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|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
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| 2. Programa de formación docente | Teacher education program |
| 3. Estudiante practicante        | Student teacher           |
| 4. Investigación narrativa       | Narrative inquiry         |

**RESUMEN DEL CONTENIDO:** (Máximo 250 palabras)

Esta investigación narrativa tiene como objetivo estudiar cómo los estudiantes-practicantes construyen su identidad docente en un programa de formación docente en inglés. Así como los factores que favorecen y dificultan esta formación. Al analizar las narrativas escritas por los estudiantes-practicantes, sus narrativas orales y sus diarios de prácticas, los investigadores encontraron que la construcción de la identidad de los maestros implica un proceso continuo y su desarrollo es posible debido a las experiencias de enseñanza e interacciones sociales. Los resultados muestran que la construcción de la identidad docente comenzó con algunos conflictos que los estudiantes-practicantes se enfrentaron al momento de aprender a enseñar. Luego, esos conflictos se resolvieron cuando experimentaron el acto de enseñar e interactuaron con la comunidad de maestros, construyendo una nueva comprensión de su identidad docente y creando nuevas oportunidades para su desarrollo profesional.

**ABSTRACT:** (Máximo 250 palabras)



This narrative research aims to investigate how student teachers construct their teacher identity in an English language teacher education program; as well as the factors that promote and hinder its formation. By analyzing student teachers' written narratives, oral narratives, and teaching practicum journals, the researchers found that the construction of teacher identity entails an ongoing process and its development is constantly shifting as a result of the teaching experiences and social interactions. The findings show that the construction of the teacher identity started with some conflicts student teachers faced in the process of learning-to-teach. Then, those conflicts were resolved as they experienced the act of teaching and interacted with the teacher community, building a new understanding of their teacher selves, and creating new opportunities for their teacher professional development.

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Understanding the construction of teacher identity in English language student teachers

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2019

Understanding the construction of teacher identity in English language student teachers

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Tesis de grado presentada como requisito parcial para optar al título de Magister en  
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### **Resumen**

Esta investigación narrativa tiene como objetivo estudiar cómo los estudiantes-practicantes construyen su identidad docente en un programa de formación docente en inglés. Así como los factores que favorecen y dificultan esta formación. Al analizar las narrativas escritas por los estudiantes-practicantes, sus narrativas orales y sus diarios de prácticas, los investigadores encontraron que la construcción de la identidad de los maestros implica un proceso continuo y su desarrollo es posible debido a las experiencias de enseñanza e interacciones sociales. Los resultados muestran que la construcción de la identidad docente comenzó con algunos conflictos que los estudiantes-practicantes se enfrentaron al momento de aprender a enseñar. Luego, esos conflictos se resolvieron cuando experimentaron el acto de enseñar e interactuaron con la comunidad de maestros, construyendo una nueva comprensión de su identidad docente y creando nuevas oportunidades para su desarrollo profesional.

*Palabras clave:* Identidad docente, programa de formación docente, estudiante practicante, investigación narrativa.

### **Abstract**

This narrative research aims to investigate how student teachers construct their teacher identity in an English language teacher education program; as well as the factors that promote and hinder its formation. By analyzing student teachers' written narratives, oral narratives, and teaching practicum journals, the researchers found that the construction of teacher identity entails an ongoing process and its development is constantly shifting as a result of the teaching experiences and social interactions. The findings show that the construction of the teacher identity started with some conflicts student teachers faced in the process of learning-to-teach. Then, those conflicts were resolved as they experienced the act of teaching and interacted with the teacher community, building a new understanding of their teacher selves, and creating new opportunities for their teacher professional development.

*Keywords:* Teacher identity, teacher education program, student teacher, narrative inquiry.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This research study seeks to examine how student teachers (henceforth STs) construct their teacher identity in an undergraduate English teacher education program, at a public university in Colombia. We engaged in an exploration of the narratives of 6 STs in a teacher education program, who were in their final semester by the time we gathered the data. Thus, the present study offers an examination of the teacher identity construction for that group of participants and identifies the factors that may have played a role in the construction of their teacher identity. In this first chapter, firstly, we present information regarding research on teacher identity construction. Secondly, we introduce the rationale and statement of the problem, and conclude with the research questions that guided this narrative research. Thirdly, we make reference to the purpose and contributions of this research study. Finally, we establish the structure and organization of the study.

### **Research on Teacher Identity Construction**

For the current research study, we perceive teacher identity construction in terms of what the STs do and know; contending the activities in which they engage, and the beliefs and emotions they developed. As described by Lankveld, Schoonenboom, Volman, Croiset and Beishuizen (2017), “the development of teacher identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of who one considers oneself to be and who one would like to become” (p. 2). That is to say, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; it is rather negotiated through experience and the meaning-making of that experience.

Several scholars (Fajardo, 2014; Díaz, 2013; Quintero, 2016) have explored the issue of teacher identity construction from a social perspective. Based on their contributions, we can say that the construction of teacher identity takes place when STs or prospective teachers are immersed in a teacher community. Besides, the act of being recognized as a teacher by colleagues and students, shape and transform prospective teachers' professional affiliation (Fajardo, 2014). On the other hand, reflection allows STs to think of new possibilities to act within the teaching context, shaping their self-images as teachers (Díaz, 2013). Finally, social actors such as former teachers and classmates can help STs to construct their identity through encouragement and support during learning experiences (Wegner, 1998).

Colombian scholars have shown advancement in the area of teacher identity research. However, there is a need to contribute to the literature on this area. In this regard, Archanjo, Barahona, and Finardi (2019) claim that the construction of teacher identity is an issue that has been under-researched in contexts such as South America. Clarke (2008) similarly points out that even though it is widely accepted that teacher identity is transformed as a result of teachers' participation in the teacher community, little relevant research has been undertaken with pre-service teachers. Bearing in mind the above, it is crucial to dig deeper into the construction of teacher identity in our local context.

### **Rationale and Statement of the Problem**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that students who enroll in the undergraduate English teacher education program where this study took place do not want to become English teachers, instead, they wish to learn English for a variety of purposes including travelling abroad or meeting academic requirements to be able to enter another academic program in

the university. The previous situation is not only common in our local context, Barahona (2014) similarly claims that learning English was the most important motive for pre-service teachers to enter a teaching English as a foreign language program in Chile.

However, once students are enrolled in the English teacher education program where this study took place, they take courses in the four components of the program curriculum: discipline specific, teachers' professional identity, sociocultural identity and development, and elective component; which grant them opportunities to construct teacher knowledge and gain a broader understanding of the teaching profession. The courses offered in these four components aim to provide prospective English language teachers with the necessary content and practice for developing both linguistic and pedagogical skills as they construct the knowledge base of language teaching for their future role as in-service English teachers.

This is consistent with the views of senior STs in this English teacher education program, as noted in a questionnaire administered during the needs' analysis of this study. They showed reluctance to engage in teaching while others insist on working as EFL teachers mainly because they had already completed all the coursework that enabled them to be knowledgeable to teach English as a foreign language and did not wish to let that time and investment become a waste.

To find additional support to conduct this study, we asked eight students from the first semester of the English teacher education program to answer some questions (see Appendix A) regarding the reasons that motivated them to enter this program, and their expectations as prospective English teachers. They shared their responses with us via email, as a reflective assignment they had to submit for the English course they took in their first



semester of the teacher education program. Additionally, we contacted via Facebook eight EFL teachers who had recently graduated from the same teacher education program, and sent them a questionnaire (see Appendix B) in which they were requested to mention the reasons they had for entering the program, and their professional expectations before graduation.

The analysis of the data showed that seven out of eight students from the first semester mentioned that the main reason for enrolling in an English teacher education program was their interest in learning the foreign language. Just one of them stated the desire to become a teacher, as she declared: *“the reason why I enrolled in the English Language Teacher education program was my love for teaching. Since I was a kid I knew I wanted to be a teacher”* (Questionnaire 1, henceforth Q1).

When the same students were asked about how they saw themselves in five years, all of them mentioned that they would graduate from the teacher education program while two out of eight students saw themselves as English teachers in the future. In contrast, six students acknowledged their desire to travel to traditional English-speaking countries (inner circle countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States) in order to work and improve the language. For instance, a student claimed: *“I want to learn the language to travel abroad and know other cultures. Learning a language is important nowadays because it allows you to get a profitable job”* (Q1). In the same line of thought, another student stated that *“The reason why I enrolled in the ELT program was because I wanted to improve my English skills. I don't want to be a teacher. I don't have passion for teaching, but I guess it is not impossible to work it out”* (Q1).

In contrast, six out of eight recent graduates from the English teacher education program claimed that they decided to enroll in the program because they wanted to improve their English proficiency, but did not have any interest in teaching, as this EFL teacher claimed: *“When I started this teaching program I did not care to become an English teacher. I was just interested in all the opportunities that learning a foreign language could give me in the future when applying for any kind of job”* (Questionnaire 2, henceforth Q2). Another recent graduate affirmed: *“I loved languages, especially English, when I took the ICFES test I got a really high score in the English section, so I decided it was a good idea for me to continue improving my English”* (Q2). Despite the fact they did not want to become teachers, they were currently working as English teachers when we contacted them to complete the questionnaire. On the other hand, two other recent graduates who equally worked as EFL teachers claimed their desire to become agents of social change and recognized courses such as research methodology, general pedagogy and didactics, and the method courses as tipping points in their preparation as teachers. In this regard, one of them stated: *“I wanted to teach, I have thought that a teacher has an important role in students' development. I always wanted to be able to contribute with my knowledge to make an impact on society”* (Q2).

Additionally, the majority of those in-service teachers who completed the questionnaire asserted that their professional expectations by the time of graduation centered on teaching and refining the skills they were taught in the teacher education program. This was further evidenced in most of their responses as they expressed their desire to keep growing professionally, even considering the possibility of pursuing postgraduate education.

These in-service teachers also claimed that they did not want to be teachers but ended up working as teachers. Likewise, students from the first semester of the English teacher education program thought of themselves as future graduates from the program, although not necessarily working as English teachers. Taking into account the previous statement, it appears that some factors may have fostered the construction of teacher identity in those EFL teachers who graduated from the English teacher education program.

Considering the above, this research study focuses on the retrospective narratives of 6 STs in order to examine their process of teacher identity construction in an English teacher education program.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this narrative research were:

- How do English language student teachers construct their teacher identity in an English teacher education program at a public university in Southern Colombia?
- What factors promote the construction of teacher identity among student teachers in an English language teacher education program at a public university in Southern Colombia?
- What factors hinder the construction of teacher identity among student teachers in an English language teacher education program at a public university in Southern Colombia?

### **Purposes and Contributions of the Study**

We acknowledge the construction of teacher identity as a complex process. It involves personal and social realities articulated and developed in the process of learning to teach. Yet, we endorse the importance of the experiences lived within the English teacher

education program where this study took place. Consequently, the present study focuses on STs' identity construction as it evolved during participants' experiences in an English teacher education program at a public university in Colombia, and provides a series of contributions to the field of teacher education and development. First, this study is likely to contribute to the literature on teacher identity construction by offering insights in regard to the elements that may promote and hinder the construction of such teacher identity. Second, the findings of this study could be useful for teacher education programs, including those with a focus on foreign language teaching, in order to guide the development of content and curriculum design for pre-service teachers' education. Finally, the findings offered in this study may consolidate a framework for the understanding of teacher identity construction.

### **Structure and Organization of Study**

The present document constitutes the report of the research study and has been organized as follows: In the second chapter, we will lay out the theoretical frameworks of the study with particular reference to the construct of teacher identity, sociocultural perspective, and narrative as a phenomenon. The third chapter will introduce a brief review of the literature on the construction of teacher identity in Colombia and other contexts. The fourth one will describe the methodology used for this study with a focus on the participants, the methods for data collection, and the procedures for analyzing the data. The fifth chapter will disclose the retold stories of the participants while allowing readers and reviewers of this study to get a preamble to the findings of the study. The sixth chapter will unfold the findings of the research. First, it will describe how the teacher identity construction occurred in the cases of the six participants. Then, it will account on the factors that promoted and hindered the construction of teacher identity. In the seventh

chapter, we will offer the discussion and conclusions of the study, addressing the pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and possibilities for future research in the area of foreign language teacher identity.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framework

The present research study aims to understand how STs in an English language teacher education program construct their teacher identity. In that sense, we now address a series of constructs that constituted the conceptual lens to help us examine the construction of teacher identity in the present study. Firstly, we introduce the concept of teacher identity. Secondly, we discuss the phenomenon of teacher identity construction from a sociocultural perspective. Thirdly, we review the concept of narrative as a phenomenon that may take part in the construction of teacher identity.

#### Teacher Identity Construction

The process of becoming someone involves the construction of a person's identity. Danielewicz (2001) states that "identity is our understanding of who we are and of who we think other people are. Reciprocally, the term also encompasses other people's understanding of themselves and others" (p. 10). In line with Danielewicz's (2001) idea of seeing identity as individual and social, Clarke (2009) recognizes a person's identities as how the person views him/herself and how other people see him/her. Norton (2013) uses the term identity to "reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, and how that relationship is constructed across time and space" (p. 45). Johnson similarly (2003) argues that identity is "constructed and altered by how I see others and how they see me in our shared experiences and negotiated interactions" (p. 788). Danielewicz (2001) claims that "creating identities is not an individual undertaking, but involves others, especially groups or collectives connected to social institutions as well as

the discourses associated with them” (p. 35). On the other hand, various scholars (Johnson and Golombek, 2016; Penuel and Wertsch, 1995; Roth, 2003) have theorized about the social origin and formation of identity by highlighting how cultural tools shape and re-shape action in goal-oriented activity, so that identity is a being in continuous becoming through activity. From the above, we can conclude that teacher identity is the understanding of who we are and how people see us as individuals, and its development is constantly shifting due to the teaching experiences and social interactions.

The concept of teacher identity is linked to internal (personal) and external (social) realities. The former entails cognition, while the latter denotes roles (Fajardo, 2011). The internal realities constructed by teachers are crucial when constructing teacher identity, given the fact that those come from the result of teachers' experiences as learners (Lorti, 1975). Barkhuizen (2017) acknowledges that teacher identity is both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material and technological world. In addition, Barkhuizen adds that teacher identity changes, in short-term and over time, discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners and the like, and in material interaction with spaces, places and institutions. Teacher identity is similarly argued to be developed as part of the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2001), which means that the university teacher education program and the teaching practicum provide STs with the theoretical and practical tools to construct their new identity as teachers.

However, the process of becoming a teacher does not start when students enter an English language teacher education program; it also involves meaningful and unconscious previous experiences that students had as learners in basic education which might contribute to shape the idea of being a teacher. Prospective teachers enter the English

language teacher education program with several experiences as students. This long-term process of socialization leads prospective teachers to develop everyday concepts about teaching and being a teacher (Johnson and Golombek, 2018). Lorti (1975) recognizes that “being a student is like serving an apprenticeship in teaching” (p. 61), given the fact that students spend an average of 13,000 hours in direct contact with teachers by the time they graduate from high school (Lorti, 1975). Thus, as teacher learners or STs in a teacher education program gain pedagogical knowledge regarding what and how to teach, and take part in classroom practices and the teacher community, they build a new identity as teachers.

The social interaction is a crucial element in the formation of teacher identity since it is through others that we become ourselves (Vygotsky, 1987). In this regard, Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) also claim that the teacher identity is not only constructed from personal experiences, technical and emotional aspects of teaching (such as classroom management, knowledge regarding the foreign language and how to teach it, and the like), “but also as the result of an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis” (p. 603).

Social actors such as former teachers, professors, classmates, and colleagues play an essential role in the construction of teacher identity, given the fact that they can influence and empower the way teachers act and behave in their learning communities. Furthermore, STs develop their teacher identity as they become members of a community of practice where learning happens in social interactions (Wenger, 1998).



Fajardo (2014) similarly claims that the concept of teacher identity is understood as what teachers do and know. The former includes social recognition (community membership), while the latter involves beliefs, motivation, or emotions (cognition). STs experience social recognition when they become members of a teacher community. Thus, cognition emerges as a result of their schooling experiences and learning-to-teach experiences as STs (Fajardo, 2014). Based on the previous statement, teacher identity is how teachers see themselves, and are recognized by others. The construction of teacher identity is multifaceted, unstable and is constantly shifting as prospective teachers engage in a teacher community (e.g, university or teaching practicum) and gain pedagogical knowledge.

As Cooper and Olson (1996) affirm, “teacher identity is continually being informed, formed, and reformed as individuals develop over time and through interaction with others” (p. 80). Thus, we can claim that the development of teacher identity is influenced by many factors (beliefs, perceptions, personal history, social interactions, cultural, psychological factors and the like). When constructing teacher identity, STs copy and integrate models and strategies from colleagues and the context that surround them. According to Castellanos (2004 as cited in Díaz, 2013), the construction of teacher identity is linked to the interaction and collaboration with cooperating teachers and practicum supervisors. It then follows that “the culture of the school, its internal dynamics and organization, enable or constrain the achievement of 'satisfaction', 'commitment' and 'motivation', and impact upon teachers' constructions of their teacher identities” (Day et al. 2006, p. 606).

Similarly, Sossa, Luna, and Carrillo (2017) assert that teacher identity is not only influenced by the personal identity, but it is also built up every single day by teachers'

beliefs and the setting where they work. Johnson and Golombek (2011) recognize teacher professional development as a complicated, prolonged, highly situated, and deeply personal process that has no start or end point. In this sense, we can say that the process of becoming and being a teacher is never-ending and requires participation in social practices while teachers face the different realities in their teaching practice.

### **Factors that affect the teacher identity construction**

The teacher identity construction entails an ongoing, never-ending process of being and becoming (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) that is affected by many factors such as beliefs, social interactions, personal history, cultural and psychological factors. As the teacher identity is mediated through social practice (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Vygotsky, 1987), we can say that STs construct their teacher selves as they interact with the teacher community.

Social actors, such as former teachers, professors from the English language teacher education program, practicum supervisors, cooperating teachers, and colleagues play a crucial role in this dynamic process, since those actors not only allowed STs to shape the idea of being a teacher, but from them, they copy and integrate a model of being. Besides, the support, encouragement and feedback from practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers enable STs to reinforce their self-images as prospective teachers and to recognize their teaching competencies as valued (Tsui, 2007; Wegner, 1998).

The teaching practicum is another important source of teacher identity formation (Day et al. 2006; Similarly, Sossa, Luna, & Carrillo, 2017) since it is the moment when STs face the school realities and put into practice all the theoretical knowledge gained in the English teacher education program. As STs are immersed in a community of practice, they recognize themselves as teachers and value their teaching competencies while taking on a

new identity. From the above, we can say that the teacher identity formation is the result of the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2001).

Moreover, English language student teachers engage in meaningful narrative experiences throughout their stay in the teacher education program that foster reflection upon their realities and their act of teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986). Bengtsson (1995) asserts that “within work contexts, reflection becomes an acknowledged way for student-teachers to learn about their practice and about themselves” (p. 37). In this vein, reflection allows STs to think of new possibilities to act within the teaching context, shape, and create a new understanding of being a teacher.

To conclude, we can say that the process of teacher identity construction is constantly shifting and is mediated and transformed through the social practice. Therefore, the fact of belonging to a teacher community (teaching practicum), the reflection generated from the act of teaching, and social actors positively influence the identity construction. From the previous sociocultural environments, STs not only shape a new sense of professional affiliation since they are recognized as members of a teacher community, but also they create a model being from the social interaction with professors, and colleagues.

### **Sociocultural Perspective in Teacher Education**

When considering the underpinnings of identity development, Vygotsky's approach to cognitive development suggests a clear mindful stance based on a sociocultural process. For instance, Johnson and Golombek (2016), who frame their research approach in Vygotskian theory, see “the development of human cognition as inherently social; that is, it emerges out of participation in external forms of social interaction that become internalized

psychological tools for thinking (internalization)” (p. 4). Social activity is considered then as the vital process through which human cognition is formed, considering that human cognition happens when the person is part of a sociocultural environment. When someone is allowed to be part of a group who shares resembling characters, tools of thought, and language, he or she develops different mechanisms that “might influence the capacity to reflect critically and meaningfully with peers” (Cavanagh et al, 2014, p. 4).

