of the data under analysis. This study draws on a selection from a broader corpus, focusing on excerpts that allow for a deeper discussion of autonomy.

The excerpts cited throughout this article were selected from both the written text and from the transcription of the speech presented in the videos, so as to preserve the integrity of the narrative and ensure consistency in the analysis. For greater clarity, the excerpts taken from the PDF document, written utterances, were identified with the letter E (Excerpts E1, E2, etc.), while the excerpts transcribed from the videos, oral utterances from the narrator's speech, were identified with the letter F (Excerpts F1, F2, etc.). The selection of excerpts was guided by criteria of thematic representativeness and relevance to the categories of analysis defined in Oxford's (2003) political-critical model. Preference was given to excerpts that clearly illustrate learning events and the narrator's reflections, thereby ensuring that the discussion is supported by evidence directly aligned with the research objective.

Thus, the object of analysis in this study is a multimodal narrative, written in the first person, recounting the journey of ESL learning from childhood up to the time of its composition, produced as part of the requirements for completing a graduate course in Linguistic Studies.

Although it is my own narrative, the analysis and discussion are conducted in the third person. Cunha (1997, n.p.) argues that "[...] by distancing oneself from the moment of its production, it is possible, when 'listening' to oneself or 'reading' one's own writing, for the producer of the narrative to even begin theorizing their own experience." The author emphasizes that it is necessary:

for the individual to be willing to critically analyze themselves, to separate the biased and affective perspectives present throughout their journey, to question beliefs and prejudices, and, ultimately, to deconstruct their historical process in order to better understand it. (Cunha, 1997, n.p.)

Accordingly, in an effort to establish the necessary distance for critical analysis, this study distinguishes between two subjects: the narrator, who recounts her past experiences, and the author of this article, who analyzes the narrative in the present.

Drawing on the themes proposed in Oxford's (2003) model (context, agency, motivation, and learning strategies) as analytical categories, the written texts and transcriptions of the narrative were

examined to identify excerpts that enable discussion of issues related to autonomy in ESL learning. These are presented below, informed by the relevant literature.

### 3 Discussion

Building on the political-critical perspective presented in Oxford's (2003) model, whose concepts and themes were outlined in the introduction, this section turns to the narrative, originally organized by the narrator into five chapters: *Primeiros Contatos* (First Contacts), *Educação Básica* (Basic Education), *Aprendizagem Informal* (Informal Learning), *Educação Superior* (Higher Education), and *Rotinas Atuais* (Current Routines). For clarity and cohesion, some chapters were combined into joint sections. Accordingly, *Primeiros Contatos* and *Educação Básica*, which recount experiences from childhood and adolescence, are discussed together in Section 3.1. Section 3.2 examines *Aprendizagem Informal*. Finally, *Educação Superior* and *Rotinas Atuais*, which address academic training and professional practice, are grouped and discussed in Section 3.3.

#### 3.1 Section *Primeiros Contatos* and *Educação Básica* of the narrative

In the first excerpt from *Primeiros Contatos*, we observe actions that negotiate the author's access to education, challenging the prevailing power structures that denied formal schooling to five-year-old children (Excerpt E1). Access was secured because the author's mother, herself a teacher and thus positioned within certain power structures, was able to convince the school to accept her daughter, despite her not having reached the official entry age.

My childhood memories are filled with an irrepressible curiosity about written language and the determined stubbornness to become a reading child, which led my mother, a primary school teacher, to make an "agreement" with the school administration where she worked: I would start preschool at age five (when the official starting age was six) and then repeat the year to align with the system. Repeating proved unnecessary, however, because I performed very well and was promoted directly to the first grade, where I would finally learn to read. (Excerpt E1)

Although this access represents a step toward autonomy and demonstrates the author's agency, since it is the author and her "determined stubbornness to become a reading child" that mobilizes her mother's efforts, it reflects a conception closer to what Pennycook (1997) defines as mainstream autonomy, situating autonomy within an individualistic, learner-centered dimension. Stetsenko (2013) introduces the concept of *collectivoidual*, which challenges the dichotomy between collective and individual by positing that individuals are shaped by collaborative practices while simultaneously shaping them. From this perspective, the author's access to education does not signify advancement toward the socially relevant, problematizing practices envisioned by Pennycook (1997), within an emancipatory view of education (Raya, Lamb, & Vieira, 2007). Rather, it highlights how context is permeated by issues of ideology, power, control, and access, which can function either to support or to hinder the development of autonomy (Raya & Vieira, 2020).

Despite gaining access to formal education, ESL learning remained inaccessible to the narrator for some time (Excerpt E2), either because of political factors determining when ESL would be introduced into formal education or due to limited resources shaped by geographical, socioeconomical, and cultural circumstances. In this context, the absence of agency and learning strategies underscores the lack of choice and the inability to exercise control or access available resources. The mere existence of resources cannot be equated with motivation, since the author had neither voice, control, nor choice over cultural alternatives, and no power to seek redress for the scarcity of options.

