The (Re)Construction of Self Through Student-Teachers' Storied Agency in ELT: Between Marginalization and Idealization

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Abstract This chapter presents and discusses the findings of a narrative inquiry conducted over 2 years in an English Language Teacher Education Program in Colombia (South America). Focusing on the stories of pre-service English language teachers, this inquiry examines how these pre-service teachers (re)constructed their personal, academic, and professional selves. It draws upon written narrative data set collected through a teacher education course over four semesters and this data set includes four different course assignments from 80 pre-service teachers. In these assignments, pre-service teachers were engaged in a three-step reflective practice upon significant people, contexts, and practices during the activities of teacher education. Their reflective practice fostered the notion of self-as-teacher that future teachers construct (Hopper T, Sanford K, Teach Educ Q 31:57–74, 2004). The data analysis yielded findings which we present under three headings: public education as possibility, ELT as a glocal profession, and teachers' multiple ways of being. The study findings point to pre-service teachers' identity construction experiences between marginalization and idealization.

1 Introduction

In this chapter, we draw on the area of second language (L2) teacher education and narrative inquiry in order to address the need for pre-service English language teachers to (re)construct and make sense of their personal, academic, and professional selves. The reason for addressing such concern, is that future teachers' subjectivities need to be made present in processes of developing a sense of self and in processes of transformation of the contexts and dynamics of the profession of language education. The organization of the contents of the chapter is as follows: First, we

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problematize models of teacher education based on the native speaker myth (Phillipson 1992) and a colonizing tendency. Then, we discuss the narrative "turn" to study identity construction. Afterward, we describe the pedagogical and research designs based on the view of life stories as narrative data. Next, we present the findings that revolve around the main discussion of the ongoing negotiation of self between marginalization and idealization. Finally, we present the conclusions of the study.

2 Colonial Legacy in Initial Teacher Education

There is a general consensus that teacher education falls into three main models or approaches, and that ELT teacher education has drawn on those models. Here we will use Kumaravadivelu's (2003) terminology, but acknowledge that other authors have made a similar claim (Atkinson 2004; Giroux 1988; LaBoskey 1994; Richards 2008; Woodward 1990).

In the first model, the *passive technician*, teachers are expected to master disciplinary knowledge, follow exact methodologies or strategies to teach it, and in general terms, to consume the knowledge produced by experts. A second model known as *reflective practitioner* sees as the aim of teacher preparation not only the mastering of the disciplinary knowledge but also the capacity to reflect upon classroom practices in order to improve them. A step forward in this model is the *reflexive practitioner,* which adds to the former one, the capacity of the teacher to also reflect on institutional structures, and the self, that is, to examine teachers' "beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, prejudices and suppositions that inform teaching" (Atkinson 2004, p. 380). The third model is the critical practitioner in which teachers are engaged in problematizing social, cultural, and ideological issues, among others, and acting upon them. As such, they are considered as *transformative intellectuals* and therefore, producers of knowledge.

These models that have served in the education of in-service teachers, have been extrapolated to initial teacher education in ELT. A revision of the curriculum of such programs in Colombia shows that the prevalent model is the first one. There is a strong emphasis on a) disciplinary knowledge, which for our case, is the mastery of the English language and b) teaching methodologies that are the traditional approaches developed by the countries of the *inner circle* (to use Kachru's 1986 denomination), particularly the United States and Great Britain.

Although teacher education models have moved from seeing teachers as passive to seeing them as intellectuals, for the most part, initial teacher education in Colombia is stuck in the past as "schools of education," and particularly programs devoted to the preparation of ELT professionals-to-be, are still designed to perpetuate a top down approach that stems from a colonial perspective (Pennycook 1994) aimed at the preparation of "TESOL soldiers" (Phillipson 1992). The colonial legacy in ELT undergraduate programs could be evidenced through several overt and covert elements that are articulated through the curriculum and through broader social practices (e.g., hiring and/or scholarship requirements, social prestige,

salaries, etc.). We briefly address some of them here to bring to the surface some critical issues that need to be examined in ELT undergraduate programs.

2.1 Prevalence of the Native-Like Speaker Model

Much discussion has taken place around the world about the dichotomy of native speaker-nonnative speaker (Jenkins 2006, 2009; Kachru 1986; Kubota 2012). The native speaker model has been very pervasive, and has spread the idea that anyone learning English should mimic a native-like accent. Although speaking a language implies much more than just "accent," the importance given to accent is enormous and has ideological, cultural, and professional implications. Private schools, universities and language institutes usually market their English language programs on the premise that they have "native speakers." Therefore, non-native speakers of English who do not attain the native-like accents are regarded as second-class teachers; as not having the "right" linguistic capital and as a consequence, their job conditions are unequal compared to that of native speaker teachers or native-like speaker teachers (de Mejía 2002).