Penuel and Wertsch (1995) acknowledged in Vygotsky his capacity to approach “development as a process of transformation of individual functioning as various forms of social practice become internalized by individuals” (p. 84); clarifying the cognitive development as a result of social practices adopted and adapted by individuals, but also suggesting that this cognitive development of individuals ends fundamentally permeated by others' functions and social practices. Likewise, regarding Vygotsky, Penuel and Wertsch hold the view that “the major thrust of his work was dedicated to the proposition that all human mental functioning is socioculturally, historically, and institutionally situated” (p. 84).

Turning the sociocultural theory towards the field of teacher education, teachers seem to acquire most of their understanding on how to teach from their experiences as learners, and through practices lived along their contact with teachers, as discussed by Cavanagh et al. (2014). Our research interest is then to analyze different experiences that may promote and hinder the teacher identity construction in an English language teacher education program. It is through a sociocultural perspective that we intend to identify who and what plays a role in promoting or hindering certain situations that may have contributed to the construction of teacher identity.

We should consider that all the experiences lived by the participants in this study, in the undergraduate English teacher education program, have been socially constructed and have played an important role in this complex interplay, resulting not only in gaining teacher cognition and experience but also in co-constructing their teacher identity.

Engeström (1987), for instance, weighs on the process of social interaction by expressing that “the individual’s contribution quickly loses its individual identity and merges into a vast pool of similar contributions in the social exchange within communities” (p. 127). In this view, we can derive that the students of the English language teacher education program have placed their individuality in an assortment of characteristics and values, and through interacting with others in the English language teacher education program, they may have socially constructed a teacher identity. In fact, it is through the interaction with their community and the social practices that prospective teachers can experience and imagine themselves while both being and becoming the result of such identity formation.

Commenting on the engagement in practice as a source of identity formation, Gu and Benson (2014) propose it as “a powerful source of identification through which one develops a sense of who one is, how one can participate in activities, and what competencies are needed” (p. 189). Since the community of the STs displays an amalgam of characters, sociocultural experiences and professional practices; this might offer a chance to identify factors in which their identity was formed.

Another significant aspect concerning the importance of the sociocultural theory is mentioned by Johnson and Golombek (2016), when reflecting upon the implications of scientific and everyday concepts. Vygotsky (1987) defines the former as the scientific and academic concepts taught in schools and the latter as the intuitive concepts contained in

everyday situations and contexts. Furthermore, the importance of these two concepts lays upon their interrelationship; how they interlace to transform thinking and practice (Fleer, 2009). That is to say, linking the theoretical and pedagogical knowledge to teachers' experiential and practical knowledge may "enable them [teachers] to reorganize their experiential knowledge and this reorganization creates a new lens through which they interpret their understandings of themselves" (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p. 6).

Consequently, we focused on student teachers' social relationships and interactions with their professors and peers during the undergraduate teacher education program, acknowledging this as crucial to the construction of teacher identity for providing sufficient everyday concepts which possibly transformed their thinking and teaching practice.

To elucidate our view of sociocultural theory and its implication for teacher identity construction, we consider Singh and Richards (2006) who explained the process as, "woven through the ideologies, discourses, contents and approaches of the course, and the individual teacher's own desire to find meaning in becoming a teacher" (p. 152). Hence, the sociocultural perspective describes a route to achieve teacher knowledge while inherently constructing teacher identity, if we understand teacher identity as socially transformed by a range of situations in which the individual is immersed (Johnson, 2001).

For the reasons previously stated, we considered sociocultural theory as a concept that leads to comprehend teacher identity construction. Evidently, STs participate in academic guided situations to learn about scientific and pedagogical content. Equally important, they are led towards the everyday concepts through culturally-immersed contexts, discussions and reflection. In this way, STs participate actively and socially in critical and reflective identity construction, as well as acquire teacher knowledge. This

summarizes our understanding of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a lens to examine teacher identity construction in an English teacher education program.

### **Narrative as Phenomenon in Teacher Identity Construction**

Huber et al. (2013) highlighted the relevance of stories by asserting that, "stories are not to be treated lightly as they both carry, and inspire, significant obligations and responsibilities: stories must be cared for as they are at the heart of how we make meaning of our experiences of the world" (p. 214). This illustrates to some extent our perspective and interest in narrative as a phenomenon in understanding participants' process of identity construction in an English language teacher education program. By addressing student teachers' narratives of experiences (while) in the program we might come to a better understanding of the set of circumstances experienced in this teacher education program.

Bell (2002) similarly states that,

People make sense of their lives according to the narratives available to them, that stories are constantly being restructured in the light of new events, and that stories do not exist in a vacuum but are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives. (p. 208)

The distinctive narratives lived by student teachers throughout the English language teacher education program may contribute to examine professional identity construction, granting narratives a deserved role in the discussion of teacher development and the construction of teacher identity (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). Moreover, by understanding the participant's narrative experiences as stories consisting of events, characters and settings organized in a determined temporal sequence (Carter, 1993); we may come to comprehend better the causality and significance in their process of teacher identity

construction. It is then the interaction with others' stories by retelling and restorying them, as provoked by dialogue in different social interactions, which may contribute in fact to the ongoing construction of an identity (Denardi & Gil, 2015).

As importantly, the stories we share constitute the grounds for our behavior and self; all the narratives inform and define our identities in that "internalized stories provide a narrative means for processing data, regardless of whether that data manifests itself as numbers, language-based communication, or cultural phenomena" (Hearne & Trites, 2009, p. xi). Consequently, as noted by McLean and Pasupathi (2010), narrating stories is a process that seems to influence "identity more traditionally conceptualized, that is, identity in terms of beliefs, ideological commitments, social roles, and even self-views" (p. xxi)

Narrative permits an individual to generate a perspective of the world by means of stories. "Narrative is the phenomenon of inquiry because everything, including teacher development, is a phenomenon narrated through stories. The phenomena of narrative inquiry are, themselves, narrative in nature" (Xu & Connelly, 2009, p. 221). Then, if the research purpose is to understand the phenomenon of teacher identity construction as narrated through the stories of the different actors and as narratively co-constructed within the experiences in an English teacher education program, it compels to voice the narratives of the participating student teachers upon entering the program (Xu & Connelly, 2009). And, once in the program, identify story sources, narrative experiences for retelling and restorying, and individuals involved in their narrative practices.

English language student teachers engage constantly in personal and enriching narrative experiences throughout the teacher education program; narratives that contribute to foster reflection on teacher knowledge and awareness of their own teacher realities and



needs (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986). Some authors (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Huver, Caine, Huver, Steeves, 2013) recognize mainly the importance of narrative, for in-service teachers, on its (re)constructive process of inquiry. They admit its potential in that it enables teachers to interpret and reinterpret their experiences for building knowledge. In a similar fashion, Johnson and Golombek (2002) identified the importance of narrative in its inquiry, for it contributes “to describe the complexities of their practice while stepping back from the hermeneutical processes in which they [teachers] normally engage” (p. 6).

However, we want to consider the relevance of replicating and voicing student teachers' narratives during their English language teacher education programs essentially because, “teacher knowledge is personal knowledge, and anything taught to teachers as knowledge-for-teachers becomes teacher knowledge and touches the very heart of who teachers are by touching their identity as teachers and as persons” (Xu & Connelly, 2009, p. 223). We believe that student teachers' narratives should be considered when we aim at understanding how their undergraduate experiences may have contributed to their interpretation of teaching, the meaning-making of teaching and the construction of teacher identity prior to their commencement as in-service teachers.

In terms of the relationship of narrative and teacher identity construction, Hall (2011) notes that, “precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies” (p. 4). While a student teacher participates in dialectic practices and (re)tell stories, he may come to comprehend what he is narrating about, affecting the comprehension and knowledge of the other student teacher(s) or professor(s) engaged in such practice. As

Riessman (2008) explained, a central function of narrative is the construction of identities:

“when research participants engage in the practice of storytelling, they do so because narrating has effects in social interaction that other models in communication do not... Most obviously, individuals and groups construct identities through storytelling” (p. 8).

When we tell narratives, we do not solely reveal our identities, but we represent them.

According to Sfard and Prusak (as cited in Liu & Xu, 2011) in their work *telling identities*, “identities may be defined as collections of stories about persons or, more specially, as those narratives about individuals that are reifying, endorsable, and significant” (p. 590). With this in mind, addressing the narratives of student teachers might help us to know the process of teacher identity construction, and hopefully, to observe categorically the sources that contribute to it. This view is supported by Johnson (2009) who writes that “teachers’ prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and most importantly, the context within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do” (p. 9).

Certainly, narrative contributes to the formation of teachers, with a clear appreciation on their persona, with determined focus on the foundations of who they are and what makes them later share such identities with their own students, redefining their purposes for teaching English and for becoming teachers of English. Therefore, we consider narrative as a phenomenon, as a door that grants student teachers access to teacher knowledge and to the construction of teacher identity. As Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) point out, “through storytelling, teachers engage in narrative ‘theorizing’ and, based on that, teachers may further discover and shape their professional identity resulting in new or different stories” (p. 121).

Understanding the process of teacher identity construction has become an area of relevance in teacher education since it brings us closer to comprehend “what teachers know and how their knowing is expressed in teaching” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1997, p. 666). Thus, it is equally important to identify what student teachers already know upon entering English teacher education programs in order to understand the narrative context shaping a teacher's experience and learning once he is enrolled. Thus, to understand the essential nature of narrative activity and its properties, including knowledge gaining, one would have to recall Carr's (1986) words:

This is to say that narration in our sense is constitutive not only of action and experience but also of the self which acts and experiences. Rather than a merely temporally persisting substance which underlies and supports the changing effects of time, like a thing in relation to its properties, I am the subject of a life-story which is constantly being told and retold in the process of being lived. I am also the principal teller of this tale, and belong as well to the audience to which it is told. (p. 126)

Carr's advocative definition of narrative in respect to the area of teacher education reflects upon the life-story and also upon the student teacher (subject of the story) who acts and experiences. It considers the changing spatial-temporal conditions, and, also, how the process of telling and retelling the story while experiencing and learning may have implications for both the subject of the story and the other actors involved in the setting where and when the story happened.

Correspondingly, regarding the reflective function of narrative, it is when student teachers engage in opportunities for reflection during, but not limited to, the undergraduate

program coursework and practicums, that they construct their narratives of experience as well as create a purpose for their future as teachers, knowing and making meaning of teaching and teacher education (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986). That is why we ought to consider that teacher knowledge entails a narrative constructive endeavor which highly involves the student teacher's experiences. As noted by Xu and Connelly (2009), "teacher knowledge is a narrative construct which references the totality of a person's personal practical knowledge gained from formal and informal educational experience" (p. 221). Thus, it is important to know student teachers' constant engagement with the narrative (re)construction of their selves during their time in the undergraduate English teacher education program.

In short, narratives are a powerful method to reveal the engagement of teachers with their teaching contexts. Analyzing stories provides an opportunity to know student teachers' learning and teaching experiences towards the construction of a teacher (professional) identity (Schultz & Ravitch, 2012). Narratives allow us to discuss and reflect with student teachers on identifying moments of influence which may have shaped their teacher identity during their stay in the undergraduate English teacher education program.

This chapter has posed the three theoretical constructs that consolidate the lens through which we observe the construction of teacher identity. First, we elaborated on the construct of teacher identity as a prolonged and complex process that is affected by different personal and social factors. Second, we discussed the implications of the sociocultural perspective as a constitutional theory that contributes to understand the route to achieve teacher knowledge while inherently constructing teacher identity. Finally, we reviewed narrative as a phenomenon that may permit student teachers access to teacher

cognition and consequently shape their teacher identity. The following chapter revises related studies, considers their findings and research implications.

## Chapter 3

### Literature review

This chapter discusses some related studies that need to be considered to understand how STs and prospective teachers constructed their teacher identity in Colombia, and other contexts. Besides, it sheds light on the factors that promoted or hindered the construction of teacher identity.

The construction of teacher identity is a never-ending process, that changes over time through the social interaction. Besides, it is created and recreated during the active process of learning to teach (Izadinia, 2013). This section introduces the contribution of scholars in the field of teacher identity construction, and based on their insights we can say that the construction of teacher identity is constantly shifting and is mediated through the social practice. Social actors such as former teachers and practicum supervisors shaped their identity through support during their learning-to-teach experiences. Besides, the teaching practicum is a crucial moment in the process of becoming a teacher given the fact that STs and prospective teachers put into practice their knowledge about teaching, reflect upon their actions in order to improve their practice, and the teacher community recognizes their competences as valued.

Regarding the development of teacher identity, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2012) conducted a longitudinal study in Finland. The aim of the study focused on exploring the professional identity development of two foreign language teachers during their first years of teaching. Reflective narratives and interviews allowed participants to recall their first-year experiences, their language teaching practices, and reflection on their identity as teachers. Results showed that the participants' narratives display two different experiences: a painful

and an easy beginning. The first participant reflected on her role as a teacher and learner, the best methods for language teaching and the importance to establish good relationships with pupils. While the second participant's strongest theme was disappointment caused by the failures she faced. This teacher claimed that she was given a false picture of the school reality during her teacher education and did not feel prepared to face those challenges. Even though participants received the same preparation to teach, their initial professional identity differed in the beginning when facing the multiple challenges in their school community. The first participant was reluctant and self-doubtful about her role when teaching since the very beginning. Her narratives did not display a positive teacher identity, but the development of two separate identities: an ideal and a forced identity that were in constant conflict. On the other hand, the second participant's professional identity evolved through reflection, time and the help of other colleagues. For her, failures and new challenges were positive opportunities to find her own path as a teacher. This study is relevant to our research given the fact that it suggests that educating teachers is not only about introducing concepts but understanding students' beliefs about being a teacher; an aspect that has a lot to do with the construction of teacher identity. Besides, this research study "points out that the professional identity development of pre-service teachers cannot be taken for granted, and requires more overt attention" in ELT programs (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2012, p. 127).

Salinas and Ayala (2018) carried out a case study that explored how two English as a foreign language student teachers (Carol and Molly) constructed their professional identity throughout their teacher formation program in Chile. Personal narratives, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group showed that the construction of student teachers' professional identity is unstable and is shaped by the inter-related personal and external

factors such as self-image, learning environment, and practicum experiences. Carol and Molly's self-image changed through the process as a consequence of their learning environment and practicum experiences. Carol's improvement in her language and teaching skill made her become self-confident. When carrying out her teaching practicum, her teacher supervisor's feedback and suggestions were not only helpful for her to grow professionally, but to reinforce her self-image as a teacher. Besides, she realized that there is a difference between theory and practice when it comes to classroom management. However, she adapted her teaching style to the needs and likes of her students in order to improve her relationship with them. In regard to Molly's case, professors had a huge impact on her as a student teacher, given the fact that the interaction with professors helped her move from being a shy and low confident student teacher, to being a self-confident one. On the other hand, the lack of presence of her mentor teacher, misbehavior and parents were seen as some obstacles for her. However, being able to solve unexpected problems made her feel self-confident about her new role as a teacher. Teacher identity is a complex process in which teachers must negotiate and reshape their identity through social interaction, as in the case of Carol and Molly. Gratifications, obstacles, and experiences allowed them to shape their professional identity.

In another study, Tsui (2007) explored the teacher identity formation of an EFL teacher through a narrative inquiry in the Peoples' Republic of China. The implementation of face-to-face storytelling and reflective diaries allowed the researcher to construct and reconstruct the participant's lived experience as an EFL learner and teacher throughout his six years of teaching. This narrative inquiry shows that teacher identity is highly complex. Participation is crucial to identity formation. However, participation, as well as



nonparticipation in negotiating meaning, is shaped by power relationships among members of a community. Likewise, the participant's lived experience points out that there are two sources of identity formation. The recognition of the teacher's competence valued by a community, and his legitimacy of access to practice (Tsui, 2007). The previous statement implies that social recognition of one's competence is an important aspect when it comes to identity formation.

Liu and Xu (2013) carried out a narrative inquiry that studies the trajectory of learning of a language teacher in the workplace in China. The study focused on a single case of a middle-aged teacher who had learned and taught English with a traditional approach. Also, she had to cope with challenges in her workplace as she was the department head and leader of a liberal pedagogical reform. Researchers gathered the data through four 90-minute interviews, two reflective essays and informal conversations. Findings revealed that the teacher needed to shift her identities to adapt to the new work order in the workplace. Additionally, the trajectory of learning can be shaped and reshaped by power relationships, as in the participant's case. Before joining the school community, she saw herself as a "traditional teacher" for 17 years. When offering to become the Chair of the Department, it was evident her rejection to accept this job. However, her identity diverged once she took up the leadership position. This study points out that teachers need to shift their identity in order to survive the new challenges of a teaching context. Besides, it confirms that teacher identity formation is a process that has no start or end point (Danielewicz, 2001); identity is never fully or finally achieved since we are always actively being and becoming.

Izadinia (2013) presented a review of 29 studies concerning student teachers' identity. It is worth mentioning that the studies considered for this review were not focused on language teaching specifically. However, the researchers explored the influence of four broad variables that allow student teachers to construct their teacher identity: the impact of reflective activities, the learning communities in which student teachers are involved, contextual factors, and prior experiences. The result of these variables impacted student teachers' confidence, sense of agency, self-awareness, critical consciousness, cognitive knowledge, their voice and relationship with colleagues, parents, and pupils, which are "the interrelated components of student-teacher identity" (Izadinia, 2013, p. 709). Izadinia similarly observed that the reviewed studies only reported positive changes and desirable outcomes, and "there was no mention of the unfavorable results and the challenges student-teachers faced during the process of identity formation" (Izadinia, 2013, p. 709). Besides, this study suggests that it is essential to pay close attention to the influence of teacher educator-student teacher relationship on the construction of student teachers' professional identity.

In a different study, Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, and Fry (2004) studied the tensions a student teacher faced in her teaching context, and her expectations for good instruction as provided by the university. Researchers collected data from the ST during her teaching practicum and her first teaching job, such as concept map activities, interviews with the student teacher, her university supervisor and her cooperating teacher. Researchers observed some tensions between the constructivist nature of the university program and the traditional instruction where the student teacher had to complete her practicum. The student teacher often expressed frustration at the lack of opportunities she had to teach according to

the principles she had learned at the university, and she was worried about becoming a traditional teacher. Her cooperating teacher strict guidance did not allow her to use the constructive tenets she had learned, so she accommodated to her cooperating teachers' ideas. On the other hand, in her first teaching job, she had the opportunity to put into practice her constructivism tenets. According to Smagorinsky et al. (2004), tensions can be seen as potentially productive in creating environments conducive to the formation of a satisfying teaching identity. In this regard, the tensions she experienced, provided her with more determination to find her identity as a teacher.

Fajardo (2014) conducted an exploratory research aimed to investigate the construction of professional identities from the interplay between participation in a teacher community and students' systems of knowledge and beliefs. Participants were six Colombian pre-service teachers in the final stage of their English language teacher education program. It is important to mention that this study was one of the few studies conducted in the Colombian context regarding the development of teacher identity in ELT programs. Interviews, stimulated recall and online blogs allowed the researcher to reveal that the process of learning to teach is socially negotiated. Belonging to a teacher community has a direct connection with constructing professional identities. According to Fajardo (2014), the school community and teachers' institutional agendas such as course planning, assessment, and professional development can play a significant role in the process of identity construction. Another important aspect is the social act of being recognized as a teacher rather than a student teacher that helped some participants to shape their sense of professional affiliation. However, there were some experiences of exclusion in which one of the participants was not invited to an institutional meeting with parents.

This situation shows that belonging to a teacher community may also result in tensions of power and dependence (Fajardo, 2014). The above means that significant events of professional inclusion or exclusion can contribute to the construction of teacher identity.

In another study in the Colombian context, Díaz (2013) conducted a descriptive case study that examined the identity formation of student teachers through a cyclical model of reflection and the role of the teacher community in STs' identity construction. The study involved ten STs of the foreign language program of a public university in Colombia. The implementation of group dialogues, diaries, and participant observation revealed that "identity is a social process that evolves in the settings where people learn and interact" (Díaz, 2013, p. 47). STs' reflections showed that their identity was shaped by the context where they developed their teaching practicum. They moved from dependent state towards independent decision. According to Díaz (2013), some students showed their willingness to make independent decisions, but they learned that in the school they had to follow top down instructions. The above implies that reflection plays a crucial role in the formation of teacher identity since it allows STs to think of new possibilities to act and be within the teaching context. Also, from the moment they started taking risks and making decisions, they became aware that teaching was not only about transferring knowledge, but it was about being a helping hand to their students.

