

**Título**

“ME, AS A TEACHER”

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**Course**

Practicum IV

My name is Mónica Alzate, I was born in Itagui, Antioquia in April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1973. I studied in Medellín public schools until fifth grade. I lost my father in 1986, and my mother took my brothers and me to the United States of America, so that she could give us a better life. I studied sixth grade in Florida, and from seventh to tenth grade in Boston. When I arrived to that country I did not speak English, and for me it was very difficult to start the school without understanding what the others said to me. I remember that I returned to my home crying because of the big frustration I felt because of the impossibility of communication with my teachers and classmates, and it was difficult for them; because they did not know how to explain themselves.

As time went by, I started to understand what my partners and teachers said, and I started to communicate, using body language though. When I started high school, I was assigned to an ESL program, which helped me a lot to understand the language and to develop the class commitments. Burnham et al (2009) state that ESL programs offer the opportunity to students to adjust to their new culture, which is demonstrable through my experience and thanks to that, I could succeed in the United States education. I only studied until 10<sup>th</sup> grade, because I had to work, but in 1993 I decided to return to Colombia because I wanted to study and become a professional; I did not have that chance in United States as a fact of being an undocumented resident. I validated my high school process and started my technologic studies at ESUMER, as an International Business Technician, but I had to quit a semester before my graduation. I wanted to create a family. I gave birth to my two children, and to be able to raise them properly, I had to wait ten years until they were old enough to return to my studies.

Why do I want to be a teacher? This is a question that I have asked myself since the moment I decided to study English teaching. Firstly, my family supported me a lot, and the advantage of knowing the English language made me make this decision. When I started to study in the Catholic University Luis Amigó its

philosophy, which says: “La realización del ser humano y el compromiso que sabemos cumplir” (FUNLAM, 2006) motivated me a lot.

I have a dream, and more than being a teacher is my social commitment. I want to form integral human beings, but I must start with myself first. I am allowing that the experience of studying at FUNLAM touches me until the last fiber of my soul, and that this formation takes me to a clear idea of what I want to do. The clearest fact for me is to work with children, thus the children develop is fundamental, and that children start to understand that there are other cultures and languages. Ya-Chen (2011) states that students develop intercultural awareness when they interact with the language in EFL class and their own context. I can show my learners other cultures through English language, expanding their own realities and developing a wider understanding of the world.

I did not have a good academic formation. The lack of good foundations made me have big gaps in my discipline. My formation was a mixing of cultures, in other words, I do not know English or Spanish. If I start to analyze my intelligences, I know I have the ability to learn by interacting to people, which according to Gardner (2011), places me in the profile of an interpersonal intelligence owner. I also have the skill to solve problems and sometimes I do not know how I achieve this; It must be thanks to my practical thinking and thus, I do not like to tangle with complicated things. When I do not understand something, I just research or ask, because I am not afraid of making mistakes, oppositely I like to make mistakes because I learn more, and this can be explained through Krashen’s monitor model (1982), which establishes that learning happens as a result of the approximations and later, the corrections made by students and their teachers. I am not excellent or outstanding with things, but I make the difference because I succeed despite of my difficulties.

As an English teacher, I want to use pedagogic strategies that catch my students' interests, with clear messages, and understanding of the relationship between language, society, history and culture; thus, I will be able to share.

in addition to my knowledge, a series of values and teachings which develop an integral human being, a humanist aware of his surroundings and conscious about the changes that happen around him.

I was conducting my practicum process in a public high school during nights (CLEI) last semester. My lack of experience has been challenging at the moment of interacting with different-age students with many social issues such as drug addiction, alcoholism, prostitution or students who have to study during day for make a living and they want to graduate from high school as soon as possible, just aiming for a better salary. I also have adult students who do not know how to read and write. It is hard to teach English in this social context because they ask me why they need another language with the few chances they have; the only thing they need is to graduate fast and that is it. This let me really concerned about the teacher's duty, and I only hope to find the path I want to walk, because I see a deteriorated society and education system which is not working, and this true worries me and I always ask myself as a teacher about what can I do to improve those people's lives from my career. The school environment in which I was practicing was very heavy, thus it was important to have a good relation with the other teachers to support the learning and welfare of students. I always asked help from the other teachers because they know the students better than me that is why collaborative work is important. In this scholar context, discipline and a good classroom environment are important for the students' comfort and a collaborative stance. I realized that to teach my students how to work with others was important, so they could know and respect each other.

This experience has shaped my teacher's identity thus, as Marcelo (2010) states, the identity is an evolutive process that depends on interpretation and is bound to a context. Teachers can shape their identities based on their classroom experiences, and this identity evolution is a key aspect to change the learners' negative perceptions towards EFL.

I feel that I have improved a lot with all the tools that my teachers have given me. As an example, Course design, which helped me to understand that to prepare a class was not just picking a topic, an activity and then conduct the class, but to design a class starting from the goals, the achievements, what I want to teach, the meaningful and what the learner will acquire in terms of standards, which according to the Basic Learning Rights (2016), are tools that allow students to interact with in English to improve their human and professional abilities. I want my students to learn in my classes. It is important that teachers plan their classes based on the subject knowledge, students' knowledge, the community and the study plan.

I feel really motivated because during this semester I am conducting my practicum with the Catholic University Luis Amigó children training group, and the idea is to work on story tales and scenic arts; this is also my graduation work, the extra-curricular spaces for the children's English learning. What I have clear from my teaching and learning experiences is that I want to teach children; as a result, I acquired my own kindergarten during last year. I am sure that I want to work with children as I stated before, and with the help of my family, I started my own educative institution, which is named The Kid's House. I love to see the amusement expressions they have, and the big ability to learn. I know that this profession will fill me with many satisfactions and I will learn a lot from it. This process has also created an awareness of the management of educational institutions in me, and the importance of a well-organized administration.

For concluding this paper, I want to thank my family that has endured the long absence hours for the sake of my dream, that has been fulfilling little by little and which I must constantly work, to give my students a good formation with love, respect and collaborative work, which is fundamental to grow as people. I also thank my teachers for their teachings. They gave me really good tools to develop not only as a professional, but also as a person; they taught me to be more critical upon my acts.

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