In Colombia, native speakers are constructed as individuals born in the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand or Canada, and their linguistic capital is regarded as the one that anyone learning English should acquire. Undergraduate ELT programs make great efforts to instill in student-teachers the native-like accent; some programs have phonetics classes and devote a great deal of attention to native-like pronunciation. For lay people and school administrators alike, there is a privilege of native-like pronunciation and accent over teaching skills. For hiring purposes, having an ELT degree is not enough (even necessary) but to show excellent TOEFL scores. Teachers with native-like pronunciation get better jobs than teachers who do not fit those standards. This discrimination does not apply to native speakers who do not fit the model of the idealized English speaker; actually it does not apply to any foreigner as long as they speak any variety of English, and their working conditions are better than those of Colombian teachers.

2.2 Teaching Methodologies from the Center

Undergraduate programs include courses on teaching methods that student-teachers are expected to master and implement in their practicum by the book. Very little discussion happens around what language is, what teaching is, what learning is, and why and when one should use a particular methodology. One major criticism of the methodologies produced by the inner circle countries, relates to their "English Only" orientation (Auberbach 1993; Canagarajah 1999; London 2001), where the students' first language (L1) is seen as problematic and negative. Additionally, the social dimension of teaching is often neglected in the methods class since the emphasis is on the L2 as an object of study and not its use to signify the world.

2.3 Isolation from the Social, Cultural, and Political Context

The teaching of English has been constructed as a neutral activity, where the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and discourse structures, and students are expected to replicate them (Guerrero and Quintero 2009). Seeing language as a vehicle of the exertion of power and domination, or as the possibility to counter hegemony, has not been included in either language policies or in syllabi content. Isolated efforts have been made to bring discussions on the role of critical pedagogy to counter this presumed neutrality and invite student-teachers to reflect on the social dimensions of education and the importance of situated practices. This is the case of the authors of this chapter and their colleagues in their research group, who have all incorporated practices and discourses based on critical pedagogies to better serve the mission and vision of the university and equip student-teachers with context-sensitive tools.

The critical issues mentioned above, have been discussed and problematized in the literature, but we know very little about how much understanding student-teachers have about them and how that might play a role in their negotiation of identities. Narratives have proved to be a powerful tool for both researchers and student-teachers to dig deeper into their understandings of these issues and how they intersect with their identities (Barkhuizen 2016).

3 Life Stories as Narratives

From a narrative perspective, stories can be accounted for as the representation of experience and the self. (Re)storying meaningful life experiences, is an event that calls for an introspective complexity and an alternative conception of language. Such conception needs to evolve from viewing language as a mere system of communication (Stern 1987) towards considering it as a form of self-representation that is deeply connected to people's social identities (Miller 2003). Language is more than a mode of communication or a system composed of rules, vocabulary and meaning. It is also an active medium of social practice through which people construct, define, and struggle over meanings in dialogue with others. Furthermore, because language exists within a large structural context, this practice is positioned and shaped by the ongoing relations of power that exist between and among individuals.

The connection of the individual and collective dimensions of language lead one to think of language as a form of self-representation. In that regard, Canagarajah (2004) claims that we construct ourselves through narratives that we share with others. He further explains that the self is shaped by language and discourses composed of multiple subjectivities derived from heterogeneous codes, registers, and discourses found in society. Moreover, Norton (1997) maintains that how we relate to the world, the way we construct it across time and space, and the understanding

we add to what lies behind that relationship determines people's identity. For Rudolph (in press), the construction of identity involves dynamic and discursive positioning and being positioned.

The notion of identity in this study is equated with the notion of self, or the self-as-teacher that student-teachers construct (Hopper and Sanford 2004). The self can be considered as a life story since it is through narration that people construct their own selves. In other words, while people make sense of their past life experiences and understand their possibilities for the future, they construct their identities (Barkhuizen 2008, 2016; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Peacock and Holland 1993).

In the same vein, Kumaravadivelu (2012) describes the sense of self as a set of features of an individual's identity that relates to their capacity and willingness to exercise agency. This leads one to think that the representation of one's own self demands reflection and action upon the experiences that one individual has had throughout their life, the ones they continue to live in the present, as well as those that project them into the future. This can take the shape of stories that tell and contribute to making sense of our lived experiences as human beings.

4 Using Narratives as Pedagogy and Data

This study took place during 2 years in a public university in Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia. The university serves 27,000 students from low and middle low social classes; it is organized into five Schools and offers three doctoral programs, two in the School of Education and one in the School of Engineering, 35 graduate programs, and 43 undergraduate programs. The context of this study comprises an academic space of a last-semester research seminar of a ten-semester English language teacher education program, where one of the authors serves as a teacher educator. For four consecutive semesters, the teacher-researcher collected the narratives of student-teachers enrolled in the class, which totaled 80 participants, whose average age was 20 years old. Of 80 participants, 70% were female and 30% were male, and all of them signed a research consent form to participate in the study. All of them had finished their practicum and were finishing writing their research monograph. Traditionally the main goal of the research seminar in which this study took place, has been to help students prepare their monograph oral and written reports paying special attention to matters of form. The teacher-researcher, motivated by his own philosophical perspective in education, transformed that objective towards the creation of an atmosphere for an introspective practice upon the (re)construction of the personal, academic, and professional selves of student-teachers who engaged in a process of writing to (re)story their meaningful experiences in their academic formation. The new dynamics of the seminar encouraged them to make a transition from academic formation in the undergraduate program towards both professional performance in educational institutions and graduate studies in the fields of their interest.