Finally, Quintero (2016) examined the (re)construction of pre-service teachers' personal, academic and professional selves in an ELT program in Bogotá. Participants were eighty pre-service English language teachers. However, the researcher selected nine of them in order to report the research study. Written life stories were the primary source of information which fostered reflection upon the pre-service teachers' academic life

experiences. Written life stories revealed that the social interaction and the fact of seeing themselves as part of a teacher community play a crucial role when shaping identities. Also, the university provided them with the theoretical and practical tools to make sense of the human dimension of education that determines their identity, such as being a transformative teacher. Besides, social actors such as teachers and classmates helped pre-service teachers shape their identity through encouragement and support during learning experiences. On the other hand, relationships between strict in-service teachers and pre-service teachers influenced the construction of their teaching selves. Those strict teachers were models for pre-service teachers to not be like them. Besides, the teaching practicum sessions helped pre-service teachers to be more empathetic and humane to their students.

The previous studies highlight the importance of studying the construction of teacher identity. Besides, Salinas and Ayala (2018) point out the relevance of understanding the factors involved in the process of teacher identity construction since it will help to better prepare teachers to face their teaching practice. Those studies reaffirmed that the construction of teacher identity is constantly shifting and is mediated and transformed through the social practice (Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Lui & Xu, 2013; Fajardo, 2014; Izadinia, 2013). Professional environments may affect teachers' identities both positively and negatively (Tsui, 2007; Salinas & Ayala, 2018). The teaching practicum is a crucial moment in the process of becoming a teacher, given the fact that it challenges STs to face the school reality and confronts what they have acquired regarding the principles of language teaching. Obstacles, failures, and tensions lived throughout the teaching practicum can lead to reflection and self-confidence, allowing STs to develop their professional identity (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2012; Tsui, 2007; Smagorinsky et al., 2004).

Another important aspect regarding the construction of teacher identity is social recognition which takes place in the school community. The recognition of student teacher's competence as valued by the school community is an important source of identity formation (Tsui, 2007; Fajardo, 2014; Izadinia, 2013). Freeman and Johnson (1998) point out that participation in the social practices and the sociocultural environments associated with teaching and learning is essential to learning how to teach. Moreover, practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers who are in charge of guiding student teachers in their practicum, contribute to shape their identities. Their feedback, suggestions, and encouragement were opportunities for them to reinforce their self-images as future teachers (Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Quintero, 2016). On the other hand, interaction with professors of the teacher education program had an impact on student teachers. This interaction shaped STs' identity through encouragement and support during their learning experiences (Salinas & Ayala, 2018). Also, from that interaction, student teachers moved from being low confident to being self-confident teachers. The human dimension of professors, cooperating teachers and practicum supervisors can resonate with STs in such a deep way that they may see them as role models (Izadinia, 2013). The research studies cited above highlight the power of narratives in order to re-construct previous experiences that helped teachers or STs to become who they are as professionals (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2012; Salinas and Ayala, 2018; Tsui, 2007; Lui and Xu, 2013; Diaz, 2013; & Quintero, 2016).

This literature review provided insights regarding the elements that may influence the construction of teacher identity, such as the interaction with social actors (professors and supervisory teachers), the fact of belonging to a teacher community, recognition of his or her role in the school community, and the challenges found in the teaching practicum.

However, it is important to focus on the obstacles and tensions STs face during the process of teacher identity construction since studies reported the positive outcomes (Izadinia, 2013).

Given the still limited number of studies concerning teacher identity in the field of language teacher education in the Colombian context, the present narrative research sought to contribute to understand the process student teachers go through to construct their teacher identity in an undergraduate English teacher education program at a public university in southern Colombia.

This chapter has approached an overview of the research studies regarding the construction of teacher identity conducted in Colombia and other contexts. The following section includes the methodology that guided this research study, describing the participants, researchers' positionality, the methods of data collection, the procedures for collecting the data, the procedures used for analyzing the data and trustworthiness.

## Chapter 4

### Research design

This chapter introduces the research approach and type of study, offers a description of the setting and participants, and presents the methods for collecting and analyzing data. Additionally, this chapter provides an explanation of the researchers' role and the concept of trustworthiness that guided this narrative research.

#### Research Approach

The present study followed a qualitative narrative research orientation. In a qualitative study, "the main focus ... is to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people" (Kumar, 2011, p. 103). Additionally, a narrative inquiry focuses on "studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual" (Creswell, 2002, p. 502). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) similarly define narrative research as "a way of understanding experience" involving "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (p. 20). When conducting a narrative study, researchers establish a close relationship with participants as it allows them to understand certain experiences and get detailed information that people do not consciously know themselves. Bell (2002) claims that a narrative inquiry "allows researchers to present experiences holistically in all its complexity and richness" (p. 209). This type of study involves working with people's consciously told stories, recognizing that these rest on deeper stories of which people are often unaware (Bell, 2002). Bell then adds that:



Whether or not they believe the stories they tell is relatively unimportant because the inquiry goes beyond the specific stories to explore the assumptions inherent in the shaping of those stories. No matter how fictionalized, all stories rest on and illustrate the story structures a person holds. As such they provide a window into people's beliefs and experiences. (Bells, 2002, p. 209)

As narrative inquiry requires going beyond the use of narratives as a rhetorical structure, that is, beyond simply telling stories, to an analytical examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates (Bell, 2002). This approach helped us to understand our participants' experiences in depth, their interpretation of themselves and the events that shed light on who they are as teachers. It similarly examined how participants shaped and transformed their teacher identity as they negotiate forms of participation as members of a teacher community (learners in a school, teacher learners in a teacher education program, and student teachers in the teaching practicum).

As narratives tell participants' experiences, "they may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves" (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). Narratives illuminate the particular experiences of individuals and illustrate how student teachers and prospective teachers shape and transform their professional identities (Schultz & Ravitch, 2013). According to Schultz and Ravitch (2013), narratives are seen as "acts of meaning" (Bruner, 1990) "through which people create explanatory frameworks to make sense of their learning to teach through reflection and analysis. Those acts of meaning are the intersection of the acquisition of knowledge, the development of emergent identities, and practice" (p. 37). A narrative is seen as the discourse that tells experiences and the meanings that these experiences have for our participating student teachers. Narratives seek to restore

remarkable memories and experiences that may illustrate how STs see themselves as teachers and how they construct their professional identity.

“A narrative story is a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restoring as the research proceeds” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). This implies that participants and researchers construct a close relationship since both voices are heard throughout the research process. The above indicates the importance of a mutual construction of the research relationship, a relationship in which both participants and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

### **Setting and Participants**

This research study took place in the context of an undergraduate English language teacher education program at a public university in Southern Colombia. The college of education offers undergraduate teacher education programs aiming to prepare individuals to be teachers of different subjects, including mathematics, English, Spanish and literature, arts, early childhood education, and natural sciences.

The English teacher education program in this particular case, prepares prospective EFL teachers to work in primary and secondary schools in the country. Students who enter this program should complete 165 credits in order to be certified as English as a foreign language teachers. Throughout their stay in the English teacher education program, students gain proficiency in English and obtain knowledge regarding the areas of history and philosophy of education, general pedagogy, curriculum, and three English didactics seminars (methods courses) such as Second Language Learning Theories, Principles of Language Teaching, and Course Design and Assessment in order to master the fundamental

concepts about learning and teaching. Students are required to take courses in those areas prior to the start of the teaching practicums (Practicum I, Practicum II) (*Reglamento de práctica pedagógica*, 2004, p. 4).

STs must complete their two teaching practicum periods in a public or private primary and secondary school in their final year of the English teacher education program. Each ST is assigned a cooperating teacher (usually working in the designated school), and a practicum supervisor, who observes a number of lessons during each practicum and provides feedback to the ST. The English teacher education program states that the objectives of the teaching practicums are to provide STs with opportunities to plan and develop courses through teaching techniques and activities, in a real-life teaching and learning context, to gradually gain experience in their performance as teachers (*Reglamento de práctica*, 2004). In this regard, the teacher education program provides STs with the tools and knowledge to develop their own teaching styles, to understand affective factors and learning problems that affect students' learning process; and to encourage STs with the spirit for doing research towards solving issues associated with the teaching and learning process in the classroom or schools where they complete their practicums.

The group of participants selected for the present research study were three female and three male STs of the English teacher education program enrolled in their final practicum period. According to Gatbonton (2008), "a student teacher or novice teacher is the one who is still undergoing training, who has just completed their training or who has just commenced teaching and still has very little experience behind them" (p. 162). STs were between the ages of 20 and 25. All of them had graduated from public high schools, whereas five of them studied in "Normal schools". According to the article 112 of Law 115

(1994), "Normal schools are authorized to prepare educators for the preschool and primary levels" (Law 115 of 1994, translation). These Normal schools have an agreement with higher education institutions to operate as academic support for initial professional teacher preparation offering a complementary cycle in years 12 and 13. When students complete the cycle in a normal school, they receive a degree as a qualified preschool and primary teacher, and if they wish, they can continue into an undergraduate teacher education program in a college of education. It is worth mentioning that two participating STs completed the cycle in years 12 and 13 (Normal schools) to be qualified as teachers. Three out of five STs, who studied in Normal schools, did not complete the cycle because they did not want to be teachers.

Initially, we contacted and invited student teachers to participate in the present research study as volunteers. We invited them to an informal meeting where we discussed the purpose of our research study and how they, if accepted to participate, would be required to interact with us. Soon after having that talk, the STs expressed their interest in participating in the research study and signed the consent form (Appendix C) to officially begin the process. In the consent letter, we specified the purpose of the study, the type of data we were to collect, the right they had to leave the study at any time without any penalty and the importance of bestowing anonymity.

### **Researchers' Positionality**

The process of research is a shared space where researchers and participants interact; hence, both parts have potential to impact the investigation course. As Bourke (2014) proposed, "It is reasonable to expect that the researcher's beliefs, political stance, cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background)

are important variables that may affect the research process" (p. 2). For this reason, we considered it was relevant to describe our positionality as researchers.

We as researchers in the present study had graduated, a few years ago and at different times, from the same undergraduate English language teacher education program that the participants involved in this study currently attended. Advantages arise when both researchers and participants shared the same language and physical space, allowing privileged relations, background understanding and access to the field (Bousetta, 1997). In simpler terms, we were in their position once - student teachers, interacted with most of the professors they do as well, and probably experienced similar situations within the teacher education program. As part of our experiences in the undergraduate teacher education program, we had completed two practicum periods each; one of us did both practicums in public schools whereas the other did the first practicum at a private school and the second at a public one. It is relevant to mention that when we studied in the undergraduate teacher education program, we were taught by the professors who also taught the participants in this study. We then had the chance to meet each other in August 2017 as graduate students in the master's program we were pursuing and decided to work together on our final thesis project. It must be noted that we did not know any of the participants prior to start the research study, and we did not have any academic contact with them.

One of us had been working as a primary school teacher, in the private sector, for three consecutive years. This researcher has worked as a teacher of English for 7-year-olds. Also, this researcher travelled abroad through an exchange program, in 2015, when she could practice the target language and experience a cultural immersion.

The other researcher has been working as a visiting professor for the undergraduate English teacher education program since 2017. Simultaneously, this researcher gained experience working as a bilingual instructor for a public national institute of vocational education and training, from 2016 to 2018. This researcher has oriented English courses on different levels in the program, an experience that allowed him to get more acquainted with the program's faculty and students.

### **Data Collection**

The data were collected over a 5-month period, during the final year of STs in the English teacher education program. Written narratives, oral narratives, and participants' reflective journals written during their teaching practicums constituted the sources of data collection. The implementation of these methods helped us to gather meaningful experiences and difficulties that STs encountered upon entering and during their stay in the English language teacher education program.

Oral narratives followed the features of an unstructured interview. Kumar (2011) remarks that "the strength of unstructured interviews is the complete freedom they provide in terms of content and structure" (p. 137). Additionally, this instrument allows researchers to formulate questions and raise issues on the spur of the moment depending on what occurs during the discussion (Kumar, 2011).

On the other hand, written personal narratives reveal how teachers engage in the construction of narratives about themselves at the moment of teaching and learning to teach. Connelly, Clandinin and He (1997) acknowledged that in personal narratives students or participants "weave together their accounts of the personal and the professional, capturing fragments of experiences in attempts to sort themselves out" (p. 667). The

construction of personal narratives is seen as "acts of meaning" (as cited in Schultz & Ravitch, 2013) that allow teachers to make sense of their learning to teach through reflection. A written personal narrative is a first-person account of a language learning experience or teaching experience. In this regard, McDonough and McDonough (1997) claim that written personal narratives are a re-creation of an immediate experience. Moreover, the act of writing itself is a way of structuring, formulating and reacting to that experience, which leads to reflection and analysis of their actions.

Journals and written personal narratives are a way to account introspective information, providing the researcher with exponential information and details, granting the possibility to observe constantly the subject of research. Holly (as cited in McDonough & McDonough, 1997) recognizes in written personal narratives a private space, a forum for reflection. The sense of journals allows one to personally reflect upon the matter of study. In the English teacher education program, journals have a pedagogical use as well. STs write practicum journals when they are developing their teaching practicum. The process of writing allowed STs to reflect on their performance in the classroom, and assess the lessons, activities, and methodologies they implemented to enhance their professional development. Journals constituted a unique perspective to understand the construction of teacher identity in the process of learning to teach since STs wrote them to fulfill a practicum requirement and not as a method purposefully established by the context of the study.

The implementation of oral narratives and written personal narratives allowed us as researchers to obtain a richer and detailed description of the participants' experiences, in order to answer the research questions and construct the stories. In this vein, written and

oral narratives were the most suitable methods to give voice to their past experiences, and to reconstruct prior experiences regarding their exposure to teaching courses and pedagogies within the English language teacher education program. “The telling or retelling (either oral or written) of an experience entails a complex combination of description, explanation, analysis, interpretation, and construal of one’s private reality as it is brought into the public sphere” (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p. 33).

The researchers created an account on “Seesaw”, which is a digital portfolio in order to collect the written narratives. Firstly, Researchers asked STs to share pictures, tests, videos, assignments and academic transcripts that allowed them to recall experiences they lived in the teacher education program. Researchers were the only ones who had access to those files. STs could not see what their peers had posted either. Secondly, researchers posted an instruction (see Appendix D) for them to write three different personal narratives (see Appendix E) in order to recall experiences of their first year in the program (henceforth WN1), their second and third years in the program (henceforth WN2), and their experiences as STs during their final year in the English teacher education program (henceforth WN3). These narratives were written in three different moments with a one-month deadline. Written personal journals allowed us to get to know our STs a little bit more, understand who they were and their background, who they were before entering the teacher education program, who their teachers were, and the meaningful experiences that may shed light on their construction of teacher identity.

Once STs wrote and uploaded their first written narrative, the researcher contacted each one of them and set a date to conduct the first unstructured interview (oral narrative). Then, the researchers and the STs met at the university at the time arranged and took as the



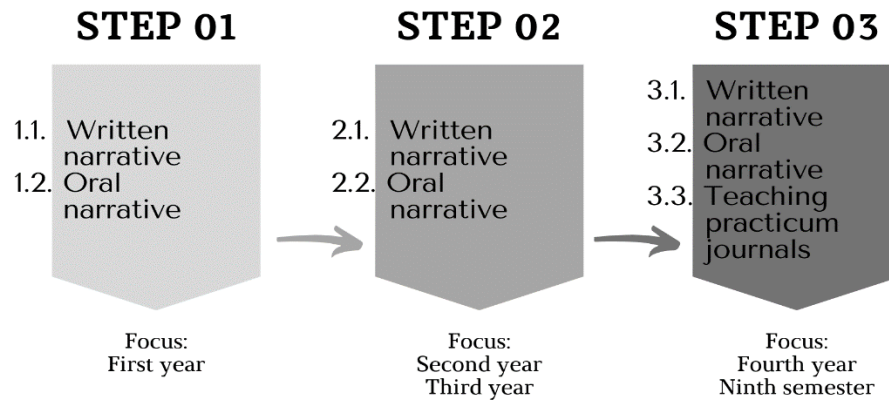
starting point in the interview what they had written in their written narratives. Each oral narrative was audio-recorded and took place in an air-conditioned room in the university. STs used Spanish, their mother tongue, during the course of data collection since this could add spontaneity and flow to the conversation. The purpose of the first oral narrative was to get to know every single one of the STs and to dig deeper into their experiences as students in their first year of the English teacher education program. The second oral narrative enabled STs to recall previous experiences as students in their second and third year in the English language teacher education program. During their narratives, STs referred to challenges, professors, courses, academic spaces and classmates that helped them to construct their teachers' selves. And the third oral narrative, shed light on their experiences as STs in their final year in the teacher education program, while highlighting the difficulties and remarkable experiences lived throughout their teaching practicums. The oral narratives lasted around 50 minutes to one hour, and STs offered narratives of their reasons to enroll in the teacher education program, their former teachers in secondary school and their legacy, the professors and courses of the teacher education program, and the difficulties and experiences they had as STs in a community of practice. Researchers took into account the study plan of the English teacher education program which indicated the courses they took each semester and the name of the professors at the time of conducting the oral narratives in order to recall previous experiences as students of the teacher education program. STs were asked to bring a copy of an unofficial transcript of their study plan that allowed them to recall previous experiences lived throughout the English language teacher education program. It is important to highlight that when conducting the oral narratives STs brought up crucial aspects that were not written in the

journal in depth. These face-to-face encounters provided us with the opportunity to interact with the participants in an honest way and develop a close relationship with them.

Finally, we asked STs to share the reflective journals they wrote during their teaching practicum periods, for us to learn more about their experiences in the classrooms and contrast that information with what they had stated in the unstructured interviews. STs had been requested to individually write one entry weekly during each teaching practicum, totaling about 30 journals per each participant. The six STs shared their written personal journals, attended the interview sessions, and shared about 100 practicum journal entries from practicum I and II.

The teaching practicum journals were designed and written by the participants as a requirement during the teaching practicum periods. It is relevant to mention that journals are requested by the coordinator of the teaching practicum and are required for the completion of the practicum in the teacher education program. Equally important, the first teaching practicum journals were written before the participants were asked to participate in the research study. Once they completed their second teaching practicum, they shared those journals with us. Thus, these journals presented rich raw data, where the participants expressed their reflections as STs. The reflections stated in the journals brought to light considerable information regarding the teaching practicum as a critical factor in the process of teacher identity construction. STs had posted the journals in some blogs or via Google drive, and we were granted access via email. These were 100-to-250-word journals that students had written on a weekly basis during their practicum periods. We considered these journals as valuable sources of reflection and identity construction. The convenience awarded in such journals for allowing STs to write their thoughts with a purpose other than

gathering data for this research study, was reason enough to include them as additional data sources. The following figure offers a summary of three moments of data collection, based on the data collected and the purpose of each moment.



*Figure 1. Data collection process*

As shown in figure 1, the implementation of data gathering was divided into three moments and every moment required to follow the same steps. In a brief outline, the first step involved participants posting their written narratives to Seesaw, responding to the instructions given for completing each written narrative. The second step covered the oral narratives focusing on the relevant aspects addressed by participants in their previous written narratives. Yet, the last moment differed from the first two in that it involved also collecting the teaching practicum journals. Each of these moments also stated three purposes for collecting the data. In this regard, the first moment focused on experiences lived in the first year, the second moment on experiences lived in the second and third year, and the third moment on experiences lived in the fourth year in the English teacher education program.

The oral narratives in the form of unstructured interviews, written personal narratives, and practicum journals allowed STs to recount their experiences, challenges, attitudes, anecdotes, memories and academic spaces that in one way or another represented meaningful aspects in their preparation as future teachers.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the researchers themselves were in charge of translating (see Appendix F) the data from Spanish into English in order to maintain the core meanings and ideas of participants. However, in an attempt to minimize the effects of accuracy of interpretations, 40% of the transcripts were checked by an English teacher whose mother tongue was Spanish. We decided for this English teacher in particular based on his experience living in an English-speaking country, his academic experience at the level of a masters' program in English, and his high-level English proficiency certified in an international test. Based on his feedback, we made decisions about the final translations.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process in this study followed the principles of narrative research. It is worth mentioning that this approach divides into two distinct groups based on Bruner's types of cognition: paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought (Bruner, 1985); and such division offers two ways to analyze narrative data, according to Polkinghorne (1995):

- (a) analysis of narratives, that is, studies whose data consist of narratives or stories, but whose analysis produces paradigmatic typologies or categories; and (b)
- narrative analysis, that is, studies whose data consist of actions, events, and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories (e.g. biographies, histories, case studies).