During this initial period of contact with written language, I was aware of other languages and curious about them, yet faced an almost insurmountable distance, bridged only by the international songs we listened to on the radio. In the 1980s, in the small town in the interior of Minas Gerais where I grew up, access to English-language resources was virtually nonexistent. Still my overactive childhood imagination often compensated compensate for this absence, and I vividly recall believing at one point that English might be a version of Portuguese words spelled backwards. (Excerpt E2)

The beginning of ESL learning in formal education, during the final years of elementary school, fell short of the narrator's expectations. She recalls the "[...] methodology focused on grammatical structures and a type of teaching that did not reflect my interests at all" (Excerpt E3). According to Little (2022), the development of autonomy in the ESL classroom requires active student participation in

activities connected to learner's interests and identities, a process absent in the narrator's experience. Instead, she highlights the unfavorable context shaped by political and access-related issues tied to location, noting that "[...] in a very small town in the interior of Minas, it was very difficult to hire English teachers" (Excerpt F1), and that "[...] usually the English teachers were Portuguese teachers filling English positions because it was not really possible to find English teachers at the time" (Excerpt F2).

Although autonomy was not fostered within the classroom, traces of it can be observed in the narrator's practices outside school. That is illustrated in Excerpt E4 and complemented by her recollection: "I vividly remember grabbing a dictionary and trying to translate the two songs [...], *More than Words* e *It Must Have Been Love*" (Excerpt F3).

Then I went freestyle: a dictionary in one hand and the song lyrics in the other. In a pre-internet era, it was all I had at my disposal. It was not so hard with the hit *More Than Words*, but the modals and participles of *It Must Have Been Love* left me completely lost. (Excerpt E4)

Raya and Vieira (2020) point out that an important part of learning occurs outside the school walls, in a gradual and concomitant process of practices both inside and outside the classroom. In this sense, out-of-class practice is not understood as an independent, individualized activity, but rather as a continuation of classroom learning. Although the narrator perceived classroom learning as yielding very limited progress, her home practices, such as translating song lyrics with the help of dictionaries, illustrate her initiative to use available resources to pursue linguistic and cultural interests. These practices also signal the strengthening of agency and the autonomous development of learning strategies that granted access to content previously beyond her reach. Oxford (2003) emphasizes that adversities are not insurmountable barriers to autonomy, and the narrator's engagement in ESL activities, even without instructor guidance, demonstrates that the lack of continuity between in-class and out-of-class learning did not entirely prevent autonomous engagement. However, as Reinders (2020) reinforces, learning beyond the classroom involves encouragement, preparation, and support from the teacher, elements the narrator reports as absent in her basic education.

### 3.2 Section *Aprendizagem Informal* of the narrative



In this section, the narrator reflects on ESL learning after completing high school, during her first undergraduate course, and in the subsequent years. Under the title *Aprendizagem Informal* (Informal Learning), she introduces the subtitle, *Aprendendo Inglês Sem Saber* (Learning English Without Noticing It), which underscores the retrospective recognition of incidental learning outside the classroom.

After formal schooling, some learning practices from earlier stages, such as translation attempts, were abandoned. Yet the narrator perceives a shift toward greater autonomy in ESL learning, largely enabled by contextual changes, most notably the popularization of the internet. This shift provided access to a wider range of resources and content, as well as tools for expanding her social circle and engaging with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Excerpt E5). As Reinders (2018) emphasizes, one way technology fosters autonomous is by broadening access to resources for additional language learning.

At the end of the 1990s, with the popularization of the internet, a new desire emerged: to be able to access the content available online, mostly in English. From the new millennium onwards, cultural content that had previously been out of my reach became accessible, such as subtitled films and TV series. (Excerpt E5)

Motivation is strongly shaped by access to technology, as reflected in the narrator's statement that she was motivated by the availability of diverse online materials and content. In addition to resource availability, the account indicates that the broadening of her social context and interactions with ESL speakers prompted reflections on her self-perception, shaping her identity. Norton (2000) defines identity as the way individuals understand their relationship to the world, constructed over time and space and encompassing future possibilities.

These reflections arise from the narrator's surprise at meeting ESL speakers who were neither fundamentally different from her nor more intelligent, yet were fluent in the language. This experience challenged a childhood belief, that ESL was inaccessible to people like her, captured in the passage, "it was almost impossible to be fluent in English; if even the teachers couldn't reach it, who was I to try" (Excerpt E6). The expansion of reality through the internet thus destabilized prior assumptions. As Oxford (2003) notes, the political-critical perspective on autonomy compels learners to question such assumptions and critically examine the discourses shaping their histories. This process enables the

emergence of new alternatives, opening pathways for the development of what Pennycook (1997) terms an “insurgent voice”, a stance the narrator appears to adopt.