The reflective practice took the shape of written life stories that were determined by guidelines (see Appendix) that contained the description of their trajectories as related to their academic experiences before (retrospection), during (interpretation), and after (prospection) their university program. The written life stories constituted research data for analysis from a narrative perspective (Barkhuizen 2014). The uses of narratives were not so commonly found in the contexts of language education research in past years. However, the *narrative turn* in the field of applied linguistics in general, and in the area of L2 teacher education in particular, is nowadays acknowledged not only as a genre (form), but also with a focus on it as methodology and data (a means to do research), sometimes under criticism about a loss of "scientific" specificity (Barkhuizen 2013). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) equate narratives with qualitative studies, the conception of narrative is methodological in this chapter and used in close relation to the use of language as a social practice through which identities are negotiated and experiences storied (Norton and Early 2011).

In regard to the view of stories as data, or in the case of this study, written life stories as a form of narrative data, the introspections of the authors of such stories here became discourses that provoked insights about how selfhood was (re)constructed (Canagarajah 2004). Drawing on the area of L2 teacher education, our main concern here is related to the need for the pre-service English teachers to (re)construct and make sense of their personal, academic, and professional selves. One reason for addressing such concern is that, when student-teachers are called upon to make a transition from practices that make them dogmatize language education towards alternatives for transforming their realities as future professionals of language education, their subjectivities need to be made "less absent" in such processes of transformation. Even though transformation in teacher education is not an easy task, it is necessary to find a way for preparing future teachers to negotiate the processes of developing a sense of self (Bullough 2008).

5 Between Marginalization and Idealization: The Ongoing Negotiation of "Self"

After collecting and analyzing student-teachers' narratives, we identified one core category and three sub-categories (See Table 1). The core category, Between marginalization and idealization: The ongoing negotiation of "self," gives an account of the epistemological, professional and personal journey student-teachers make from their years previous to enrolling in the program, to the time of the collection of narratives which was close to their graduation. This category encompasses the idea of student-teachers' agency to make their own way from assigned identities to self-constructed identities. Our student-teachers come from socio-economic contexts that are already marginalized and therefore their assigned identities stem from deterministic and essentializing discourses. Their own life experiences and the

Table 1 Emerging categories

Main category	Definition
Between marginalization and idealization: The ongoing negotiation of self	Student-teachers' agency to make their own way from assigned identities to self-constructed identities
Sub-categories	
Public education as possibility	The role of public universities in granting an underprivileged population access to social mobility
The ELT glocal professional	Pre-service ELT teachers are thinking globally as local participants in the global world; they project their own selves as overcoming the barriers they might find in terms of knowledge, geographic location, and economic constraints.
Multiple ways of being	Using pre-service teachers' narratives, we show that in the (re) construction of their identity, there is no single way of being but rather they take different paths related to two themes: Language education as a profession: Language and teaching; and the role of social actors in becoming transformative social agents.

academic formation they receive at the university allow them to take control of their own destiny and struggle to self-construct their professional identities.

Our intention to inquire into the ways pre-service English language teachers (re) construct their identity draws on an area of research that is known as marginalization (Varghese et al. 2005). Such identity (re)construction took place in social, cultural, and political contexts – the teacher education program and the public schools in which the pre-service teachers developed their teaching practicum – where the identities that emerged were multiple, shifting, and in conflict with the agency of the individual participants as a mediating factor. Varghese (2000) claims that the construction of teacher identities is developed against the marginalization of the language education profession that is always in the background of real life. As an illustration of Varghese's claim, we can mention the Colombian bilingual language policy[1] is based on the *native speaker myth* (Phillipson 1992), which leads to the idealization of who can be the best teacher. Such idealization, in the process of formation and growth, can be linked to the tension between the ideal and real dimensions of language teacher identity, which in turn creates tensions between claimed identities and assigned identities.

The examination of the signs of the origins and evolution of their personal, academic, and professional selves in their stories was a crucial way of understanding how the participants were becoming language teachers who can challenge the traditional models of language education based on the notion of "effective instruction" (Cummins 2001) and who are willing to perform their roles as teachers and researchers with much involvement in their classroom, school, or community. That serves the purpose for them to explore the possibilities of (re)constructing themselves,

[1] Information on this Colombian government program can be found at: http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/productos/1685/w3-article-261856.html

both as individuals and professionals who can transform their lives and be responsible for the holistic development of their true selves (Kumaravadivelu 2003).

From a narrative perspective, the participants' life stories were ways to account for the possibilities that attending a public university offered them to become critical educators, the evolution of their personal and professional beings in their university program through their interaction with teachers and fellow students; also, the different alternatives for the (re)construction of their identities. Such accounts gave rise to three sub-categories that are defined, illustrated, and interpreted below and that serve the purpose to define the main category. The three sub-categories are: (1) *Public education as possibility;* (2) *The ELT glocal professional;* and *Multiple ways of being* (See Table 1 below).