These two views work in tandem allowing the narrative researcher to analyze data “to develop an understanding of the meanings our participants give to themselves, to their surroundings, to their lives, and to their lived experiences through storytelling” (Kim, 2016, p. 189).

Since we sought to understand how participants' mindful experiences in the English teacher education program had influenced their teacher identity and valued their narratives as a fundamental source for understanding the meaning and construction of such teacher identity, we considered Polkinghorne's definition of analysis of narratives and narrative analysis to analyze the data collected in this study. In the following paragraphs, we are going to describe how we implemented analysis of narrative and narrative analysis.

**Analysis of narratives.** On the one hand, the analysis of narratives in this study is understood by means of organizing data into features, consequently categorizing such features of data in common categories. This is referred to as inductively deriving concepts from data (Polkinghorne, 1985); similar to the notion of grounded theory or thematic analysis.

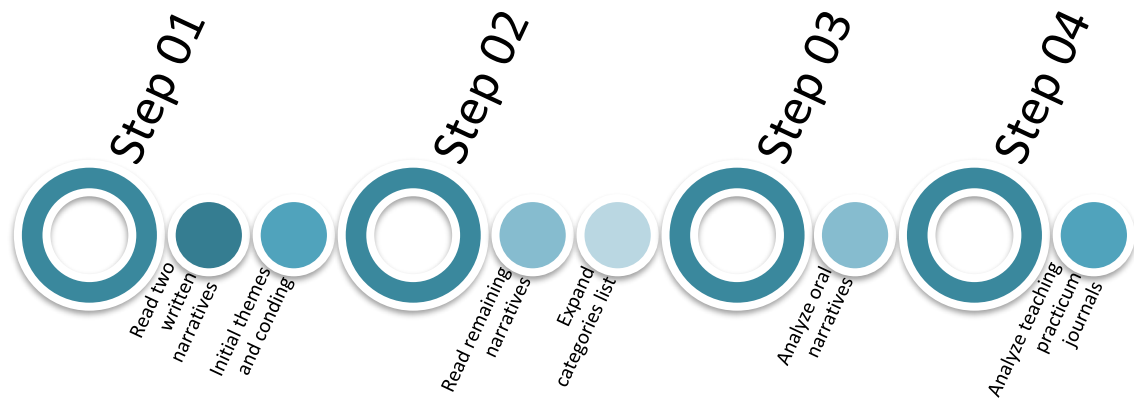
Consequently, we performed the analysis of narratives in the following steps for each moment of data collection, the three moments that were described in the previous section. The first step required us, the researchers, to read two of the participants' written narratives, one each of us, experiencing with this an initial approach to the data. Afterwards, we met to discuss relevant aspects found in the data to elaborate initial themes. Once we have deliberated on this issue, we decided on some initial categories to identify correspondence in the data when reading the upcoming narratives (the ones written by

participants and the transcripts of the oral narratives). Also, this step involved defining colors for coding the initial common themes.

The second step relates to the reading of the remaining written narratives, the other four, and a subsequent discussion of our selections once we have completed reading the written narratives. In this step, we found common threads in the written narratives we have read and decided to mention some excerpts that could support each category, and also verify its exclusiveness. In this step, we expanded the initial list of categories that emerged in the first step. Later, we compared and suggested topics, based on the already-found categories, that would lead our upcoming oral narratives.

In the third step, we transcribed the oral narratives and analyzed them using the method suggested by Polkinghorne, consisting of organizing the data by features and putting together common themes of the data collected, just as we did with the written narratives. However, as opposed to the analysis on the written narratives, we read and analyzed the transcripts of each data collection moment (6 transcripts per moment) in one take.

The fourth step concerned the reading of the teaching practicum journals. After we have recorded and analyzed all participants' written and oral narratives, we asked them permission for revising their teaching practicum journals. Once we were granted access by the participants to the journals, we proceeded to color-code based on the pre-selected categories we had recognized in their written and oral narratives. Although one of the purposes was to find new categories through analyzing their journals, we also wanted to enrich the participants' stories valuing their personal self-reflection on their experiences within the teacher education program. This four-step process is exemplified in figure 02.



*Figure 2. Data analysis process*

The first three steps took place in the first two moments of data collection. That is, the moments consisting on the gathering of one written narrative and one oral narrative from each participant (6 written narratives, 6 orals narratives, for a total of 12 overall narratives for each moment). The fourth step took place only in the final moment (i.e., moment 3), in addition to the three previous steps, and consisted solely on the analysis of the teaching practicum journals, as stated previously. This process allowed us to access and analyze the data more frequently and considered some meaningful pieces of information for in-depth analysis before addressing the participants in the next moment of data collection.

Finally, it is important to note that we revised manually all the data gathered, written narratives, oral narratives and teaching practicum journals, and classify common themes into categories and subcategories. Themes significant to our research purpose emerged from the data and are boldly presented within the chronological order experienced by the participants of the study in the next chapter.

**Narrative analysis.** On the other hand, narrative analysis consists of addressing the stories as experienced in time to construct stories that contribute to understand the narrative as a whole; “the process of narrative analysis is actually a synthesizing of the data rather than a separation of it into its constituent parts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). We implemented narrative analysis in four steps that allowed us to construct the participants' stories, valuing the individuality in their cases, and with the purpose of giving an explanatory knowledge of how each of them acted and why they acted in a determined way.

The first step dealt with reading and interacting with the participants' written and oral narratives, looking for significant moments or experiences that could help us order the stories. The second step involved us discussing on narrative patterns found in the participants' written and oral narratives - the metanarrative. Since all participants shared same time periods, physical place and similar experiences in the teacher education program, the narratives suggested a chronological order to construct the stories. The third step consisted on identifying themes that were more particular and representative for each participant, considering we were going to offer the individual story of each one of them. The fourth step regarded organizing the stories by similarities and differences that could advise some cohesive ties to identify all stories as relating to one-another.

To conclude, the goal of using narrative analysis in this research study was to help the reader comprehend the events as lived and experienced by the participants and recognize the stories as understandable explanations of teacher identity construction. Polkinghorne addressed the importance of this specific type of analysis in that “storied memories retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken, and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it” (p. 11).



**Trustworthiness.** Narrative inquiry seeks to investigate individual interpretations and worldviews of complex and human-centred events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Therefore, the definitions of reliability and validity may not suit narrative inquiry. Huberman (1995 as cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007) points out that “it is not satisfactory to apply traditional criteria of validity and reliability to narrative” (p.93). According to Bell (2011), reliability and replicability will never be appropriate criteria for narrative inquiry, since researchers focus on studying participants' experiences and points of views, to not only search for one single truth, but multiplicity of truths.

Polkinghorne (1988) claims that it is beneficial to look for new measures in using narrative inquiry. In this regard, narrative researchers should consider new aspects such as access, honesty, verisimilitude, and authenticity to construct a more narrative orientated framework of validity and reliability.

Access is evidenced in this research study since we provided readers with first-hand accounts of our STs' experiences, “their cultural context and the process of construction of knowledge” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 94) through the stories narrated by the researchers (STs' trajectories). Also, the data, in the form of written narratives and transcripts of oral narratives were available for participants and external readers to consult if they wished. Regarding honesty, participants checked the stories that narrated their experiences as STs in order to provide credibility to our study, due to the fact that “the trustworthiness of the narrative research lies in the confirmation by the participants of their reported stories of experience” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 99). Researchers asked STs to read their stories (written by the researchers) for them to confirm that the experiences narrated were accurate, and to check for information that might reveal their identity. When

researchers collected the data, STs checked the stories researchers wrote regarding their experiences as STs in the English language teacher education program. The third aspect researchers should take into account is verisimilitude. In this regard, the data and report of stories should resonate with the experiences the researcher, and the reader have (Webster & Mertova, 2007), and we as researchers can give credit to that since we had been STs in the same English teacher education program that our participants were members. Based on that, we can confirm that we lived similar events and experiences. Authenticity was achieved as researchers provided enough information in order to convince the reader that the stories were told in a serious, honest, and coherent way (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Besides, we made sure that the results of this research study contained the voices of each participant involved.

Added to the new ways of viewing reliability and validity in narrative research, it is important to mention the ethical issues taken into consideration when conducting this research study. Researchers explained and discussed with STs the consent form, so they had full knowledge of the intention of the research. Besides, they were informed about their right to remain or remove themselves from the research process at any time. Finally, STs selected some pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity.

This chapter has summarized the methodology that guided the present narrative research, the context and researchers' positionality, as well as the methods, procedures of data collection and analysis used to understand the process of teacher identity construction. The following chapter presents the STs' trajectories within the teacher education program and the findings that indicate how STs constructed their teacher identity, as well as the

factors that promoted and hindered its construction in an English language teacher education program.

### **Student Teachers' Trajectories**

The present narrative research aims to understand the process of teacher identity construction. As well as the factors that promote and hinder such formation in an English language teacher education program. In order to have a better understanding of how this process occurred, it is crucial to present the six different stories that narrate student teachers' trajectories in the process of becoming teachers. These stories restore remarkable experiences STs lived within the teacher education program, illustrating how they constructed their teacher selves.

#### **Chata**

*"I never thought about being a teacher. Actually, it was the last thing on my bucket list"*

Chata studied at a Normal school (a public institution) in Southern Colombia. Her father had been a teacher, and from him, she learned that teaching was a rather difficult profession, and based on that idea, Chata never thought about being a teacher.

She always stood out for being a good student in the English class. She was such a brilliant student that her English teacher in school always encouraged her to mentor her classmates when they did not understand a lesson. As Normal schools operate as academic support for initial professional preparation for teachers, Chata had to develop a teaching practicum for a whole year in a public school with five classmates as an assignment for a pedagogy course. She and her classmates used to teach in second grade on Wednesdays. Chata acknowledged that that experience was tough for her because in her classroom there were 30 students and even though they were five "teachers," they could not manage the whole class.

When Chata culminated her high school education, she had in mind pursuing a degree in Audiovisual and Multimedia Communication in Medellín. She was admitted, but she realized she had to wait for a whole year to start classes because it was an annual program. She could not wait that long; that is why she applied to a program of Film and Television at a public university in Bogotá. However, she was not admitted. That is when Chata started to wonder about her future. She recalled that she was good at English in secondary school and this led her to enroll in the English teacher education program. Chata started the program being pessimistic, given the fact she did not want to be a teacher. Since she had studied at a Normal School, she thought she had extended her school while studying in the University because she had already taken courses such as Philosophy of the Education, pedagogy, and curriculum.

In the University, Chata met professors whose methodology was old-fashioned and traditional. On the other hand, Chata had the opportunity to meet one teacher that helped her in the process of being and becoming a teacher: Karol, her professor of Basic English II. From the interaction with her professors, Chata created her ideal teacher's image.

*“If I continue teaching, (...) I wish I could be at least a little bit of what she is now.”*

Chata's second and third year in the English teacher education program was quite easy because she was familiar with the Pedagogical knowledge covered in those courses. During these two years, Chata had two professors that oppressed her opinions and did not allow her to express her points of view, since the professor was always right, and was not open to other perspectives. Then, Chata took the “intermediate English course” with Professor Karol in the fourth semester. Chata saw Karol as a mother in the teacher

education program. Her teaching style was innovative; she was friendly but strict at the same time. Not only did the intermediate English professor help Chata on her academic achievement but also built Chata's self-confidence by insisting that she could accomplish anything in life. Chata highlighted the role professor Karol developed in her teacher identity construction. Even though Chata did not want to be a teacher, she saw in Karol, a role model.

In the fifth and sixth semester, Chata developed her first microteaching in a real school. When it was time for Chata to teach her lesson, she felt confident when teaching due to her previous experiences as a teacher at a Normal School. Chata learned from conducting some observations and developing her microteaching practice that the act of teaching was quite complex.

*"During my first practicum, I felt horrible because I was not sure about my [language] knowledge."*

Her last three semesters in the teacher education program were challenging because Chata had to develop her teaching practicum and conduct her research study to obtain her bachelor's degree. Chata and six researchers conducted a research study that aimed at creating a radio station in a school to promote and practice the learning of English. The research took place at a school where students faced social issues, physical and emotional abuse from their parents, addiction to drugs, and bullying. Teachers and students welcomed Chata and her classmates with open arms. For Chata, it was tough to handle the discipline and all the social situations that students faced.

STs are allowed to develop their teaching practicum in the undergraduate English language teacher education. The next semester, Chata felt overwhelmed during her first

teaching practicum because it never crossed her mind to teach in courses such as “Basic English II,” and “Pre-Intermediate English” at the University. Chata felt horrible because she did not feel confident with her language proficiency and knowledge about teaching to undergraduate students. During her first week, she left the classroom with melancholic feelings inside her heart, because she thought it was impossible to encourage her students to take an active role in class. Apart from that, a professor from the program told Chata that she had heard negative comments regarding her teaching performance and language proficiency in class. Those negative comments forced her to question her future as an English teacher. After that fatal beginning, things turned out to be better for Chata. However, she made an effort to overcome her insecurities. Besides, the feedback given by her practicum supervisor was always meaningful and enabled her to construct her own teacher persona. When teaching in the undergraduate program, Chata realized that teaching was not only about teaching a foreign language but cultivating in students values such as respect and tolerance from one another. The tensions, mistakes, and reflections upon her performance were valuable for her second teaching practicum.

Her second teaching practicum took place at a public school with seventh graders. Managing the classroom was an issue for Chata since students misbehaved all the time. From day one, Chata had to apply the principles of behaviorism, threatening students with a grade if they did not behave in class. Besides, she had to teach the linguistic components such as grammar and vocabulary, because students were used to that.

Chata ended up without a practicum supervisor during her first teaching practicum, and something similar happened to her in the second teaching practicum since one of them

became dean of the School of Education, and her other practicum supervisor became the Principal of the University.

Right now, Chata is aware that she has to teach English, even though she does not feel the vocation. She graduated from a “Normal School” where she was taught to be a teacher, and she is about to get a bachelor's degree in order to teach English as a foreign language to primary and secondary school students. Despite all the teaching experiences in the “Normal School” and the undergraduate teacher education program, Chata does not feel the vocation to teach for the rest of her life. However, Chata would like to be like her professor Karol and those good teachers she had in her “Normal School” when teaching. Based on their teaching styles, methodologies, and personalities, Chata has constructed her own teacher identity. She has taken positive aspects from former teachers and professors in order to shape her own teacher self.

### **Taystee**

*“A professor who planted the seed of becoming a teacher.”*

When Taystee was in the 11th grade at a Normal School, she used to teach to 3rd graders in a public school. She always had the ease to interact with kids; for instance, she built rapport with a student who misbehaved in class all the time, and who was scolded by her homeroom teacher. She tried to understand his behavior and encouraged him to keep on learning. Even though she had had previous teaching experiences, Taystee did not want to be a teacher. A year after her high school graduation her mother passed away, and that tragic event affected her emotionally. She needed a break, which is the reason why she did not want to enter the university yet. Instead, she started studying English at a language institute.



As time went by, Taystee decided to present the “Saber 11 test” in order to study Engineering. This test qualifies students in 11th grade according to their academic skills to enroll in higher education institutions. She did not pass the test, so she applied to the English teacher education program. More than teaching, she wanted to learn the language, travel, and get to know other cultures. However, Professor Juan, who taught the Basic English I course, helped her change her perception towards being a teacher. Taystee felt overwhelmed due to her lack of English knowledge, but professor Juan always encouraged her when she thought she had made a mistake by choosing the English teacher education program.

*“That is when I questioned myself about my future as an English teacher.”*

During her second and third year of studying to become a teacher, Taystee took courses that enable her to obtain the knowledge base of language teaching. In the fourth semester, Taystee signed up for a course in “Phonetics and phonology.” From that course, she realized her pronunciation was not the most accurate. Therefore, she questioned her future role as an English teacher. If she was going to teach this language, she needed to gain a native-like pronunciation. When she obtained 3,3 in an important language proficiency test, she felt frustrated because if she did not know the language correctly, she could not be called an English teacher. Then, she decided to take courses that allowed her to improve her target language proficiency. Professor Juan taught the course “intermediate English” in the fourth semester. When Professor Juan saw how affected Taystee was by her test result, he encouraged her by telling her that she could see her weaknesses as potential aspects for improvement. Thus, he told her, she was a brilliant student who was capable of doing whatever she wanted to accomplish in life.

In Courses such as Second Language Learning Theories and Principles of Language Teaching, Taystee realized that the constructs were tough to comprehend and that is why she used to study with a classmate. Together, they reviewed the theory studied in class, and prepared for the tests. When taking those courses, she finally became aware that the teacher education program was about preparing language teachers after all. Then, she developed her microteaching practice where she put into practice the theoretical and pedagogical knowledge gained in the teacher education program. Taystee and some classmates observed some classes, then designed a lesson and finally taught a lesson based on the four language skills. The microteaching practice was not complicated at all, because Taystee was not alone teaching, she could rely on her classmates and get feedback from them in order to improve her teaching practice.

*“Sometimes, I cannot accept my future as an English teacher but [I] reflect upon the good things [about this profession, and that] makes believe that being a teacher is worthy.”*

Taystee started teaching English in a public school as a requirement for her teaching practicum. She taught to eighth and ninth grades in the afternoons. From her first encounter with her students, Taystee realized that her students faced physical and emotional abuse from their parents, economic problems, and addiction to illicit drugs. Teaching in this context was tough for Taystee. However, she understood that her role was not only about teaching a language per se.

During her final semester in the teacher education program, Taystee developed her second teaching practicum in an institution of *higher education* to challenge herself and overcome her speaking anxiety. She recalled her teaching experience as a challenging one

because she had never taught adult learners before. As expected, she felt nervous when teaching her first class. When the class was over, her cooperating teacher told her that she needed to be more confident about herself. Her second teaching practicum was quite complex, given the fact that she thinks she needs to improve her language proficiency. Nonetheless, her cooperating teacher was always helping her out and motivating her to keep going. Apart from her teaching practicum, Taystee worked as an English teacher in a private school. She taught English to kids in the morning and adult learners in the afternoon, which brought more stress to her life.

Taystee has transformed her image as a teacher by experiencing the act of teaching and interacting with the school community. Her cooperating teachers, practicum supervisors, and reflection upon her teaching practice have been equally crucial in her professional development. Professor Juan planted in Taystee the idea of becoming a teacher, but not a regular teacher, the one who encourages students to keep going, and not to give up. Even though she is not sure about her future as an English teacher, she feels more confident teaching to curious and attentive kids, who want to learn new things in English, and who welcome her with a smile, those smiles that can fix a broken heart.

### **Björn**

*“Once I entered the program, I met two excellent teachers who encouraged me to consider the idea of becoming a teacher.”*

Björn's mother instilled in him the idea of learning a foreign language, maybe because his relatives had been English teachers and translators. Björn stood out for being a good student and always a leader. When Björn was in high school, he had two types of

English teachers, one who rejected everything he did and said in class. And the one who encouraged him to keep on learning English once he finished his high school.

Initially, Björn wanted to study Law. Unfortunately, he did not get the required score in the Saber 11 test to enter the Law program. That is when he started studying English at an institute where he met professors Karol and Juan. Björn presented “Saber test” (a test that qualifies students in 11th grade according to their academic skills to pursue a professional career), and the English language teacher education program was not his first option. When he thought about entering the university, he had selected three different majors. His first choice was Law. However, when it was time to decide, he inclined to study foreign languages, so in the future, he could complement his knowledge about this language with Law.

As Björn had taken some English courses before, he made equivalent those courses to the University. But, he did not want to wait for two years without studying the language, that is why he asked professors Juan and Karol to let him audit their classes. As time went on, the idea of becoming a teacher resonated with Björn because of Professors Juan and Karol. Thanks to them, his idea of teaching as a profession changed. They always highlighted the positive aspects of the profession and the importance of the teachers' role, because they were in charge of making a significant impact on society, they were to be agents of social change.

*“The light that illuminated my path.”*

Since Björn was younger, he was passionate about literature and poetry. So, when he took a course on literary theory in Spanish, he questioned his future as an English teacher. He had improved his writing skill in Spanish, so he committed to pursue a major in

Spanish literature upon graduating from the English teacher education program. In his third year, his motivation for continuing in the English teacher education program dropped drastically, given the fact that he failed two relevant courses “Academic writing” in the fifth semester and “Upper Intermediate English II” in the sixth semester.