An increase in agency is evident in the narrative, stemming from greater self-regulation and broader access to cultural alternatives. The narrator enrolls in an ESL course, motivated by the possibility of accessing content, but her motivation wanes when she realizes that the learning strategies do not align with her personality or expectations (Excerpt E7). Paiva and Braga (2020) argue that identity, motivation, and beliefs significantly shape the learning process, and in this account the narrator shows greater awareness of her needs and the ability to mobilize resources to meet them, thereby expanding her context, broadening her actions, and challenging established beliefs. Thus, while the the narrator regrets the inefficiency of her choice of English course, the experience nevertheless demonstrates how this interaction, as Paiva and Braga (2020) emphasize, positively contributed to the development of her autonomy, ultimately leading her to pursue a degree in ESL.

Around 2006 I enrolled in a course, but the class model, exclusively in English and focused on conversation, did not suit me. As an introverted person, I did not feel comfortable with so much interaction and without the comfort of my mother tongue.  
(Excerpt E7)

In the video recording related to this part of the narrative, the narrator states: “[...] I thought I had stopped learning English, but only later did I realize that during that time I was, in fact, still learning” (Excerpt F4). Reinders and Benson (2011) identify two key characteristics of long-term learning trajectories: first, the shift of learning from inside to outside the classroom, which continues to develop organically even without formal instruction; and second, the close connection between this process and the construction of the learner’s identity, showing that learning is broader broader and more comprehensive than the mastery of linguistic forms and structures. The narrator’s account illustrates these insights, providing concrete evidence of the relationship between autonomy and identity in learning, as also highlighted by Paiva and Braga (2020).

### 3.3 Sections *Educação Superior* and *Rotinas Atuais* of the narrative

After the period of incidental learning, the narrator recounts her experiences in higher education, specifically in a distance ESL degree program made possible by public investments in education. The importance of these policies and their impact on the narrator's trajectory is underscored in the subtitle, *Políticas públicas que transformam vidas* (Public Policies That Transform Lives).

The narrator describes her admission to the program and evaluates this choice as “perfect for my introverted personality” (Excerpt E8). This reflection reveals a central aspect of autonomy development: the capacity to recognize one's needs, preferences, and learning styles, and to actively seek educational opportunities that address them (Chik, 2018). It also illustrates a shift in learning context, with expanded opportunities enabled by broader public policies for access to education, reaffirming the link between autonomy and political, social, and cultural dimensions highlighted by Pennycook (1997).

The learning practices adopted in this new political and social context support Oxford's (2003) claims that, from a political-critical perspective, the development of autonomy is closely connected to ideological issues and access to power structures. In addition to the distance degree program, other public initiatives offering ESL courses and resources, such as the *Idiomas Sem Fronteiras* (Languages Without Borders) program, also influenced the narrator's trajectory. The availability of multiple alternatives reduced barriers to ESL access, giving the narrator greater control over her learning, while the variety of strategies enhanced her motivation by providing options better aligned with her needs and expectations. As Lantolf and Pavlenko point out regarding agency,

learners actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning [...] human agents are able (given appropriate circumstances) to critically analyze the discourses that shape their lives and to claim or challenge them according to the effects they wish to produce. (Lantolf; Pavlenko, 2001, p. 145)

It is necessary to emphasize the phrase “given appropriate circumstances” in the authors' words to counter the view of autonomy as centered on the individual, as a trait independent of context. As the narrative demonstrates, elements such as motivation, agency, and learning strategies emerge at various moments; however, the development of autonomy cannot be fully understood without a context that ensures access to learning. Oxford (2003) associates autonomy with participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), evolving from peripheral involvement to more central

roles. Building on this concept, Nicolaides, Braga, and Vargas (2021, p. 498) ask, “[...] how can an individual feel sufficiently capable of engaging in a collective project if he or she does not feel included in that collective?” From this perspective, the political-critical approach provides a broader and more comprehensive understanding of autonomy and the collective dimension it entails, aligning with Stetsenko’s (2013) concept of the *collectividual*.

Little (2022) highlights both the importance of teaching for the development of autonomy and the persistent difficulty of incorporating this topic more systematically into teacher education. In the narrative under analysis, it is not possible to determine whether the narrator’s training explicitly addressed autonomy in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, some passages about her current routines as an ESL teacher suggest the presence of such practices, particularly in her efforts to identify and provide diverse resources tailored to students’ contexts. When discussing the challenges she faces, she cites “the new technologies, the different needs of the students, [...] the social, political, and economic context” (Excerpt E9) as factors shaping her teaching, while also emphasizing that her practices are now focused on “[...] looking for resources that relate to the students’ interests, to the students’ needs” (Excerpt F5). These practices echo Little’s (2022) argument that second language learning should be grounded in students’ agency, identity, and interests.