5.1 Public Education as Possibility

Public education in Colombia, as in many other countries around the world, is under constant scrutiny. Neoliberal discourses – amplified through mass media – spread the idea that money that goes into public education is a waste (Apple 2006b; Nussbaum 2012). Colombia has participated in neoliberal models since 1990 when the then elected president had as his main government policy to adopt this particular economic model. Many attempts have been made along all these years to privatize education. Although on the surface those attempts have, apparently, failed thanks to civil and students' movements of resistance, governments have found subtle ways to impose their economic agendas on the education system. Outsourcing is a good example of this, and can be evidenced through the presence of international NGOs in charge of recruiting and selecting teachers to work in different schools; the evaluation of the English proficiency of Colombian teachers and students; or catering services for underprivileged students, to mention just a few.

The university where this study took place, is the public university of the capital city, Bogotá, financed by City Hall monies; it serves close to 27,000 low-income students (Universidad Distrital 2013) whose family income average corresponds from 1 to 3 of the 6 (highest) Colombian social and economic strata. To all our participants, enrolling in a program in this university is the only chance they have to obtain a college degree, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

> When I graduated my mom was really proud of me. I had been 1 year out of school and then I applied to the Universidad Distrital. I felt so happy when I was admitted because I wanted to study. (Participant 1, final narrative)[2]

This participant is categorical in her claim: *I wanted to study*. From this statement we can be sure she did not see any other opportunity to pursue tertiary education. According to the OECD report for Colombia (OECD 2016), only 9% of low-income

[2] The authors took the liberty to "correct" students' English to make their narratives understandable to a wider audience. We tried to respect the essence of their thoughts.

students are enrolled in university-level education. For most of them, the possibilities after finishing high school are divided between taking a low paying job (mechanics, construction workers, doormen, housekeeper, delivery person, etc.), and going to vocational schools run by private operators, mainly. According to the Ministry of Education, graduates from technical and technological schools increased from 20.4% in 2002 to 33.9% in 2011, while college graduates dropped in the same period of time from 62.3% to 44% (Ministry of Education 2012).

Despite the fact that the ELT program was not purposely tailored to address social issues, participants in the study find that public education offers them more than just "content"; it offers epistemological elements to critically examine the world and become active participants in searching for solutions for their communities. The following excerpt is a clear example of this:

> I consider that the core of this program in this university, which suited my interests, was its social vision, because going beyond the typical image of the bilingual teacher that teaches the verb to be, I consider I was educated within a setting where students are seen as persons, as humans with capacities and necessities. (Participant 4, final narrative)

As we can see from the voice of this participant, the isolated efforts some teachers make to engage students in reflecting about social issues, have shown results. The participant acknowledges that education comes with more than just content, goes beyond grammar structures, and allows them to be an active member of the community.

Tertiary education in Colombia is regulated by Law 30 issued in 1992. This law grants universities "autonomy" which, among other things, means that universities are free to create, organize, and develop their programs and curricula. Contrary to neoliberal models, universities, particularly public universities, do not have to respond to the demands of the labor market, but to an educational philosophy that understands that human beings need education in the humanities and not only in the mastery of technical skills. For the population served by the Universidad Distrital, this part of their education is very relevant because it allows them to see themselves as part of the solution of some of the many problems faced by their future pupils.

Another important aspect acknowledged by our participants, is that the education at a public institution is of the highest quality and the one that allows them to apply for a job anywhere they want. In the excerpt below, one of our participant's voices serves to illustrate this point:

> Anyway, I consider that my professional profile is very competitive at the moment of applying for a job; as a graduate from the Universidad Distrital I have a good command of English, therefore I can help students develop their communicative competences in English; I can use theories about language in order to reflect about my own professional performance; I can promote a respectful attitude towards the foreign language without leaving aside the importance of our culture. Also I am able to create new teaching techniques that stem from linguistic and technology advances, promote a critical reflection about the social, cultural and political context of the country and perhaps the most important aspect is the research training that I acquired during my studies and along the development of my research proposal. (Participant 3, final narrative)

This participant's account of her skills, all of them obtained through her education at a public university, counters mainstream discourses in Colombia which spread the idea that private colleges offer better quality of education than public ones (Apple 2006a). As can be seen from this excerpt, public university provided her with a multidisciplinary knowledge along with the linguistic capital needed in English as an L2; theory, experience, and research skills, all crossed by a critical view of the world. Her education, in their view, will allow her not only to apply her knowledge in a multiplicity of contexts but also to develop it further. If attending this public university has meant all this to her, we can say that we have moved towards the third model of teacher education we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, which is *critical practitioners*, where teachers are seen as transformative intellectuals (Giroux 1988).

5.2 The ELT Glocal Professional

Discourses on globalization have been around for quite a long time now, and while many acknowledged the advantages of the "global village," others were cynical about it. ELT was no different in this regard and discussions about the role of the English teacher profession in the growing global world abounded. Cameron (2002) called attention to the dangers of the discourses on "unity in diversity" as a fallacy that intended to homogenize English speakers around the world under the dominant model of Anglo-American speakers. Others like Warschauer (2000) called for a new English language teacher who is able to face the challenges of the twenty-first century in terms of technology and new varieties of English. Nowadays it is not possible to talk about the global without the local; it has become an oxymoron, since both are in a dialogical relationship and one cannot exist without the other.