Regarding the first course, Björn was good at writing in his first language, but he realized that there was a huge difference when writing in English. This situation affected him in such a deep way, that he questioned his future as an English teacher. For him, a teacher who was not skillful in the four language abilities, could not be seen as an English teacher. Then, along came Professor Ofelia, who taught the “Upper Intermediate English II” course. Since teachers have a direct influence on the decision of becoming teachers, Professor Ofelia instilled in Björn the desire to drop out of the program due to her teaching style and the way she treated her students.

Despite the dark and low times, Björn changed his mind about becoming a teacher when he was conducting his research project. For him, that experience was the light that illuminated his path. The situations his students experienced were hopeless. That experience sowed in Björn the interest in changing his perspective about being a teacher. When conducting his research study, Björn had a student who was bullied by his peers because he was the youngest and weakest, but Björn encouraged him to turn those weaknesses into strengths. From his teaching, he wanted to cultivate in his students the desire to overcome difficulties and to escape from the cruel reality to where they belonged, and turn their lives around for the better.

*“I really needed feedback, and I did not always receive it.”*

During her last three semesters in the teacher education program, Björn had the opportunity to attend a research symposium where he interacted with colleagues and scholars from different parts of the country. Those social interactions were not only useful for him to conduct his practicums but gave him a sense of professional affiliation since he was interacting with colleagues and scholars who had experienced teaching for years.

The participation in research symposia allowed Björn to have direct interaction with colleagues and scholars who had experienced teaching for years which also contributed to mediate and transform his teacher self.

Björn completed his first teaching practicum in a public school with tenth and eleventh graders. At the very beginning, it was tough for Björn to deal with classroom management, although his cooperating teachers provided him with useful recommendations to cope with it. The most rewarding moment during his first class was when his students called him “teacher.” He was amazed by being recognized as such, and that gave him a sense of confidence and strength to continue pursuing this labor.

When teaching his second teaching practicum, Björn did not find support from his practicum supervisor. He recalled that he needed that support, but it was something that never occurred. His practicum supervisor was more concerned about all the documents Björn was required to hand in, instead of his teaching practicum itself. However, Björn found encouragement and support from his cooperating teachers.

Björn wants to be more than an English teacher. He wants to be an agent of social change. This idea came from the different experiences he encountered while he was a language learner and a student teacher in the English teacher education program. Thus, Björn's former teachers played a crucial role in his professional development and teacher

identity construction, given the fact that from that interaction, he shaped the ideal teacher he wanted to become.

### **Frida**

*“I have always known I want to be a teacher, I like it a lot. Also, I like English too, and I was always one of the best students.”*

Since kindergarten, Frida has been surrounded by the educational environment provided at a Normal school. It was in tenth grade when she had to do her first teaching practice, and although it was not teaching English, it was an important moment that inclined her professional aspirations towards an English teaching program. Tenth and eleventh grade offered Frida a peak into teaching children. Then, a two-year complementary cycle reaffirmed pedagogical concepts and allowed her to experience more meaningful practices lived in a classroom. Undoubtedly, for Frida, learning to teach has been a clear decision since high school. Almost simultaneously, Frida awoke an interest in teaching English after her experiences in different English courses at her school; the teachers, the methodology, the activities, caught her curiosity immediately. All these aspects motivated Frida to learn English and influenced later her decision of conjoining her two passions: being a teacher and learning English.

After her high school graduation, Frida got a job as a pre-k teacher in a private school. She had a rather unpleasant experience with the administration of this school; she was requested to work long shifts, sometimes was called in to work on Sundays, and to top it off, payment was not worth the sacrifice. However, with this job Frida confirmed her passion for working with kids. She enjoyed being around them, learning from them, getting to know them as well.

A year and half after her graduation, Frida, encouraged by her mother, started to consider studying in a university, she wanted a professional degree. She decided for an online private university and enrolled an English teaching program. Unfortunately for Frida, this experience was also traumatic for her. She was learning very basic contents, some of which she had already taken in high school, the platforms used in this program were outdated, and when she met students from advanced courses, she found out they could not speak English. Frida was facing a rough moment, this online program granted her the opportunity to work and study, so she could afford her living, but it was not the best for her. She had to decide: work and study or study fulltime and no job. Well, Frida chose to study fulltime at a public university, also in an English language teacher education program.

Once in this program, Frida described her first semester as difficult because she was not at the level (English proficiency), she did not enjoy seeing her professors and classmates engaged in conversations that she did not understand. She remembered during the last exam in this first semester, while in the speaking section, Professor Juan asked her for the date and she could not answer. This last situation blocked her oral personality development, as she expressed it. However, this fear motivated her at the same time to be better prepared for the next encounter using the target language with her professor. Additionally, Frida came across motivating professors during her first year in the program. She would cite the encouraging talks she witnessed of two professors: Juan and Karol, particularly, addressing both everyone in the class and herself alone to a point in which she considers these professors marked her formative teacher development.



It is fair to voice Frida's perspective when discussing over the influence the first year had on her teaching style. She believes it is by the end of the program, when assisting to courses on methodology and theory that you begin to develop that style.

*"Sometimes I feel I don't have the speaking English level necessary to teach a class, and that makes me feel bad."*

Frida remembers assisting to English-oriented courses on teaching and didactics such as POLT – Principles of Language Teaching, DIPDI – Didactic and Pedagogy of English (For its initials in Spanish) and Research seminar. She did not take pedagogy-based courses in Spanish because since she is a graduate from a Normal school, she had the opportunity to homologate related courses. Although she saw these courses as an extra opportunity to practice her linguistics skills in English, she immediately found herself facing a bashing situation. In a course she attended, she observed how the professor asked for learned-by-heart texts, concepts, and playing long videos in class that would later ask to recite in the exams.

Concurrently, Frida was building teaching memories and experiences in one of these courses. She narrated to us how in a course they had to teach 5 lessons, covering the four linguistic skills and one on grammar. In this experience, Frida assumed her level of English was not good enough for teaching and would often self-criticized herself harshly for not answering accurately questions asked by her students. Since before enrolling this undergraduate program, she has always been worried about her oral proficiency in English, a problem that intensified due to the strictness of Frida's spirit. During this part of the program, some professors had been very demanding on grammar and pronunciation, somehow contributing to her worry. To her fortune, she registered in the Globalization and

Language Teaching course, in which she could turn around outdated English teaching concepts, felt fascinated with the concepts of Englishes and English as a lingua franca, and believed this could impact her teaching self. Yet, her strong commitment to teaching has motivated her and is, to an extent, what kept her going through adversity.

There is an aspect concerning Frida which should be unveiled, research has been one of her interest since fourth semester. She was a member of an undergraduate research group and took the research seminar course; two happenings that allowed her to experience research at first-hand. There, she highlights the significance of learning how to analyze the data and the professor's remarkable attitude towards the class, factors that Frida acknowledged as what made her think herself as a teacher-researcher.

*"I just feel safer working with kids, they are kind, we can decorate the classroom with them, talk about Halloween, bring candy, paint."*

During Frida's seventh semester in the program, she had the opportunity to teach in English for the first time in her life; a significant milestone in her professional life, but also a cause that intensified the pressure on her public English-speaking fear. However, as Frida retells, this experience somehow brought within a bigger distress; now she was not only afraid of public speaking in English, but also teaching in English. Her first teaching practicum took place in the University, with students of the Basic English I course. Through this experience, the support of her supervising teacher was uplifting. He was always there to clear her doubts, to offer guidance on how she had taught her lessons and for discussing the following ones. Since Frida was teaching first semester student teachers, the classroom management was not a problem, they were focus and attentive to her lesson.

During the first teaching practicum, she started to feel that it was better to teach alone, with no supervision. She felt more the person in charge and was not afraid to make *mistakes*. Sometimes, she felt she was just following orders and could not explore her creativity. In the second practicum, Frida taught, in the settings a public school in Colombia, around 40 students. There, she had to implement a stricter routine, experimented with discipline strategies, and, every once in a while, unleashed the Godzilla living inside of her. Nonetheless, she feels safe in the school classroom and acknowledges teaching school students makes her whole. For her, that is more satisfactory than teaching university students.

The different experiences Frida lived during this final period of her undergraduate studies were decisive for reaffirming her passion for research, reconsidering the necessity to perfectionate her speaking skill and recognizing all her teaching attributes that make her enjoy teaching English to kids.

### **Himura**

*“All I did in high school was to grab a vocabulary and expressions list and learned them by heart.”*

Himura is a 28-year-old pre-service teacher of English who comes from a neighboring town, 45 minutes away from the university. His relationship to English started in his home town's high school. He recalls vividly how he had to learn by heart vocabulary and expressions for his English class. Once, he passed a term just for reciting a list of questions and answers to his teacher, and after that, he had nothing else to do in class during that term. Like this, Himura passed high school and graduated knowing little about the English language. Encouraged by his family, he applied to a public university and got

accepted in an engineering program. Unfortunately, due to financial problems, he had to withdraw from the university in his first semester.

Years after this forlorn event, he had the chance to resume to study, but had now to choose a program to join. He always knew he wanted to be part of that public university but could not define yet what he wanted to study there – mathematics teaching program or English teaching program were the cards on the table. The decisive factor to determine his choice was which program would offer him more opportunities once he graduated; and for him the English teaching program offered him a brighter horizon.

Once in the program, at the beginning of the first semester, Himura had to face a placement test and an interview... in English! He had not inquired about these requirements and got very anxious. From that interview, he recalled that the professor in charge asked him two questions that he answered without being sure what he said, but he did it because he was afraid he could get expelled for having a low level of English proficiency. Then, he had to assist to a three-week catch-up course, where he constantly assumed an angry face so that people would not want to interact with him. Thanks to this catch-up course he learned more than he ever did in all his English courses in high school.

*“Sometimes you don't think of how to teach, the strategies and the purpose of it.”*

Once Himura was in the second year of the teacher education program, he began to question the role of the teacher of English; reflecting upon the different factors that make up a good teacher. He noted that in the school he probably did not have the interest on learning how the teacher changed from one activity to the other, and how he used to manage the classroom; yet, at the university, this experience should be used for learning. Once in the teacher education program, he considered he was aware of the necessity to

learn from his professors, but he was too anxious about learning the language that he disregarded this major opportunity. Along the same lines, he considered that it was when a student teacher is in the sixth or seventh semester that he realizes it cannot be about learning the target language anymore, but also learn how to teach it.

It was with this reflecting act that Himura embarked on his adventure through some courses of the English language teacher education program. These courses offered him a chance to build knowledge and reflect, as well, about the teaching profession; and his experience with the Globalization and Language Teaching course was a palpable example of that. In this course he became aware of the different types of English, beyond the American and the British; and he also became cognizant of some vocabulary-related situations people experience with their native language. In Spanish, he recalled, one often forgets words or how to express an idea accurately; however, this does not mean that you do not know the language. Immediately, he contrasted this issue with English and understood he needed to be more lenient with his English learning process.

The courses of the teacher education program allowed Himura to have some of his first teaching experiences. Particularly, he evokes one class he had to teach with two more classmates, and, to his surprise, he was assigned to start the class. He was worried about the English proficiency of his students and thought that they would not understand the lesson. So, he and his friends decided to design a lesson with games and dynamic activities to distract them about learning English, and spontaneously participate. The lesson went well, the students responded as expected, but there were some aspects they underestimated. Then, they had to replicate the same lesson with another class... the result was completely different; students did not work in groups and the activities could not go as planned. This

experience made him realize the importance of planning a lesson, of classroom management and of knowing the context and your students, comprehending the variants teaching implicates.

*“These last semesters were chaotic because one begins to put into practice everything you have learned in the undergraduate program and you faced a reality you are not prepared for.”*

These last semesters brought a load of responsibility and required extra dedication from Himura. He knew this was the moment he was waiting for, yet he did not know the reality of the teaching context, he was not prepared to meet certain behaviors in his students, but he knew the teaching practicums would help him understand and gain experience in this issue. Fortunately for him, his first practicum's advisor and cooperating teacher were very supportive and contributed considerably in making this an enriching experience. Here, Himura taught high-school students and met well-educated children who listened to him and participated in his classes. These students had already built some habits for the English class, so Himura could teach his lessons without further problems, other than some moments of small talk and teasing, but no big obstacles. Then, he discovered his second teaching practicum would differ in certain ways.

Himura was chosen to do his second teaching practicum in a national vocational education and training institute. Here, he was assigned three different groups, conformed mostly by adults. One of the challenges he encountered was having his new students work in groups. He would tell them to form groups of 3 or 4, and they remained seated. He learned to take the roster and tell them that if they did not make groups quickly, he would choose the groups for them. It worked! It was the little things the teaching practicums

offered him that he found useful for his profession. He recognized in the practicums an opportunity for overcoming his anxiety when standing in front of his students. Besides, he thought this was the great chance he had to learn how to let things flow in the classroom, to learn that you shall not have the control of your students, but you can design classes that make them feel interested and excited about learning English.

During Himura's trajectory along the teacher education program, he was always true to his goal of becoming a teacher of English. Nonetheless, there were some reassuring moments by the end of the undergraduate program that sealed his professional objective. He recalled gracefully the moment when he finished his first practicum in the high school, one of his students, one who had been a challenge for his classes, came out of the classroom and hugged him and without uttering a word, this student went back to class. This made him think that he had probably done something well for this student's learning experience. Similarly, his students in the second practicum thanked him for teaching them English, expressing that they had never learned to put two English words together, and with him they learned expressions and enjoyed learning it. Finally, nothing sums up this story of ongoing learning better than Himura's own words, "One feels good, feels very good teaching. Yes, there are aspects to improve, but we are doing things right."

### **Camilo**

*"I have to be honest and say that I never imagined myself studying to become a teacher."*

Camilo came from a town two hours away from the city. In his home town, he studied at a Normal school, where he did not have many good experiences with his teachers. He did not like many subjects in high school either and was primarily fond of

physical education. Actually, he did not want to study in the university. One of the reasons that influenced this decision was the divorce of his parents. He expressed that he did not grow up with the role model of his father and could not say that he would do something after what his father had studied or worked in. Camilo's role model was his big brother, who by the end of Camilo's senior high school year was in the air force fulling military service. Therefore, he did not want school anymore, nor to know about universities. He wanted to join the air force. Unfortunately for Camilo, joining this force is too expensive and his parents could not afford it. He had to think about studying.

Camilo began his teacher education story not knowing he would become a teacher; in fact, he did not know that a teacher program was to educate on teaching. He remembers believing that at the end of the English language teacher education program, he would travel the world and learn English just for his personal benefit of using the language. Then, he met professor Juan, who would be an influential factor in Camilo's student teacher life. Camilo keeps in his mind how motivating professor Juan was, how the professor used to take time to talk to his students about their learning progress. Camilo saw in this professor more than teaching a language, he saw someone who cared about his students. Without a doubt, this was a very significant experience for Camilo. As luck would have it, this professor came to change Camilo's perspective about teaching. He used to think of teaching as a rather boring profession, a perspective he developed after interacting with his high school teachers, in his home town. After meeting Professor Juan, Camilo began changing his idea of teaching and of becoming a teacher, as well.

Another important factor came up during this first year. Camilo had to take the placement test to find out if he was going to be part of the three-week catch-up course: pre-



basic English. He did not think he needed to take this course because he had been studying English in a private institute, to his astonishment, the results were not as expected and had to register the course. This made him aware of his English proficiency and made him take a more serious stand towards his learning process. In this course, he met Karla, the pre-service teacher in charge of leading the course. Camilo acknowledged that this opportunity allowed him to learn from a person who had experienced the program as well and had probably been through learning experiences like his. He reinforced some English basis with her and learned that he would see improvement if he dedicated time to the extra work, to run an extra mile.

*“I was beginning to make sense of the real purpose and objectives of a teacher education program.”*

The second and third year offered Camilo vital factors that made him realize the level of responsibility the teaching profession requires and the impact it has in society. The coursework of the teacher education program was one of these factors. On one side, his experience with courses on theories of teaching granted him the means to build his understanding on teaching. On the other, he reclaimed that the strategies used to teach the content of this course lacked didactics and focused only on learning information by heart. This troubling situation brought confusion to Camilo's made-decision of studying teaching and made him remember his experiences with his high school teachers.

Another vital factor was his experience teaching English to children in a private institute. He remembers he always liked helping and interacting with kids, as he did for some time in the church of his home town. In this institute, he learned to value the progress of his students and the importance of dynamic activities. Also, he noticed one of his

students would get really excited when Camilo walked in to start his English class. Camilo said that the motivation of this student allowed him to think that he was probably doing the classes differently, but different in a way that his students enjoyed being in his class.

The different events Camilo experienced during this time in the teacher education program provided him with understanding and knowledge of the teaching profession, forming a reflective posture about this stage. The two above-listed factors provoked in Camilo an opinion of having longer teaching experiences earlier, because the semester-long practicums which are in the seventh and eighth semester may be too late. He wanted to be involved much longer and earlier in teaching experiences, in school scenarios.

*“I had the wrong idea. I said: ‘Ok, I’m going to be the super teacher, and then I had to teach a 40-student class, no fans and in a 48 °C temperature.”*

In the last three semesters of the teacher education program, Camilo experienced the public context of teaching and was fully responsible – or co-responsible with the cooperating teacher –. In this teaching experience, Camilo was in charge of calling the register, administering exams, grading students, planning and teaching full lessons. It was the life of a teacher, in the school context, and he was responsible for the students' learning process and that they changed the perspective they had on the class of English. He recognized that sometimes he would not be able to develop fully his lesson plans because the elements he needed: TV, CD player or course books; were not available. He understood he was to have a plan b or different activities ready, just in case.

Camilo admitted during this period that he never looked at teaching as a passion, nor even as something he liked. However, it was this easiness he had for interacting with children that helped him mainly to accept the fact he studied teaching and also to become

eager for this profession as well. Camilo recalled an experience he had in his first teaching practicum, in a training institute for adults. One of his students told him that he was lucky to have him as a teacher, because thanks to him he learned the meaning of some words in English, something he never did in the school, and had changed the perspective he had about English learning. Camilo took this as a motivational opportunity to keep going and finish his teacher education program.

Another meaningful experience stroke Camilo's teaching. One of his students was very reluctant to do anything in his English class. He had tried talking with her, motivating her, assigning her roles in the class, and nothing seemed to be working. It was until he left for a symposium and brought his students candies and shared his experience there, that he could approach better this student. Class by class, the student started to participate more and at the end of the course she took part of a "Romeo and Juliette" video that Camilo was directing with that class. He considers it is moments like this that make you reflect on becoming a teacher and the positive impact you can bring to others when teaching. Camilo is convinced now that teaching is what he wants to do. He is currently working as a teacher of English for a private school and does not overlook the possibility of conjoining his knowledge of English teaching with another teacher program or photography.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings**

This chapter presents the findings that aim to respond to the questions that guided this research study. First, we will describe the process of teacher identity construction as experienced by a group of student teachers in an English teacher education program at a public university in Colombia. Next, we will provide a thoroughly description of the factors that promoted and those that hindered the construction of teacher identity through participants' experiences in the same program.

#### **The Process of Teacher Identity Construction for Student Teachers in an English Teacher Education Program**

In this section, we have chosen to describe the construction of teacher identity from the perspective of the main elements of a narrative, that is, setting, characters, conflict, plot, and dénouement. In an attempt to understand how student teachers of an English language teacher education program construct their teacher identity, we explain how this process occurred by making a comparison to the main literary elements of a narrative (Carter, 1993). The first two elements – setting and characters – constituted the core around which this narrative developed and therefore was described, yet the actual sequence that explains the construction of teacher identity began with the introduction of the third element – conflict. Thus, this conflict led to a sequence of events – the plot – that illustrated the characters' paths to resolve the participants' conflicts in the process of identity construction. Finally, this narrative concluded in its final act – a time-framed dénouement – that far from depicting a final conflict resolution, it displayed how the characters in this

narrative temporarily overcame the conflicts and continued to build their professional identity.

Three essential principles aligned with the elements of conflict, plot and dénouement. These principles were illustrated by the STs' narratives of their lived experiences with(in) the English language teacher education program. The first principle addresses *preconceptions generating tension* (in alignment with conflict); it embodies three preconceptions that STs brought with them when entering the program. The second principle focuses on *knowledge building and reflecting* (in alignment with plot); it describes when STs began building teacher knowledge within the teacher education program and reflected upon teaching knowledge and practices. Finally, the third principle attends to a *conceptual shifting* (in alignment with dénouement) that resulted from the mediation of the second principle over the first one. Important to mention that although there were 6 participants in this research study, in the following section, we will address the construction of teacher identity from the individuality of each participant; consequently, we refer throughout this next section to a student teacher as an individual but not one in particular.