The pursuit of redressing inequalities as a source of motivation is also emphasized in the narrative. By expressing the determination not to “be just another English teacher without fluency” (Excerpt E10), the narrator demonstrates a stance aligned with the emancipatory view of education proposed by Raya, Lamb, and Vieira (2007). This perspective is enabled by revisiting the difficulties she highlighted at the beginning of her journey, when she believed fluency in English to be unattainable, since “not even the teachers could reach it” (Excerpt E11). Thus, the ESL fluency she seeks is not merely an individual goal, but also a collective one, aiming at redress that transcends personal compensation and translates into providing alternatives so that future students do not encounter the same limitations she faced, such as the absence of accessible role models to inspire them, thereby enabling them to develop greater autonomy in their learning.

From a political-critical perspective on autonomy, Oxford (2003) argues that we must question pre-established conceptions and challenge the status quo. This seems to be the trajectory followed by the narrator, in an arc that underscores the challenges of a context marked more by restrictions than

by opportunities. In such a context, agency is constrained, motivation diminished, and identity shaped by beliefs grounded in scarcity. Over the course of her journey, however, structural changes, such as public policies expanding higher education and increasing access to resources and alternatives, broadened the narrator's horizons, with the development of autonomy accompanying this expansion. Ultimately, she assertively recognizes the autonomy she has achieved, positioning herself as a participant in the community of practice and as an active voice in this context, both as a teacher and an academic, declaring that "after walking such a long path, I can already guide some steps" (Excerpt E12).

### Concluding Remarks

This study presented an autobiographical analysis of an ESL learning narrative, with the aim of identifying elements that demonstrate the development of the narrator's autonomy. Based on the accounts in the narrative, which describe different situations and learning practices across the narrator's trajectory, it was possible to observe the gradual expansion of her autonomy, leading her to assume greater control over her own learning, as described by Holec (1981). This process unfolded in constant negotiation with the perceived possibilities and constraints of her context. From Oxford's (2003) political-critical perspective, these tensions are intrinsically connected to ideological issues of power and access, illustrating the complex interplay between individual and social dimensions in the development of learner autonomy.

The manifestations of autonomy identified in the narrative revealed how multiple elements can act in the ESL learning process, sometimes constraining, sometimes fostering its development, and are how these dynamics are connected to the theoretical aspects discussed, such as the continuum between learning inside and outside the classroom and the role of technology in shaping opportunities for autonomous learning.

The narrative also underscores a pivotal element in the development of autonomy that significantly shaped the narrator's learning process: public education policies. Viewed from different ideological perspectives, these policies influenced the learner's autonomy in distinct ways. At the outset of the narrative, they restricted her access to formal ESL education and to adequate learning resources.

Although primarily directed toward the school environment, such policies extended their effects well beyond the classroom, deeply impacting the narrator's identity and motivation. In later stages, however, public policies grounded a different ideological orientation facilitated the substantial growth of autonomy, similarly influencing not only the educational sphere but also other dimensions of the narrator's life. These measures supported her ESL learning and professional formation, ultimately providing the opportunity to become a teacher.

Another fundamental element observed in the narrative is the popularization of the internet, which granted the narrator access not only to linguistic resources but also to a broader worldview. Exposure to diverse realities and interactions with different individuals enabled the deconstruction of negative assumptions and the negotiation of her identity as an ESL learner, through the "[...] questioning and re-signification of naturalized ideological and power relations" (Tílio, 2017, p. 26). As Nicolaides, Braga, and Vargas (2021, p. 498) emphasize, "[...] constructs of identity, motivation, and beliefs play an important role in the development of autonomy." By confronting her beliefs, the narrator repositioned herself as an agent capable of learning, recovering motivation, and actively engaging in the process.

In relation to the autobiographical nature of this study, Giroux and McLaren (1993) argue that giving voice to our inner world and recognizing ourselves as active agents, enables a critical examination of beliefs and the re-signification of experiences. In this sense, revisiting and recontextualizing my learning journey constituted an exercise in reflection and transformation, beginning with the recognition of a reality that, in Minayo's (1994, p. 92) words, simultaneously informs and precedes theory, allowing one to "perceive it, reformulate it, take account of it, in an endless process of distancing and approaching." This dynamic interplay between lived reality and theoretical reflection ultimately shaped my professional formation and continues to guide my pedagogical practice with greater intentionality, in pursuit of an emancipatory approach to education that may benefit other teachers in training.

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