Guerrero and Meadows (2015) point out the responsibility of teacher education programs in helping student-teachers develop a global professional identity that overpasses the dichotomy of NNEST/NEST. The mission and vision statements of the undergraduate program in English at the Universidad Distrital claim, on the one hand, the commitment to promote the improvement of English teaching in Bogotá and in Colombia and, on the other hand, the promotion of innovation and research in ELT.

Through the analysis of student-teachers' narratives, we found that they are in a constant (re)construction of their identities. For many of our participants, the teaching profession was not a choice but an accident; they enrolled in the program as a way to obtain a professional degree to have a source of income or after trying out other programs. It is common to find statements like: "After I graduated from high school and got the highest scores on the ICFES[3] exam in the English section, I wanted to join a translation program but there is none in Bogotá." (Participant 13, final narrative); "I finished it [high school] and I decided to become a veterinary at

[3] ICFES is similar to the American SAT (Standard Achievement Test).

'La Salle' university… After a time I decided to study English pedagogy and applied to the Universidad Distrital and I got accepted" (Participant 6, final narrative).

They recall how as they were progressing in their plan of studies they were finding their teaching vocation through their interaction with teachers, fellow students, different subjects and their teaching practicum (Díaz Benavides 2013), so, their identities were unfolding towards their ongoing negotiation of self. Our participant 6, quoted above, also states:

> When I did my practicum I discovered that definitely I love to be a teacher. It is grateful when students say "Teacher I learnt" I feel happy and I realize that I'm doing the things in the right way. Now I'm finishing the undergrad program and I consider that it was an excellent choice and I'm totally sure that the way to transform the world is through the education (Participant 6, final narrative).

Through his/her discourse, this participant positions him/herself within non-geographical reference. For him/her his/her education allows him/her to act upon the world in order to transform it. His/her identity as a teacher is not attached to a particular place but to the world. Participants' narratives allowed us to see how the dialogic relationship between the local and the global discourses and practices played a role in the (re)construction of their identities. Traditionally the dialogue between the local and the global in Colombia, and particularly in the field of ELT, has been an unequal one. As we mentioned above, the contents of the curricula and the syllabi of the different subjects have been dominated by the knowledge and theories produced by the inner circle countries. Despite this fact, in their narratives, student-teachers give relevance to the emphasis that their undergraduate program and the Universidad Distrital place on the social dimension of education to make sense of all those theories produced somewhere else. We identify this aspect as critical in the construction of a glocal professional identity, since student-teachers establish connections between their local context and the global one.

Global and local discourses on ELT co-construct themselves to mandate who can become an English teacher and what and how they should teach. In developing this glocal identity, the data show that student-teachers are not mesmerized by the global world; they do not see themselves as passive participants of what the outside world has to offer. Quite the contrary, as local participants in the global world they project their own selves as overcoming the barriers they might find in terms of knowledge, geographic location, and economic constraints.

In regard to knowledge, although all participants state their interest in pursuing postgraduate education, their choice of doing it in Colombia or abroad is influenced by the availability of programs; none of them questions the quality of education in our country as illustrated in this excerpt:

> If it is possible, I may study my master program either outside or in my country and I would like to work as a university teacher to put into practice all that knowledge, probably participating in the education of teachers that is vital in the life of every teacher for the personal as well as the professional education (Participant 10, final narrative).

The interest of getting a master degree right after their undergraduate program is a new trend. Student-teachers take it for granted that graduate education is a must, and there is no discussion on that; the issue is where and what to study.

As stated by González (2007) English teachers are seen as "unfinished" and for that reason they have to undertake postgraduate degrees; according to the data, this discourse has been naturalized and all our participants take for granted the need to obtain an MA degree. What is interesting, though, is that in González's study, in-service teachers complain about the gap between the contents of MA programs and school realities. The participants in our study are not expecting the MA programs to fill these gaps for them; rather, they expect to actively participate in bringing theory into practice into their real contexts.

On the other hand, they do not see institutionalized capital (Bourdieu 1986) as the only source of obtaining knowledge. Student-teachers recognize that knowledge is also to be found in the contact with real people in the real world. This is an interesting way of bringing the local onto the table to dialogue with the global knowledge they have acquired at school. Here is the voice of one of our participants:

> As a teacher I see myself, not in Bogotá or any other big city, but in somewhere else; where I could share my time, feelings and knowledge with people who really appreciate it, where I can also learn more…I want to learn about real life of common people in Colombia, it would make me happy, it would fill my expectations. (Participant 5, final narrative)

For this participant, learning is not attached to the university exclusively; he/she finds value in "common people" to gather more knowledge, probably to make sense between the theoretical knowledge they acquire in the program and the real life real people face every day.