**Student teachers' Identity Construction as a socially-constructed narrative.**

*Setting.* The setting is the time and location in which a narrative takes place.

Commonly, all stories require a setting to be able to begin, and its importance lies in the aid it provides to initiate the backdrop and mood for the narrative. Thus, this narrative of teacher identity construction relies on the setting to help understand the context where the other elements of the story interplayed and enacted. Particularly, this narrative took place in an undergraduate English teacher education program at a public university. Participants stayed in this program for 4 and a half years, starting in 2014 and finishing in 2019. This narrative occurred mostly within the milieu of the university classroom, and also took place in language labs, public school classrooms and auditoriums. These particular locations, along with the other elements, contributed to generate conditions for participants to construct a teacher identity.

*Character.* In general terms, characters are distinctive personalities who are involved in the events described in a narrative. Throughout the development of this narrative, the student teachers, acting as the protagonist, interacted with secondary characters who provided him with knowledge about teaching, educational experiences, feedback and opportunities to reflect; which allowed the ST to advance throughout the plot. We were able to identify secondary characters such as professors, classmates, cooperating teachers and practicum supervisors, all of whom interacted in different events with the ST and supported him actively. Moreover, we perceived student teachers as dynamic characters considering the process they experienced and the resulting construction of teacher identity.

***Conflict (Preconceptions generating tensions).*** In the context of narratives, conflict is the challenge or struggle the main character deals with in the pursuit of certain goals. The type of narrative conflict we have recognized in student teachers' experiences is the man vs self, which represents the internal conflict of the protagonist challenged by his own will or fears over decisions to make. To better illustrate, the student teachers enrolled in the English teacher education program having previous concepts with respect to English teaching and a teacher education program. To demonstrate the former, Björn's understanding of the teacher profession was that "it is not too bad after all, well, we obviously have some disadvantages" (Björn, ON1, 113). And, to exemplify the latter, Camilo declared that he "didn't know a teacher program was focused on teaching" (Camilo, ON1, 12). Such concepts later turned into the core of their internal conflicts. We have classified these conflicts into three areas: the teacher vocational dichotomy, target language proficiency, and the misconception about the English language teacher program.

To discuss teacher vocational dichotomy, the participants of the study described to us an unclear desire to become teachers. This claim was already built upon entering the English teacher education program but continued to be boldly present during almost the first two years. Björn illustrated this by saying, "*since I started the program, I was aware that the degree I was going to obtain was that of a teacher of English, anyways, I did not like teaching*" (Björn, WN1, 2). In the same fashion, Chata mentioned:

*In my family there are some teachers, in fact, my father was an educator many years ago... So, as I knew something about this difficult field, I never thought about being a teacher, actually, it was the last thing on my bucket list.* (Chata, WN1, 2)

Besides, the conflicts found in the target language proficiency area relates to experiences when participants used English and a) feared reactions of those who interacted with them or b) reconsidered their professional future as a teacher of English. Such conflicts were disclosed when participants narrated to us their concerns when using the target language. As for instance, Frida stated *“Well, it is the first time I have an experience teaching English. I’ve always said that there is like a barrier, a certain fear about my English performance because it is not that good”* (Frida, ON3, 45). Such difficulties prevented them from participating actively in some classes, affecting their self-image as prospective teachers, to the point that it generated in the ST the idea of dropping out of the program. Commenting on this aspect, Chata stated:

*at the very beginning I heard comments and rumors that I didn’t like, people were saying that it was unbelievable that at the eighth semester I had such a bad level of English... I cried after hearing that, and I also think about dropping out of the practicum because of that.* (Chata, WN3, 7)

Additionally, the ST displayed a misconception about the English language teacher education program, the third conflict area. They showed an unclear concept of the teacher education program’s purposes. As expressed by some STs, they realized they were in a teacher education program by the fifth semester. This meant that STs realized they were being prepared as teachers when they had spent two years in the program. As noted by Camilo, *“One enrolls in the [teacher education] program a bit unmindful because I did not know this was for teaching, simply, teaching English. I thought it was for learning English, that’s it. Learning English and then I will travel around the world”* (Camilo, ON1, 58).



Taystee's following belief on the teacher education program indicates the force of this conflict. From her experience as an assistant of the evaluation process team for the English Language Teacher education program, she could affirm that "*the fifth semester was when dropouts reach the highest number because this was no more about grammatic or English, but it was about how to teach a language*" (Taystee, ON2, 405). She believed that it is in this point when STs become aware that it is not simply about learning English but how to teach it, and some decide to quit the program for this reason.

As in narratives, the purpose of the conflict is to move the characters forward to the plot and contribute to the development of their values and selves. Consequently, the conflicts displayed by the STs typified the same purpose in their construction of teacher identity.

***Plot (Knowledge building and reflecting).*** To put it in a few words, plot is the sequence of events happening in a narrative and which are somehow bound to affect the character's personality in pursuit of his goals. In this way, the relevance of the plot in this narrative of teacher identity construction lies in drawing our attention to the different STs' experiences that allowed them to construct a teacher identity and permits arranging such lived experiences in a structural sequence form towards a more fine-grained understanding of the process (as in a conventional understanding of a plot, not postmodernist). We argue that the plot in this narrative consisted of three major events: interaction with members of the teacher community, the gains of the teaching practicums and experiences with(in) the undergraduate program (ELT) coursework, which potentially brought knowledge building and reflection. Nonetheless, these events acted as a frame narrative - stories within a story - not a solely unique event.

The first event of interaction with members of the teacher community involves all dialogic encounters a ST holds with professors, classmates, cooperating teachers, practicum supervisors, administrators, scholars; any active member of the teacher community.

Evidence suggests this interaction led to knowledge building and, occasionally, to generate a positive image of the teaching profession. Camilo commented: *“More than teaching English, all the basics of English, he [the professor] motivated me. He was excellent at motivating people. He said things like ... ‘Look, you are good at this, you should do this, try changing this, follow this’* (Camilo, ON1, 66). Regarding the same professor, Frida stated:

*He motivated me and told me that I could do better every day. So, that is very important in the formative part of the student, not only what knowledge I can give, as a teacher, but how I can act in favor of your personal development. Occasionally, he told me he was proud of me.* (Frida, ON1, 254)

Although this interaction was sometimes unfavorable, as stated by some participants, the negative interactions often allowed STs to reflect upon the kind of teacher they did not want to be. To exemplify this, Björn recalled his experience with one of the English courses' professors and stated, *“I felt like an empty recipient that needed to be filled with grammatical structures, but not with the didactics or love for teaching, not even the development of critical thinking”* (Björn, WN2, 31).

The events that took place in the gains of the teaching practicums, the second event, equally permitted STs to interact with cooperating teachers, practicum supervisors and students, and benefited directly from the teaching contexts and practices. Some STs recognized in these teaching practicums a great contribution to their formative process. For instance, Chata stated *“I won't say this first practicum was easy, it was really challenging,*

*but I gained experience which is the most important aspect. At the end, I learned from my mistakes, which was worthy for my second practicum”* (Chata, WN3, 15). Likewise, Camilo noted that *“being a student teacher is a priceless opportunity to get a first-hand view of what really involves being a teacher”* (Camilo, TP2, PJ7).

Finally, with reference to the third event, we consider the experiences lived throughout the program's coursework were substantial grantors of knowledge building and reflection, which consequently led to a construction of their teacher identity. In this regard, Taystee claimed the following:

*Second language learning theories and principles of learning and teaching were the first pedagogy and didactics courses, and at the beginning it was hard to learn a lot of concepts by heart. However, in the course of the time, I understood several approaches and techniques that teachers take into account and use them according to students' styles and behaviors.* (Taystee, WN2, 27)

In summary, the importance of the plot remains in that without it, there is essentially no narrative. The events that happened in this narrative of a teacher identity construction allowed us to get a broader understanding, primarily because more than the *what*, the plot explains the *why* the events happened. Therefore, these 3 major events: interaction with members of the teacher community, the gains of the teaching practicums and experiences with(in) the undergraduate program (ELT) coursework led to comprehend the significance of the STs' experiences when undertaking their conflicts.

***Time-framed dénouement (Conceptual shifting).*** The dénouement is the resolution of a narrative in which the complexities of the story and the characters' conflicts are resolved. As opposed to an open narrative, this narrative of a teacher identity construction

offered some clarifying events. However, we decided to refer to this as a time-framed dénouement in that it presents the conclusion for the narrative limited to the duration of the English teacher education program, but it is not definitive, for STs are going to continue to shape their following narratives of a teacher identity construction in upcoming settings. However, vital to the dénouement of this narrative was a conceptual shifting that supported the resolution of the conflicts STs displayed at the beginning of the program. This conceptual shifting was evidenced, again, in three main areas: recognition as a teacher, reconceptualizing English language teaching, and awareness of opportunities for development.

When the ST was recognized as a teacher by his students or colleagues, the first area, he experienced some conceptual changes in regard to the teaching profession; the attitude towards becoming a teacher reflected more confidence and made the ST reconsider his importance and responsibility as a member of the society. Camilo, for instance, stated that *“it felt weird to wear a teacher's white coat and to hear students calling you teacher. It is good to feel that I am actually becoming a teacher, since then, I will play correctly the role with all the factors it implies”* (Camilo, TP1, PJ3, p. 1). In a similar way, Himura referred to his students in the research project he conducted at a public school and claimed that *“in one way or another, those kids made me change those perspective about being a teacher, we should try to contribute a little more to their reality, so they won't continue living bad situations”* (Himura, ON3, 33). By being recognized as teachers, they took a different role and defined their responsibilities as active members of the society they lived in.

Regarding the second area, some resolving events granted STs the opportunity to reconceptualize English language teaching, affecting directly their teaching practices. Frida found out in a class during her teaching practicum that *“students prefer challenging activities; activities in which they learn something new and strengthen their knowledge. Those activities could increase students' motivation and engage them in their own learning”* (Frida, TP1, PJ2, p. 2). In a similar manner, Bjorn asked his students why they thought they had failed the English class, to what his students responded it was because of the negative points the previous teacher gave them. So, Bjorn decided to make an agreement with them and realized *“it is better when students and teachers build that relationship by establishing the roles of the rules inside the classroom”* (Bjorn, TP2, PJ3, 11).

Finally, concluding events displayed in the dénouement allowed the ST to be aware of opportunities for development; they recognized in the teaching acts situations that allowed them to reflect and seek improvement. In this regard, Björn noted:

*At the end of the lesson, I realized that being a teacher is a difficult task. There are many tasks to develop and aspects to take in mind. What I have to do from now on is to think of the issues I faced in the lesson, and work on them to resolve them.* (Björn, TP1, PJ1, 18)

The dénouement of this narrative of a teacher identity construction revealed how STs' conflicts were resolved, at least partially. On the whole, considering the elements of the narrative adopted: setting, characters, conflict, plot and dénouement; this final outcome facilitates explaining how we observed and understood the construction of teacher identity in student teachers in an English teacher education program. As evidenced in the data, we

observed STs began the process of teacher identity construction once they unclosed their conflicts upon enrolling the program. Then, it was the program's offered experiences what allowed the STs to embrace their conflicts. Consequently, it was with the resolution of such conflicts that we could identify a construction of identity. In the following diagram (figure 03), we summarize the construction of teacher identity in relation to the main elements of a narrative, as proposed at the beginning of this chapter.

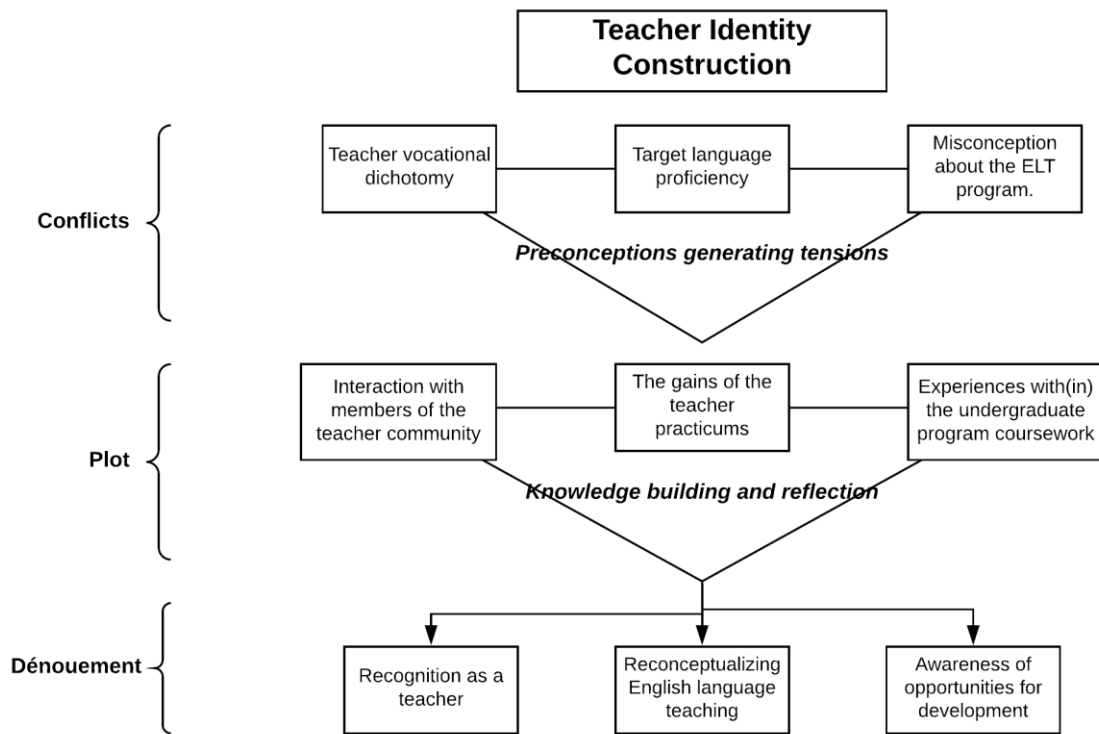


Figure 3. Teacher identity construction.

We evidenced the construction of teacher identity began with some conflicts STs exposed at the beginning of the teacher education program; such conflicts turned into tension initiators. Then, the program offered STs experiences for knowledge building and reflection through interaction with members of the teacher community, the gains of the

teacher practicum and with(in) undergraduate program coursework; these events consolidated the plot of this narrative of a teacher identity construction. To conclude, there were some concluding events that resolved the initial STs' conflicts, the ones unveiled at the beginning of the teacher education program. STs recognized themselves as teachers, they regenerated the concepts they had of English teaching and were aware of opportunities for development in their ongoing teacher formation process. This concluded, within the extend of the English teacher education program, the story about the construction of teacher identity.

### **Factors that Promoted the Construction of Teacher Identity in an English Language Teacher Education Program**

English language student teachers constructed their teacher identity as they became members of a community of practice. This formation started with some conflicts STs faced in the process of learning-to-teach during the first year in the teacher education program. The teacher vocational dichotomy, the lack of target language proficiency, and the misinterpretation about the teacher education program were the initial conflicts evidenced in the data. Student teachers also showed reluctance to become teachers of English, they did not build a professional affiliation. Despite the fact of being reluctant to become teachers, STs resolved those conflicts and engaged in teaching as they interacted with social actors such as professors and colleagues, gained knowledge in order to know how and what to teach from undergraduate courses, and experienced the act of teaching; plot events offered and experienced in the teacher education program. From the previous sociocultural environments, STs created a new understanding of their teacher selves, and built a professional affiliation.

The construction of teacher identity is an ongoing process that is influenced by many factors. In this section, we will present evidence regarding the factors that promoted the construction of teacher identity for a group of student teachers in an English teacher education program. STs constructed their teacher identity while being immersed in a teacher community teaching the language, interacting with social actors, such as professors, practicum supervisors, cooperating teachers, peers and students. In addition to undergraduate coursework, STs' personality traits and reflection upon their role and their performance in class have a direct effect on the construction of teacher identity.

**Teaching experiences in the construction of teacher identity.** We will refer to the microteaching practices and teaching practicums as teaching experiences. Since the teacher identity is constructed as part of the process of learning to teach, the teaching practicum and the microteaching sessions enabled STs to imagine themselves as teachers and be recognized as such by the teacher community (the school they taught). STs constructed their teacher identity while they faced the school realities, experienced some tensions when teaching, and became members of a community of practice. All of the above, allowed STs to recognize themselves as teachers and valued their teaching competencies while taking on a new identity.

The course on second language learning theories in the fifth semester granted STs the opportunity to conduct some microteaching sessions at a school. To begin with, the act of teaching in pairs, planning the lesson and being assessed by the professor was meaningful to Taystee, since she received feedback from peers and professors that allowed her to understand and make sense of her role as a prospective teacher. Thus, she and other STs recognized that when they started taking courses such as Second Language Learning



Theories in the fifth semester, they became aware that the program was not only about learning the foreign language but also teaching it. In this regard, Camilo stated *“In fifth semester you are like, uy what's this? A course about didactics. And what is didactics? It is about how to teach English. Juepucha, am I going to teach English?”* (Camilo, ON1, 60).

On the other hand, the teaching practicum was a crucial moment for STs, given the fact that it allowed them to develop their teaching skills and knowledge in order to enrich their teacher professional development. Most of the STs pointed out that the first teaching experience was not easy. According to them, it was inevitable to feel nervous, and as time went by, teaching became a natural task for them. For Taystee, the teaching practicum was the tipping point of her construction of teacher identity, because it was when she saw herself as an English teacher. Moreover, this experience allowed her to put into practice all the theoretical knowledge gained in the English teacher education program and became more knowledgeable by experiencing teaching in a real context. Taystee not only shaped her new identity as a teacher and grew professionally from teaching her practicum, but learned from the reflection upon her decisions made in the classroom.

Following the same line of thought, Chata recalled her experience teaching her first practicum and mentioned to us how horrible she felt because she was not sure about her knowledge, she did not think she was capable of carrying out her practicum correctly. Moreover, the attitudes her students had towards the class affected her, as she reflected in her teaching practicum journal:

Students were distracted in the computers of the lab, they were doing things that I had not asked [them to do], I left the classroom again with a melancholic feeling inside my

heart and thinking that I will never get the attention of the students of this classroom.

(Chata, TP1, PJ2).

From the previous experience, Chata reflected on her role, the way she treated her students and the activities she developed in class, to encourage them to take an active part in their learning process. As a result, new knowledge emerged from the practice of everyday teaching. She pointed out, *“I won't say that this first practicum was easy, it was really challenging, but I gained experience which is the most important aspect. At the end of the practicum, I learned from my mistakes, which was worthy for my second practicum”* (Chata, WN3, 13).

Bearing in mind the previous statements, we can say that STs acknowledged the teaching practicum as a crucial moment in their process of becoming teachers since it allowed them to see themselves as teachers for the first time. Besides, while teaching, they reflected upon their actions, creating a new understanding of their teachers' selves.

Thus, the teaching practicum is the first encounter STs had with the realities that the school community offers. According to Camilo, *“being a student teacher is a priceless opportunity to get a first-hand view of what being a teacher really involves”* (Camilo, TP2, PJ7). Camilo affirmed that the last two semesters are crucial for STs to gain experience teaching and to construct their teacher identity since it is the first contact that STs have with real teaching situations,

I believe that the last two semesters are crucial for the creation of the teachers' identity since it is where the teacher program gives STs the opportunity to put into practice all the theoretical content learnt throughout the program (Camilo, WN3, 13)

The classroom is a powerful source of teacher identity formation since STs evolve from the moment they start making decisions when it comes to teaching. When STs experience the act of teaching, they are making sense of their role. Regarding the previous statement, Frida reflected in her journal that *“the experience of the teaching practicum allows you to know yourself as a teacher, in terms of responsibility, methodology, and the principles that you apply to your English class”* (Frida, WN3, 81).

When teaching, STs' recognition of their role by the teacher community was an important aspect that promoted the construction of teacher identity. For instance, Björn claimed that *“I was amazed when most of the learners called me teacher. It gives you the sense of confidence and power to continue working on this field.”* (Björn, TP1, PJ1). In this regard, Frida similarly pointed out that *“when I was alone teaching, I felt more as a teacher. I didn't feel as a ST or the cooperating teacher's assistant. I felt like I was the teacher.”* (Frida, ON3, 375). Bearing in mind the above, the social recognition of their role as teachers by their students is an important source of identity formation given the fact that they recognized that they valued their competences to teach.

Moreover, STs recognized themselves as teachers when their students appraised their efforts and dedication to teaching. According to Camilo, all the positive comments encouraged him to pursue his dream to become a teacher. Camilo and Taystee also affirmed that they valued their role as teachers when students and parents recognized their performance in class.

Based on the previous STs' perceptions, we can say that STs constructed their teacher identity as they participated in a teacher community and developed their teaching competencies. The microteaching practices and teaching practicums affected the

construction of teacher identity positively since these allowed STs to recognize themselves as teachers and to be recognized as such by the teacher community. From the above, we can say that the formation of teacher identity is the result of a process of learning in practice and immersion in a community of practice.

**Support from the teacher community in the construction of teacher identity.**

The construction of teacher identity was mediated and transformed as STs interacted and gained support from former professors, teachers, cooperating teachers, practicum supervisors, peers and students. Social actors shape STs' teacher identity through encouragement and support while they experienced the act of learning to teach, shaping their professional affiliation. Even, the negative-impact of former teachers was seen as an opportunity for STs to determine how to be teachers and how to teach. In this category, we are going to refer here to the social actors such as teachers, practicum supervisors, cooperating teachers and peers that shifted and transformed STs' teacher identity through their support, and encouragement.

**Professors' support.** Professors from the English teacher education program were an important source of identity formation given the fact that their feedback, suggestions, encouragement and negative impact were opportunities to reinforce their self-images as teachers. From this social interaction, STs constructed their ideal teachers' images. Besides, the support from their professors allowed them to become more confident regarding their target language proficiency.

STs' experiences as learners revealed the impact former teachers had on the construction of their own identity as teachers. In this study, some teachers inspired STs either positively or negatively through their professional commitment, teaching styles or

their teacher-student relationships in the English teacher education program. STs expressed that the teachers they have had in the teacher education program “*may not teach a strategy in an explicit manner, but they did it somehow through their actions, their way of being, which shaped and touched [them] in becoming teachers*” (Himura, ON3, 274). Likewise, Himura met an inspiring professor who taught him English in the first, third and fourth semester of the program and played an essential role in his learning process. Himura claimed that this professor was a good model for him as a teacher, and that was why he tried to replicate his teaching style in his own teaching practice.

While referring to another professor in the program, Camilo considered he was lucky “*for having had the chance of knowing his teaching style, his love for the profession, and his spark that motivated and moved you forward at a gigantic pace even though you are not motivated*” (Camilo, WN1, 22). Besides, he stated that this professor was a “*crucial role model in my formation and growth as an English teacher*” (Camilo, WN1, 19). The previous quote implies that professors and their teaching practices constitute an important influence for STs in their process of constructing teacher identity. Professors' teaching styles and ways of being with STs were so far-reaching that STs unconsciously considered those aspects later when they were teaching in their practicums. In the oral narrative sessions, it became recurrent to hear STs' stories about some professors' human dimension, rather than the importance of contents covered during classes (i.e., lesson topics, books, activities, exams).

In addition, the interaction between Chata and her professor Karol suggested how beneficial was her encouragement when Chata was about to drop out of the teaching practicum due to comments regarding her target language proficiency. Chata considered

herself as a very insecure and indecisive person. However, her professor Karol appraised her skills and encouraged her to continue in her process of becoming a teacher, reinforcing her self-image as a teacher. Besides, from that interaction, Chata moved from being a low confidence ST to being more self-confident.

Another factor that contributed to promote the construction of teacher identity for these participants was the behavior and attitudes of other teachers who came to represent not so good models for these prospective teachers. Björn, for instance, reflected on teaching models he experienced in the program that were not so inspiring. He acknowledged that one teacher somehow reinforced the desire to give up on becoming a teacher. Björn saw his school experience in retrospect: the teacher had the final word and what mattered was to learn content by heart. In the same line of thought, Björn recalled his experience when taking an English course in the program. As his teacher did not inspire him, he felt that he was a container which he had to fill in with grammatical structures. In this regard, he added *“I decided to drop out the course in the middle of the semester and give me a break and reconsider my future goals. Sometimes, teachers have a direct influence on the decision of becoming a teacher or not.”* (Björn, WN2, 37). The classes and the overall interaction with this professor made Björn reflect upon what constituted a good teacher. He even compared his experience with other professors in the English teacher education program to determine what they did differently and better, weighing on the importance of motivating students through *“good advice and offering students guidance”* (Björn, ON1, 264).

Equally necessary to mention is Chata's experience regarding a similar situation with professors from two different courses in the English teacher education program. Chata highlighted how her teachers were narrow-minded and did not allow their students to state

their opinions because the professors were always right. In this regard, she claimed, *"I do not want to be a teacher like her", "I do not want my students to see me the way I saw that teacher"* (Chata, ON1, 170). From Björn and Chata's narratives, we can conclude that some teachers' attitudes and behaviors had a negative impact on the way STs shaped their own identity.

To conclude, we can say that former teachers also played a crucial role in constructing teacher identity through their support and encouragement. Teachers or professors cannot solely awake student teachers' desire to teach, but they can influence their perceptions on how to teach while becoming potential sources of inspiration for STs. Yet, the negative-impact of former teachers made STs teach better than they were taught in the past, bracing up their teaching through comparison and reflection.

**The Support of practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers.** Practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers guided STs in the process of learning to teach when completing their teaching practicums. Their role was to prepare STs for their teaching practice and monitor their lessons by providing feedback, suggestions, and encouragement. The guidance and collaboration from these social actors not only allowed STs to strengthen their self-images as prospective teachers but also enhanced their teaching practice. Besides, the social recognition from their colleagues as teachers gave STs a stronger sense of having a professional affiliation.

Taystee's cooperating teacher provided her with guidance and support in order for her to overcome the tension to teach in a higher education level. In this vein, she said, *"my cooperating teacher seemed like my practicum supervisor since he always gave me some pieces of advice. Since the very beginning he provided me with comments because he*

wanted to help me in my formation as a teacher” (Taystee, ON3, 473). Her cooperating teacher always provided her with meaningful feedback to help her grow professionally, even though his comments were not positive all the time. Himura similarly acknowledged that his cooperating teacher and practicum supervisor were excellent and were there to help him out. He usually sent his lesson plans to both of them because through their feedback he could enrich his lessons, as he stated *“my cooperating teacher gave me lots of advice. All of his comments were helpful to improve or avoid things in class”* (Himura, ON3, 14). Also, he asserted that *“my practicum supervisors really helped me because I think that there are things that are not covered in the program, but the practicum allows you to wake up and learn”* (Himura, ON3, 16).

Support in the context of teacher identity construction also came from practicum supervisors. Chata highlighted the importance of her practicum supervisor's feedback at the moment to teach and develop her lesson plans. In this respect, she claimed that *“he [practicum supervisor] told me ‘Chata you are doing this right’ or ‘you should check this’. While he was my supervisor, he was excellent. He [the practicum supervisor] helped me to construct the teacher I am.”* (Chata, ON3, 620).

From the above, we can say that social actors such as cooperating teachers and practicum supervisors contributed in the formation of teacher identity since their feedback upon their teaching practice enabled STs to grow professionally and reinforced their self-images as teachers. The subcategory below unfolds the importance of peer support in the construction of teacher identity.



**Peer support.** Peers and classmates played a crucial role in the learning-to-teach process. STs relied on their support to gain a better understanding of the theoretical concepts that were covered in the program coursework and to improve their target language proficiency. In addition, STs participated in sociocultural environments when conducting the microteaching practicum that allowed them to have their classmates' perceptions of their own teaching practice.

Frida, for example, considered that she did not have a good level of language proficiency when she enrolled in the English teacher education program. However, a classmate always supported her along the way, as she claimed: "*a friend helped me to fit in the classes, sometimes I didn't understand, so he always helped me to translate, and together we did the exercises*" (Frida, ON1, 154). In like manner, Himura affirmed that he did not feel confident with his language proficiency either. Nevertheless, his peers always supported him. He claimed that "*they were good, they never left me behind. On the contrary, they helped me to understand the things that were not clear*" (Himura, ON1, 73). Although his classmates had a better language proficiency than him, they never marginalized him, but always helped him when he did not understand the instructions. Through their peers' support, STs improved their language competence which allowed them to become more self-confident since for them a teacher should master the language in a perfect way.

The courses that STs took regarding didactics and pedagogy tended to be complex due to all the theoretical constructs they needed to master, but through the social interactions and support from peers, STs obtained a better understanding of the concepts that allowed them to construct their teacher selves. In this regard, Taystee acknowledged

the importance of studying with another classmate for the Second Language Learning Theories course, since, according to her, she did not understand the academic concepts, as she stated *“in the course ‘Second learning theories’, we focused on concepts about learning and teaching (...). I did not understand [the academic concepts]. So, I gathered a friend of mine who was a brilliant student to studied together”* (Taystee, ON3, 104).

Furthermore, STs obtained feedback and suggestions from peers on teaching a lesson, based on a video they recorded for a course. Chata recalled her classmates' constructive comments were useful when she started her first teaching practicum. Through working with peers during the English teacher education program, STs began to construct a new understanding of what it implies to be an effective English teacher.

On the other hand, STs' participation in research symposia allowed them to have direct interaction with colleagues and scholars who had experienced teaching for years which also contributed to mediate and transform their teacher selves. Björn attended a symposium in his last year in the English teacher education program, where he met some colleagues from different parts of the country and the world who were interested in the educational field. For him, this encounter was meaningful as he recognized: *“it [the symposium] helped me to nourish the teacher persona I am trying to construct”* (Björn, ON3, 276). Also, from the interaction with one of the presenters, he learned to use different interactive platforms that were useful in his teaching practicum. Additionally, Björn shared his teaching experience with students from other teacher education programs, and realized that the teaching contexts can be different. Thus, he acknowledged that *“when I talked to STs from other universities, I found different things that were going to be useful to conclude my teaching practicum and to start my second practicum”* (Björn, ON3, 267).

Support from peers when learning and understanding academic concepts and their feedback on their microteaching practice helped STs to become more confident in terms of their language and teaching competencies. The relationship with peers contributed to build STs' sense of belonging to a community of practice. Moreover, extracurricular activities such as symposia enabled STs to construct their teacher identity as they became members of a community of practice. From those encounters, STs got acquainted with the new trends in foreign language teaching and enhance their teaching competencies in collaboration with others.

### **The role of undergraduate courses in the construction of teacher identity.**

During the oral narrative sessions, STs revealed how their experiences within different courses in the program helped them to construct their teacher identity. In their stories, participants emphasized courses on the areas of Pedagogy and Didactics, English, and Research. The assiduous narratives regarding their interaction with the contents, activities and professors leading the courses illustrate an influence on their teacher identity.

For instance, Frida told us about the backlash evidence from the Globalization and Language Teaching course. She described the course as amazing, comparing it to the experience felt when watching a movie, trying to assimilate everything you are being told. Frida stated, *"I see myself like in a movie, trying to assimilate everything he [the professor] tells us to change the concept of teaching English... Now, we talk about Englishes and English as a lingua franca"* (Frida, ON2, 149). She attributed to this course the change on the concept of English and of teaching English she previously held.

Consequently, we observed how STs' narratives focused on some courses of the program, particularly those which allowed them to engage on new learning, new concepts

and new meanings. To name another one, the Reflective Teaching course conceded participants the chance to compare their advancement with other STs and take their experiences during the teaching practicum as a starting point for building teaching knowledge. To illustrate this aspect, we present how Taystee experienced reading her peers' journals and realized she was not the only one facing difficulties during her teaching experiences; through this, she analyzed what other peers were dealing with and compared it with her own process. She stated, "*it was as if I was doing another practicum myself*" (Taystee, ON3, 395). Through the written journals, participants offered a more in-depth reflection regarding the contributions of these courses on their identities as teachers.

Taystee's last statement is captivating and proposes the actual value the course must have on prospective teachers. As a ST, Taystee identified the true meaning of the course and how it offered STs a common ground for peer apprenticeship of observation, a more collaborative way to learn about teaching from each other's teaching experiences. This practice demystifies teacher learning from the sole practicum advisor's guidance or the principle of learning from the thousands of hours as learners; an outcome although achievable through the STs' exchange of experiences, was provoked substantially by the course's content and purpose.

It is important to add that some of these undergraduate courses did not simply grant student teachers with information and understanding of the subject to make informed decisions when teaching, but, as expressed by Frida, these courses made them reflect on professional projection and a holistic meaning of teaching. Frida, for instance, started to think of herself as a researcher. She claimed she got her foundations for doing research in the field of English teaching and teacher education from the Research Methodology course.

Other courses in the English teacher education program were seemingly less pleasant, providing STs an unpropitious perspective of teaching: *“as nothing is perfect I found ‘second language learning theories’ on the road, and it was horrible! Really! I had to memorize like hundreds of methods that I am not even using nowadays”* (Chata, WN2, 25). The excerpts presented so far indicate the meaningful influence that the program courses had on STs' construction of teacher identity. As indicated before, these courses provided STs with knowledge and experiences that contributed to shape their teaching style and their sense of being an English teacher, consequently contributing to refine their teacher identity.

In addition, the research courses in the program facilitated some STs the development of their research projects, shaped their sense of professional affiliation, and contributed to set new professional goals (e.g. pursuing a master's program, doing research upon graduation, becoming a university professor). Moreover, conducting research projects enabled STs to face the school realities.

Björn and Chata conducted their research project at a public school. They created a radio station in the school to promote and practice the foreign language. This was Björn's first time coming into contact with a school community, and the situations students experienced broke his heart. According to Björn, his students presented social issues such as extreme poverty conditions, domestic violence, use of psychoactive substances, and bullying. Chata stated that *“the situations these kids have experienced were hopeless, (...) and those things touch you as a teacher”* (Chata, ON3, 317). Björn added that *“my heart was touched by these little kids' souls.”* (Björn, WN2, 40). The complex situations their

students faced allowed STs to become aware and understand their teacher role, and to experience the value of their profession.

As bullying was an issue that students faced daily, Björn decided to empower one of the victims of this issue. Björn stated that “[he] used to tell him ‘no, you have to be stronger than your peers’. (...) ‘use those capabilities that you have so that you do not get left behind’” (Björn, ON3, 100). Björn motivated his student to learn English and developed the ability to overcome bullying by believing in himself. Thus, Björn affirmed that when conducting the research project, he developed his identity as a teacher because he was seen as a valid member of the school community. For him, his participation in the project was the biggest moment as a teacher because it was the first time he interacted with students. Finally, he acknowledged that “*the research project was the light that illuminated my path, also my life totally changed because of this experience*” (Björn, WN2, 42).

Also, some participants regarded research as “*a vital aspect that teachers should develop to improve the quality of the education and his or her practices that might help to change the reality in which the students live*” (Himura, WN3, 29). This excerpt shows how research may be used to improve the school reality and students' lives. STs could observe priorities to be met in the contexts they were teaching. The implementation of the research projects allowed STs to face the school realities they encountered in the teaching practicum, to reflect on their role as teachers and to shape an identity as a result of the lived experiences in these projects.

**Personality traits in shaping teacher identity.** Another factor that facilitated the construction of teacher identity for this group of participants related to their personality traits. We understand personality traits as individual features or differences in the way participants think, feel and behave, and which have an effect on personal identity. The STs' exhibited personality traits are mature, perfectionist, self-critical, sensitive and leaderly.

Camilo shared through the oral narratives how easy it was for him to interact with kids. He said, *"thanks to God, this easiness with kids has always been part of me. Although, I had not realized about it before and I came to find out about it with the experiences teaching kids and in the didactic courses"* (Camilo, ON1, 183).

Also, Camilo described his experience in the movimiento juvenil Salesiano (Salesiano youth movement) at a Normal school. He claimed, *"I was always a leader. I was the school representative and I always liked to work with children"* (Camilo, ON1, 171). He explained that the joy he found in interacting with children was something that motivated him when he had doubts about becoming a teacher.

In the same way, Taystee explained how she felt when working with adults and children, and where she fit best.

I can feel somewhat tensioned when working with adults, but I feel safer and more myself when I am with curious and attentive kids, who want to learn new things in English, who welcome you with a smile, those smiles that can fix, sometimes, a broken heart. (Taystee, WN1, 32)

These distinctive traits in Taystee's personal identity centered her attention on a specific population to teach and responded consequently to an intimate familiar moment she had to face earlier in her life. She lost her mother when she was younger, and she told

us how she missed the motivation from her mother, and how she used to encourage her and even inquired about her day. *“So, it is good that not just one person, but many, see the good things in you and tell you about them”* (Taystee, ON3, 309). From a sociocultural perspective, this arises as a probable explanation to her preference in working with kids, since, in her own words, they can fix a broken heart with a smile.

On a different note, Frida stated how being strict played a crucial role in her teaching. She revealed how she was never satisfied with the way she taught some lessons and focused on the mistakes she had made. She always asked herself after her lessons if she had been good or bad, questioning whether she was or not apt to be a teacher. Frida showed her necessity to be strict and reflective on everything she did, both as a language teacher and as a language learner. There were constant Frida's laments about her speaking performance and how that did not make her feel comfortable as a teacher. Likewise, this characteristic of her personality remained active during teaching.

Additionally, Frida further elaborated on how her perfectionism inflicted on her speaking skill development. She described that listening to other people speaking in English, people with a lower speaking performance level, became a kind of relief for her, and made her question why she was being too hard on herself. Frida considered it was because she was *“too perfectionist, because [she] wants to do everything too well.* (Interviewer interrupts) *Because [she] wants to be better, because [she] cannot stay in the level [she is] now”* (Frida, ON3, 241).

Similarly, evidence suggests that Himura's maturity contributed to a more disciplined and organized process during the English teacher education program. He expressed that for being 29 years old, he was required to think his responsibilities through



very carefully as he did not want to waste time. His maturity made him aware of his duties as a student and made him hand in assignments in time because he wanted to check how well he was progressing.

As described, we noticed that there were some personality traits present in the construction of teacher identity. The personality traits the STs had affected their construction of teacher identity, in that those traits that make them who they are, created a unique pattern that consequently defined their teacher identity.

**The role of Reflection in the construction of teacher identity.** A final factor that contributed to the development of teacher identity for the participants in the English teacher education program had to do with reflection. For this study, reflection is discussed as a mental process that departs from the desire to understand the contexts and acts of teaching. This later results in better student learning and more efficient teacher performance (Akbari, 2007). Reflection appreciates self-awareness as what will provide knowledge and understanding of the self (Fendler, 2003). Reflection allowed participating STs to see and think themselves being and becoming teachers of English.

STs' narratives advised that after the period of tensions they experienced in the program, as discussed in the first section of the findings, they reflected upon a) their impact as teachers on society, b) their teaching and c) their prospective teacher necessities and priorities, leading towards the construction of their teacher identity. Evidence of how reflection contributed to teacher identity construction was found in all data collection instruments. This regarded primarily the last three semesters' experiences in undergraduate program courses, teaching practicums, and observations in the micro-teaching practices.

Frida recalled how Professor Juan helped her speaking skill, and indicated how this professor's formative part influenced in her. She stated:

*Considering how weak my speaking skill was, if I could see him [professor Juan], I would thank him for everything he did on that. He would be proud now [...] A teacher who cares for a student impacts more than a teacher who simply goes to teach a class. (Frida, ON1, 276)*

Frida defined for her that the most important characteristic a teacher could have is his formative quality. In the same spirit, Camilo noted:

*As a teacher in training, I always try to do my best in order to start from the beginning being a good teacher. In this order of ideas, I am trying to approach to the student to show her that I can be a reliable person and that she can tell me her troubles to find a solution. For next week I will be attentive to see if the student's attitude changes or if the situation continue being the same. (Camilo, TP2, PJ9, p.1)*

These data show how STs were concerned with the way they could impact their students with more than just learning a language. STs reflected on the actions they observed in former teachers and on their experiences as pre-service teachers. They emphasized the importance they, as teachers, had when facing, for instance, their students' emotional problems. For the participants, being a teacher involved awareness on their students' sadness and find out the reasons, and then cheer them up. To view their responsibility as teachers from this perspective led them to recognize the value of their actions, and then reflect on what a teacher is meant to be.