Our participants also see themselves as producers of knowledge. This shade of their glocal identity ranges from their interest in bringing into their classes innovative practices, strategies and techniques to actively participate in the academic community through publishing articles and being members of research groups (actually one of our participants got her first article published in a peer indexed journal at the time of the data collection). "I would like to keep on researching about social issues related to foreign language education. I dream of being part of an educational group supported by Colciencias" (Participant 17, final narrative); "With the purpose of getting a job at a university I should start building my curriculum vita on a researchable base. Hereby, my intention is publishing a research article in a peer reviewed journal and work hard in the research group I am a member of" (Participant 16, final narrative). As these quotes show, our participants find enough agency within themselves to project their professional selves as producers of knowledge, as researchers and academics able to be members of research groups acknowledged by the Colombian research institute, Colciencias, and as publishing in peer reviewed journals which, for many in-service teachers, has been unattainable.

In terms of challenging geographical barriers, our participants value the education they have received in their undergraduate studies and think it gives them the

necessary tools to start out in a different country. Their motivations are different: some dream of working abroad, others want to travel to get cultural experience, others to improve their language proficiency. Either way they do not seem to find constraints in geographical borders:

> Within five years I project myself as a qualified Spanish teacher at the university level or secondary education. Naturally, this requires extensive preparation in the field. For example, for teaching Spanish in any country in Europe, North America, Oceania and Asia, the minimum requirement to apply for a job is a postgraduate degree at the Masters level in that particular field. (Participant 2, final narrative)

These excerpts of student-teachers' narratives allows us to infer that they fight their imposed identity, due to their coming from a marginalized section of the population and project their identities in the global context, where they see it as relevant to have a master's degree or any other form of academic preparation.

The third barrier our participants intend to overcome in the search for their ELT glocal identity, is the economic one. They are quite aware that economic capital (Bourdieu 1986) plays a crucial role in helping them achieve their professional objectives. As we mentioned above in the previous section, our population is made up primarily of low-income families. These students struggle to have their basic needs served but nonetheless seem determined to fight their economic disadvantage in order to attain their goal of traveling abroad and obtaining masters' degrees. Some of them had already started to plan their future and were saving money at the time of the data collection; others plan to get a job as soon as they graduate to save money for their studies because they know that if they want to study in Colombia, there are no scholarships offered and unless they work, postgraduate education would be unaffordable (González 2003). If they want to study abroad, they might apply for a scholarship, but they would need money for traveling expenses, food, and housing. Here are some of our participants' voices:

> My expectations to start a graduated program are one of my priorities right now. I would love to be able to do it abroad. So, I will apply for scholarships abroad and I am saving as much money as I can, in order to be able to afford it. Unfortunately, the fees are extremely expensive for international students. (Participant 17, final narrative)

In this participant's sample, once again the interest of pursuing further education is relevant. His/her claims show his/her concern about saving money to pay for his/her education, not saving to buy a house or travel for pleasure but to obtain the possibility of getting more professional preparation. He/she is aware of the expenses but also of the possibilities of applying for a scholarship.

What is interesting from these participants' narratives, is that they do not seem defeated. These student-teachers are taking their professional future in their hands and making provisions to attain it. Each does or will take different paths but they are not accepting the essentialized categories historically imposed by society on them first, low-income populations, and second, Colombian teachers.

5.3 Multiple Ways of Being

This theme refers to the varied realizations of the participants' identity by means of writing and sharing life stories. Life stories led the participants to make sense of academic experiences related to two elements that are the object of language education as a profession: language and teaching. In addition, their stories served the purpose to introspectively determine the role of social actors in becoming transformative social agents.

The theme of language education as a profession was present in all the participants' reflections and led them to take a stand about language and teaching. This theme results from the perception of teaching as both a human and a genuine social practice that inspires the true selves of the participants in this study. As a life experience, teaching is not seen as an abstract entity, but as a central part of the intellectual life in school and is relevant for the participants because it mediates knowledge and helps to form attitudes and values (Quintero 2003).

The view of teaching as a social practice, can be paralleled with a view of language that participants evidenced in this study. Language was viewed as more than a mode of communication or system composed of rules, vocabulary, and meanings. It was also viewed as an active medium of social practice through which people construct, define and struggle over meanings in dialogue with others. Furthermore, because language exists within a large structural context, this practice is positioned and shaped by the ongoing relations that exist between and among subjects (Norton and Toohey 2011). In regard to the above conception of language, Pennycook (2001) maintains that language can be understood as an emergent social act, rather than an external code that we acquire and reproduce: a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity. Thus, in this study, there is an intention to evolve from viewing language as a mere system of communication (Stern 1987) towards considering it as a form of self-representation that is deeply connected to people's social identities (Miller 2003).

This helps the participants to perceptively and reflectively value their own university experiences as part of their growth, which leads them, as well, to consider themselves as autonomous moral agents living under a variety of real and constantly changing circumstances that can never be exactly repeated. After all, teachers are basically human beings full of emotionality, feelings, and rationality, components of intellectual and human ways of being. This aspect of teaching is illustrated in the following comment:

> My teaching practicum classes have aided me to be more patient with students and get rid of the stress that is always implicit in our profession. Going back to all this experiences, I would say that I'm more sensitive towards students' needs because I always tend to put myself into their shoes and develop activities which involve their daily life and accomplish their particular needs. Taking into consideration my mother's opinion, she told me that I'm more conscious about their understanding of the foreign language instead of only doing my class. Besides, I receive calls in order to clarify a certain topic or even giving them some feedback so she considers that I'm more human because I'm more aware of them and their learning. (Participant 13, final narrative)

This participant's quote is relevant, as it relates to the experiences that lead her as a person to grow in varied dimensions i.e., sensible, sensitive, and empathetic. That happens at the same time as the exchanges in which the participant engages generate relationships, in addition to leading her to achieve goals and fulfill expectations. The teacher-student type of relationship can be determined by (and also determines) the sensitivity and sensibleness of being a language educator. A rational and affective attitude towards students' needs becomes a sign of an empathetic way of being.

The human dimension referred to above has no limits, with regard to the human potential of teachers. Teaching, in other words, can be a whole life project. The role of education cannot be a utilitarian one that serves only extrinsic goals such as those of positivistic pedagogy models based on instrumental ideologies (Giroux 1983). When participant 13 states, "I'm more conscious about their understanding of the foreign language instead of only doing my class," she is detaching herself from pedagogical models that are value-free, objective, neutral, purely empirical, and reduced to predictable results. Conversely, education and pedagogy should be valued intrinsically; educators cannot operate, therefore, as uncritical technicians (Quintero 2013).

In the same line of thought, the story below of participant 9, appears as the resistance to an emphasis on teaching practices that revolve around pre-established and remote objectives of language teaching and learning (Giroux 1983). Such resistance can be supported by Bakhtin (1986) who does not conceive language as an idealized succession of forms that is independent of their speakers or their speaking. Conversely, he sees language as contextualized utterances in which speakers, in dialogic exchange with others, engage in meaning making.

> She also shared her cultural experiences with us too, which motivated us to learn more, be more interested and engaged in the class. I do not remember any other teacher doing that at the university; usually English teachers just taught the contents from a book or copies, but never got close to the real use of the language which is a determining factor for me as a future teacher. (Participant 9, final narrative)

Bakhtin's view of language learning, which includes the use of language in order to participate in particular speech communities, serves the purpose of informing the resistance of participant 9 to rely on the use of textbooks, which is forced by the editorial marketplace, since it is based on structural principles that create an idea of language learning as a gradual individual process of internalizing a number of rules, structures, and vocabulary of a standard language. That was something that needed to be rethought in order to assure a focus on continuity and immediateness of life in and outside schools. This last idea provides sense and genuineness to the teaching and learning experiences (Apple 2006b). Such genuineness is also a determining factor for *self-as-teacher,* as it can also be inferred from the story of participant 9 when she states, "[…] the real use of the language which is a determining factor for me as a future teacher."

Another theme that is in close relation to the one discussed above, is that of becoming transformative social agents. In their life stories, the participants made reference to significant others, such as relatives, teachers, and classmates that played

the role of identity shapers (Díaz Benavides 2013), as models of authority, teaching, and personality. Those three factors also generated either affiliation or resistance towards a model of a teacher. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) assert that society offers alternatives for people to opt for in a specific time and place, "to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives" (p. 19). That explains why individuals are continuously involved in the (re)creation of modes of being and the belonging and creation of new selves. A story that illustrates the theme of becoming transformative social agents is the following:

> The university, as my second home has taught me about life, it has awaken that spirit of rebellion and adventure that allows me to understand many things and realize that we can dream but reality is different. Yet, I must admit that dreaming is amazing. The people I have met in the university are vital in discovering who I am. They share my dream. The dream of being good teachers, help our families, have a real impact in others, discover and experience amazing things, have a different perspectives on the world and live intensely. Therefore, the personal and academic plans and my perspective as a good teacher and constant learner will permit me to achieve my goals that are inherent to the development of education and its importance in the society. Even more, as English teacher I have the possibility to change different contexts, make use of multicultural aspects and the language itself to communicate and understand the world through different experiences allowing students to appropriate that language and become users of it in a real context. (Participant 8, final narrative)

Through this excerpt, participant 8 shows a socio-critical perspective of education elucidated, in a desired educational community that assumes a desired identity. An alternative way of being can be inferred from the statement, "we can dream but reality is different," that participant 8 makes in the sense that she intends to implement new alternatives in educational practices. Such new alternatives, or transformations as Quintero and Piñeros (2006) call them, are the result of a critical attitude about commodity, recipes, and prescriptions, which implies taking personal or professional risks in their schools (Nieto 2003). The participant's hopes for the future are integral to language teacher identity. Such desired communities are named "imagined communities" by Anderson (1991) in order to signify that people can feel a sense of community in imagining themselves related to others across time and space, even if they have not yet met. In the participants' view of the teaching labor and their social commitment, there is a focus on the future, the same as in the idea of imagined community, when people imagine who they might be, and who their communities might be when they advance in their academic formation.

Participant 8, and the other participants in the study, encountered conditions that complied with their expectations in relation to others, as well as the opportunities to fulfill their academic formation goals. This implies an individual sense of self (i.e. memories and self-knowledge) and group communication, both of which involve other people in various contexts. This in turn relates to the dual dimension of language as Pennycook (2001) puts it when referring to it as a vehicle that not only reveals, but also builds the dialogic relationships among social actors in which two dimensions are connected: the individual and the social or collective dimensions.

In their stories, the participants address the possibility of transforming their future teaching practice by considering language not as a goal, but as the means for social construction and transformation. By referring to the contribution they make

to construct a vision of the world, they can be interpreted as willing to become social transformers, rather than passive agents intended to reproduce officially sanctioned patterns and ideas. It can also be said that the exploration of their meaningful experiences within a formative environment, allows them to question dogmatizing language education. That implies that they prepare themselves to make the transition from the heavy emphasis that their teacher education program places on the theory *about* how to teach, how to do research, and how to innovate in the field of language education towards the sensible and practical reality of *being* and *doing* in language teaching, research, and innovation. We think that our participants are willing to "step outside the mold," though it might imply that they find themselves "needing to engage in actions contrary to their beliefs about teaching and learning in order to satisfy one or another set of externally imposed mandates" (Bullough 2008, p. 5), as found by Guerrero and Quintero (2010) in a previous study.

6 Conclusion

Practices of marginalization can take various and subtle ways. In initial teacher education the curriculum, plan of studies and teachers' practices are good examples of this. The participants in our study face marginalization not only within the context of their area of studies but also within the social and economic circumstances in which they are born. Throughout this research we unveiled different shapes and paths in which student-teachers' identities were (re)constructed to overcome imposed marginalizing conditions. As researchers we found this multiplicity to be thought-provoking; it remains to be seen what is left in their struggle between their marginalization and the idealization, once they graduate and deal with the real world.

Appendix 1: Guidelines for Introspective Practice and Written Life Stories

In this introspective practice, you are encouraged to engage in reflection upon your academic experiences before and during the university, as well as make or design a projection for future professional performance. The introspective practice will take the shape of written life stories that have trajectories or sequentially ordered events that provoke insights about your academic experiences and construct a detailed picture of personal factors that may be having an impact on the teaching of languages. Use these questions to guide your practice from beginning to end:

- How does reconstructing my past life experiences allow me to make sense of how my life is situated socially and historically?
- How do my life experiences continue to influence me as a learner and as a teacher?
- What type of language teacher do I want to be?

Independent Work I

1. As a preliminary activity, you need to think of people, institutions, environments, activities, and any other influencing factor about your academic formation before university. Focus your attention on the following questions:
   (a) How does reconstructing my past academic experiences allow me to be aware of how my life is situated socially and historically?
   (b) How do my life experiences continue to influence me as a university student and as a future teacher?
2. With the proposed questions in mind:
   (a) Choose a meaningful past event either in elementary or secondary school.
   (b) Talk with key people or, if possible, visit the school
   (c) Take notes on the meaningful event, people, or place.
3. Using your notes, write a narrative text that accounts for your retrospection i.e., the reconstruction of meaningful past experiences about your academic formation. Write as much as you wish and pay attention to contents, not to form.
4. Keep the narrative text for later use.

Independent Work II

Please consider the following in order to write the continuation of the narrative text you wrote in Independent Work I.

1. Reconstruct and reflect upon meaningful experiences during your university program. Think of only one key event, academic space, professor, or classmate that you may consider relevant for your formation as a future teacher. For this, focus on the following question:
   What kind of language teacher-researcher am I being educated to be?
2. With the above question in mind:
   (a) Choose a meaningful past event.
   (b) Talk with key people at the university
   (c) Take notes on the meaningful event and people.
3. Using your notes, write a narrative text that accounts for your reflection upon your own meaningful experience at the university. Write as much as you wish and pay attention to contents, not to form.
4. Keep the narrative text for later use.

Independent Work III

As the continuation of Independent work I & II

1. Conduct an inquiry on graduate programs and schools that you consider related to your own profile as a future English language teacher. Use the following question for this work.
   What kind of language teacher-researcher do I want to be (after I graduate)?
2. With the above question in mind:
   (a) Inquire about graduate programs of your interest (local, national, international) that fit your personal and academic profile.
   (b) Inquire about schools where you could apply for a job. Prefer a match between the school's philosophy and your personal and academic profile.
   (c) Take notes on each aspect that you may consider relevant.
   (d) Using your notes, write a narrative text about your projection as a future professional of language education. Write as much as you wish and pay attention to contents, not to form.
3. Keep the narrative text for later use.

Pair Work (in Classroom)

Use the narrative texts that resulted from the Independent Work I, II, & III to have a writing conference with a classmate.

1. Share your texts and talk with your classmate about the following questions:
   (a) What meaningful event/person/context in did you decide to focus on for your narrative texts?
   (b) Why does that event/person/context represent a lot of meaning for you?
   (c) How did the meaningful event/person/context shape your own view of your academic formation and your future career as professional of language education?
2. After talking with your classmate, your answers to the questions above may lead you to make some additions to your narrative texts.
3. Incorporate your classmate's feedback into your texts and make the corrections you may feel relevant.
4. Submit the resulting narrative texts to your professor.

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