Furthermore, when the participating STs started reflecting on the impact they could make on their students, they were perceiving the teaching profession more holistically, acknowledging that,

*I think that a teacher has an important role in the development of society because teaching is not only giving lessons, taking attendance and assessing students. But also, researching is a vital aspect that teachers should develop to improve the quality of the education and his or her practices that might help to change the reality in which the students live. (Himura, WN3, 36)*

Here, Himura states how his perspective on the teaching profession changed throughout the program, fortunately, he also pointed at what made him realize that; it was his experience in a children's shelter what made him aware of the importance of this profession in how students showed gratitude for his efforts and how he could contribute to their realities in that place. STs reflected on the students' priorities and made them their necessities as teachers as a way to possibly support students to "*escape from the cruel reality they belong and turn their lives around for the good*" (Björn, WN2, 47).

Another aspect they reflected on was their teaching. Based on their teaching experiences in the teaching practicum and some part-time jobs they managed to get, they reflected on the possible perspectives their students could have on them. Frida observed reiteratively that if a teacher is insecure about vocabulary and language-related knowledge, that teacher would transmit that to her students. Himura, reflected upon the same issue but took a different stand. He stated,

*I had never thought in something that is very common, that sometimes I don't understand a word in English and I feel bad, and say to myself I don't speak*

*English. Later, in a course, the professor gave us the example that this also happens in Spanish with some words, and that doesn't mean I don't speak Spanish.* (Himura, ON2, 67)

Participants elaborated their own assumptions of the use of the target language, which could possibly affect the way they teach it, and will exert influence on the aspects of the language they choose to strengthen (work on).

Also, regarding their teaching but reflecting upon the technical aspect of it, participants reported some considerations during their teaching practicums. For instance, Taystee said, *"Those important issues that make me think that it is time to do the things in the correct order and plan much better the following classes"* (Taystee, PJ5, 20). They were concerned about how their students reacted to their lesson plans. Chata, for example, was very critical after a lesson she taught, claiming she wanted to apologize to her students for having taught the lesson wrong. She stated, *"I went out the classroom feeling sorry for my students, I wanted to apologize because I have taught the lesson wrong. I have to continue improving, and most importantly, I know I make mistakes, but I want to solve them"* (Chata, PJ4, 13). Reflecting on the lessons they taught, on their teaching style, made them aware that they had another chance with future lessons, allowing opportunity for improvement. Frida continued expressing how her priority was to be confident when speaking in English and attributed this as the guide to see herself as a teacher of English. She perceived this as a way to impact students better, and for her it was just as important as the teacher's pedagogical knowledge.

This final part of the category presents the reflection upon their needs as teachers and priorities projected from their contexts, suggesting a possible relationship of cause and

effect. The excerpts we have presented in this category indicate that reflection plays a crucial role in the construction of a teacher identity since it allowed STs to think of new possibilities to act when teaching, to reflect on their impact on society and perceive teaching as a more integral profession.

The previous categories seemingly constituted the factors that promoted the construction of teacher identity for a group of six student teachers in an English teacher education program at a public university in Colombia. The construction of teacher identity is a never-ending process that requires participation in a teacher community and with its members. The data here suggested that, although all participants experienced common factors (e.g., teaching experiences, courses, teachers, peers, research project), each one brought in individual factors (e.g., personality traits, reflection, goals), which led each participant to assume the construction of his or her teacher identity.

### **Factors that Hindered the Construction of Teacher Identity in an English Language Teacher Education Program**

In this section, we are going to present student teachers' vocational dichotomy and concerns regarding the target language proficiency as factors that hindered their construction of teacher identity in an English teacher education program. Based on STs' narratives, the misinterpretation of the teacher education program, lack of affiliation towards the profession, and language proficiency affected the construction of teacher identity at some point. As they did not want to be teachers, they could not fully develop their teacher selves. Moreover, not having the desired language proficiency did not allow them to be perceived by the teacher community and themselves as language teachers.

**Teacher vocational dichotomy as an obstacle in the construction of teacher identity.** STs' reasons for enrolling in the English teacher education program seemingly reflected a higher interest in learning English to travel and work abroad, rather than to become English teachers. STs knew from their relatives, and their school teachers that being a teacher was a challenging profession and based on that, they had rather negative views towards this profession. The misconception towards the English language teacher education program and their beliefs about teaching illustrate a duality that affected STs' construction of their teacher selves. Since STs expressed an unclear desire to become teachers during the first two years of the teacher education program, they could not fully develop their teacher identity construction at some point.

Some STs recognized that they entered the English teacher education program because they were not able to pursue another college major they had in mind. Besides, the fact of having studied English in a language institute or being apparently good at this language before seeking university admission, allowed them to consider the English teacher education program as an option. In this regard, Camilo claimed that he wanted to serve in the air force. However, his parents could not afford it. After that, he questioned himself about what he was good at. In high school, he always stood out for being good at English. It was during the first interview that Camilo shared how he felt about becoming a teacher when he joined the program: *“Well, I would say that I was uncertain about becoming a teacher, that I did not know about that and did not want it”* (Camilo, ON1, 161). From the previous quote, it is evident his reluctance towards being a teacher given the fact that the English language teacher education program was not his first option. As he could not serve

in the air force, he was forced to select this program because he was good at the language, facing a struggle for a professional identity.

Later, Camilo started to find a priori experiences that might shed light on the formation of his teacher identity. When he was in the first semester, Camilo recalled he was lost, like all his classmates when entering the program, as he pointed out: *"I want to travel around the world (...) and learn English. I wanted to speak, listen and understand the language"* (Camilo, ON1, 48). He did not know that the program was about language teaching and thought that he was going to learn the language in order to travel around the world. Moreover, he recognized that he and his classmates realized that the program was about teaching when they took courses such as second language learning theories, principles of language teaching, and course design and assessment, in the fifth semester. STs' misinterpretation about the program and their beliefs towards the same led to hinder their identity as teachers, focusing on learning the language just travel abroad instead of teaching the language.

Along this vein, Chata did not want to be a teacher even though she studied in a Normal school, as Camilo did. Chata wanted to study photography, and that is why she traveled to Medellin to present a pre-university test because she wanted to pursue a major in Audiovisual and Multimedia Communication, but she did not pass the admission test. However, she had had good results on the Saber 11 test, so she thought *"I am good at English, so let's enroll in the ELT program."* She added, *"As a matter of fact, I selected the program just because I didn't like anything else in this University"* (Chata, WN1, 13). Regarding the previous experience, she wrote in her journal: *"I decided to apply for the*

*foreign language program at the University. Sadly, I felt it was the worst decision for me because I really wanted to study out of my hometown”* (Chata, WN1, 6).

This feeling towards teaching has not changed throughout the English teacher education program since she still does not want to become a teacher in the future. In her first oral narrative, Chata claimed that she still has in mind the idea of being a translator and teaching as a profession is a resignation for her. From her narrative, we can say that her teacher identity was not constructed since she never experienced an affiliation towards the profession, even though she had taught before enrolling in the English language teacher education program. Also, her negative beliefs about the profession affected her construction negatively as a teacher since she learned from her own relatives, the struggles teachers often face.

Björn did not have in mind the English language teacher education program as a first option either. When he thought about entering college, he had selected three different programs to enter the University, and the first choices were Social studies, and Law. In his second interview, he insisted that he felt more inclined to study foreign languages than Law. But the idea of complementing his knowledge of English with Law changed, as Björn pointed out *“At the end, I liked studying foreign languages, instead of Law. (...) Let’s say that the perspective changed, and I inclined myself more to teach and not only to learn the foreign language.”* (Björn, ON2, 45). Since the very beginning, he knew that the English language teacher education program was about being a teacher, even though he did not like that idea. However, his idea of being a teacher evolved throughout his experience in the English language teacher education program, as he claimed: *“I always wanted to be an interpreter, but as time [went] by, my vision and objective changed”* (Björn, WN1, 5).



Even though his idea of being a teacher evolved throughout his stay in the English language teacher education program, we can say that his affiliation towards the profession was affected at some point by his initial desire to learn a foreign language to pursue another major.

Based on the above, the majority of STs selected the English language teacher education program as a forced choice since they were not able to pursue the major they had in mind. As they were good at English, they saw in the program an opportunity to accomplish their goals while losing sight of their preparation to become English language teachers. Initially, the construction of their teacher identity was affected by their initial expectations and misinterpretation of the program; they wanted to learn the language to travel abroad. STs' identity as teachers was hindered in the first year of the English language teacher education program due to the lack of affiliation towards the teaching profession.

#### **Target language proficiency as a hindrance in teacher identity construction.**

STs' apparent lack of language proficiency created some conflicts and tensions in their process of being and becoming teachers. For the STs, it was a priority to master perfectly the English language in order to be recognized as an effective teacher. Since they question their language ability when teaching, the construction of their teacher selves was affected.

Some STs affirmed that their seemingly low level of English language proficiency as determined by their practicum supervisors, teachers, and students constituted a tension they experienced throughout the teacher education program. In this regard, Chata mentioned in her third oral narrative that she felt disappointed when she heard comments from a professor regarding her language proficiency while teaching her first practicum. She

stated that she had felt insecure about her English proficiency, and those comments made her feel frustrated because an English teacher should master the language perfectly; otherwise, she could not be called an English teacher. Chata felt so downhearted when hearing those comments that she thought of dropping out of the practicum course because of that.

Björn experienced a similar situation when he did not pass an important English course due to his low English writing skill. He pointed out that his motivation for becoming a teacher dropped drastically when he also failed the academic writing course. He was good at writing in his first language, but having difficulties when writing in English made him doubt his future as an English teacher when he failed this course. Björn thought that he could not become an English teacher if he did not know how to write in this language, which affected his identity formation since he did not value enough his English skills. In this regard, he pointed out:

A teacher who is not skillful in all linguistic skills; in this case, writing, cannot be called 'a teacher.' I couldn't ask my students to improve their writing skills, knowing that I had the same problems or even worse ones. (Björn, ON2, 237)

Furthermore, Taystee experienced frustration when she did not pass an important test students presented in the fourth semester. Taystee mentioned: "*I was not the best nor the worst, but I felt frustrated because I noticed the progress of my classmate in relation to mine. I got 3,3 in the test results, and I questioned myself about my future as an English teacher*" (Taystee, WN2, 26). According to Taystee, she needed to fully master the foreign language in order to be considered an English teacher.

On the other hand, Frida acknowledged her concern in terms of her language proficiency in the first semester. She claimed that she was not at the same level as her classmates. Her professor spoke English all the time, and she did not understand a word he said. When he talked to her, she had a mental block, because she did not know how to answer. Also, she claimed that *"I saw my classmates and they answered, and the professor said: very good. So, it was that fear, if I made a mistake, my classmates would laugh at me, and that created a barrier to develop the oral skill"* (Frida, ON1, 145). At the end of the first semester, professor Juan told her that she had to improve her performance in class, or she would fail the course.

When teaching, she could not detach herself from the fear of making grammatical and pronunciation mistakes. However, she felt more confident teaching to kids instead of teenagers or students from the English teacher education program, as she claimed *"I have a barrier or a fear regarding my English language proficiency because it is not so good. But when teaching in front of younger students, I like it. So, I can overcome the fear of my English, when I teach"* (Frida, ON3, 45). According to her, she needed to have a better knowledge of the foreign language and grammar to be recognized as a language teacher. Frida considered she did not have the English level proficiency required to teach first-year students from the English teacher education program, which made her question her professional identity.

Bearing in mind the above, we found that STs' concerns about their English proficiency made them question their future as teachers, given the fact that for them an English teacher requires to master the language. The majority of STs faced tensions when they became aware that they were not considered an authority in language use because of

the comments from professors or their test results. Those tensions were evidenced in STs' experiences throughout the English teacher education program. However, when STs conducted their teaching practicum in the context of higher education, tensions were more problematic since they were afraid of losing face in front of their students. The fact of not having the expected level of English language proficiency hindered the construction of their teacher identity. To them, if an English teacher did not fully master language, he or she could not be recognized by the teacher community as a teacher.

The previous categories presented the factors that hindered the construction of teacher identity in an English language teacher education program. STs entered the program with a misconception about the goals of the program, considering it as an opportunity to learn English to travel the world. Besides, they were forced to select the program because they could not pursue another major. In this regard, we can see that STs' professional affiliation was affected in their first year since they did not want to be teachers in the first place. On the other hand, the target language proficiency and knowledge of the language affected the teacher identity construction since STs thought that they could not be recognized as teachers due to their lack of high language proficiency.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion and Conclusions

This narrative research sought to understand how STs constructed their teacher identity within an English language teacher education program. As well as the factors that hindered and promoted its formation. The study took place at a public university located in the south of Colombia, and participants were six student teachers of the undergraduate teacher education program who had completed their second practicum in a public secondary school. The implementation of written narratives, oral narratives, and teaching practicum journals allowed us to dig deeper into their experiences as STs in order to answer the research questions.

In this chapter, we will firstly offer a summary of the findings along with the discussion. Secondly, we will address the limitations we encountered in conducting the study; and finally, we will provide suggestions for further research in relation to the construction of teacher identity.

“Teacher identity stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society” (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). The construction of teacher identity entails an ongoing process that is transformed through the social practice (Danielewicz, 2001; Johnson and Golombek; Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Lui & Xu, 2013; Fajardo, 2014; Izadina, 2013). In line with the previous idea of seeing identity from a social perspective, we can say that STs take on a new identity as a result of the experience gained in the process of learning to teach and through the interaction with members of the teacher community.

The findings indicated that the construction of teacher identity is a dynamic process which entails a permanent construction of who we are and who we might become as a result of our participation with social actors (Wenger, 1998). For the participating STs, the process of teacher identity construction started with some conflicts such as a disavowal regarding becoming English teachers, a misinterpretation of the goals of the English teacher education program, and their concern about their target language proficiency. Despite the fact of experiencing the previous conflicts, STs went through a process of acceptance as they completed their teaching practicums and conducted microteaching sessions in some of the methods courses, took courses such as reflective teaching, globalization and language teaching, among others, and interacted with the teacher community. From the previous experiences, we can say that the participants' teacher identity was informed, formed and reformed as STs developed over time and through the interaction with others (Cooper and Olson, 1996). The interaction with the teacher community, the teaching experiences and experiences within the undergraduate program coursework granted STs the opportunity to reflect and transform their understanding of who they are as teachers.

The second research question concerned on the factors that promoted the construction of teacher identity. Base on STs' experiences within the teacher education program, we can say that the teaching experiences, the interaction with and support from the teacher community, the undergraduate program coursework, the personality traits and reflection upon their role and practice enabled them to construct their teacher selves. STs' understanding of themselves as teachers was shaped and reshaped as they experienced the act of teaching. In this regard, the teacher identity was constructed as part of the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2001). The immersion in a teacher community granted STs

with opportunities to experience the social recognition as they became members of a teacher community, valuing their competences and shaping a new sense of professional affiliation. These general findings are in line with research studies cited in the literature review (Tsui, 2007; Fajardo 2014; Quintero, 2016).

As we have mentioned before, the construction of teacher identity is the result of the social practice. Therefore, the support from social actors such as former teachers, practicum supervisors, cooperating teachers, students, and peers played a crucial role. In this vein, Wenger (1998) claims that individuals take on a new identity as they become a valid member of a community of practice where learning happens in collaboration with others. In this research study, we could evidence that STs constructed their teacher identity from the interaction, and support with practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers (Díaz Benavides, 2013; Izadinia, 2013) since their feedback upon their teaching practice allowed them to reinforce self-images as teachers and recognize their competences as valued (Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Quintero Polo, 2016). Thus, teachers from the English teacher education program positively affected the construction of teacher identity (Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Quintero Polo, 2016). From them, STs copied and integrated a model of being, felt inspired to become teachers and influenced their perceptions on how to teach. Even teachers who were not considered as good models, contributed to shaping STs' teacher identity formation since they created a new understanding of how to be effective teachers. STs might face conflicting situations that make their teacher identity formation challenging. However, in this case, the tension regarding those teachers who were not considered as good models became potentially productive in constructing their teacher identity. On the other hand, STs' personality traits extrapolated to their teacher identity, shaping who they

are as teachers. Besides, STs' reflection on their teaching practice and their role (as teachers) contributed to the construction of teacher identity since their teacher selves evolved from the moment they started making decisions to act within their teaching context (Izadinia, 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2012). Understanding the factors that contributed to constructing the teacher identity will help to prepare prospective teachers for the challenges of constructing professional identities in positive ways (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In this vein, teacher education programs require overt attention to the importance of this issue in order to instill an awareness of the need to develop teacher identity.

Reviewing the literature, the studies evidenced the positive factors that contributed to promoting the construction of teacher identity (Salinas and Ayala, 2018; Liu and Xu, 2013; Izadinia, 2013; Fajardo, 2014, Díaz Benavides, 2013; & Quintero Polo, 2016). In this regard, Izadinia (2013) claims that there is a necessity to consider the challenges STs face in the process of teacher identity construction. Regarding the third research question, the findings suggested that the teacher vocational dichotomy and STs' concern about their target language were issues that hindered their construction of teacher identity in the first year and their last semester of the teacher education program. As becoming an English teacher was not the first choice for these student teachers; they had negative views towards the teaching profession from relatives, which affected their professional affiliation. On the other hand, as STs questioned their language proficiency and knowledge about the language when teaching in the context of higher education, they faced a sense of confusion about their teacher identity that did not allow them to be fully recognized as teachers.

This narrative research has investigated three research questions. Firstly, it described the process of teacher identity construction from the perspective of the main



elements of a narrative (setting, characters, conflict, plot, and dénouement). The construction of the teacher identity started with some conflicts STs faced in the process of learning-to-teach. Then, those conflicts were resolved as STs interacted with the teacher community and experienced the act of teaching, creating a new understanding of their teacher selves, building a professional affiliation, and offering opportunities for professional development. Secondly, it has examined teaching experiences, support from the teacher community, undergraduate courses, personality traits and reflection upon their role and practice as factors that promoted the construction of teacher identity. Finally, it explored student teachers' vocational dichotomy and concerns regarding the target language proficiency as factors that hindered their construction of teacher identity in an English teacher education program.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

This narrative research has explored the construction of teacher identity as a never-ending process that requires participation in social practices. Besides, it recognized some factors that promoted and hindered its development in an English language teacher education program. As we collected the data regarding STs' experiences as students in the teacher education program over a 5-month period, further research should be conducted over a longer period of time in order to gain a deeper understanding of the construction of teacher identity. Bearing in mind the above, the data can be gathered at different stages of the teacher education program in order to obtain more insights in relation to the factors that shape the teacher identity construction.

Besides, it is crucial to undertake more research regarding teacher identity construction in the context of teacher education (pre-service teachers and EFL teachers)

considering it as an issue that has been under-researched in Latin America (Clarke, 2008; Archanjo, Barahona, & Finardi, 2019). Finally, we suggest research in the field of teacher identity that involves an intervention in teacher education programs in order to promote the construction of teacher identity and retain prospective teachers in the profession.

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## **Appendixes**

Appendix A. Reflective assignment for first semester English language teacher education program students

### **Audio recording 01 – Personal Reflection**

Due date: February 27th, 2018

Basic English – 20181

Surcolombiana University

This reflection is an individual assignment, and requires each student to provide answers to some reflective questions related to his/her experience in the English language teacher education program.

#### **Guidelines:**

- Record yourself in a quiet place. Use headphones with built-in mic, if possible.
- Discuss your answers before starting to record.
- Use situations from your personal experience to support your answers.
- It might help to talk to some classmates to better elaborate your answers.

The questions to reflect are the following:

Why did you decide to enroll in an English Language Teacher education program?

OR What was your motivation for enrolling in an English Language Teacher education program?

In your opinion, what are the factors that motivate young people to choose the English language teacher education program or the teaching profession?

What is your perception towards the teacher's role? OR How do you view the job of teaching?

What are the main difficulties/challenges you would encounter on entering to work in the educational field?

What are your expectations for enrolling in an English language teacher education program?

What are your plans for continuing your professional growth? OR (How do you see yourself in five years?)

#### Appendix B. Questionnaire for in-service teachers

##### Open-ended questions for in-service teachers

March 29th, 2018

Surcolombiana University

Dear in-service teachers,

Thanks for taking some time to answer some question in order for us to conduct a future research study.

We are requesting you to answer some questions about your initial thought about teaching a language as a profession, the main reasons for enrolling in an English language teacher education program, your expectations before graduating and how those expectations have changed through time.

What was your initial concept or thought about being an English teacher/educator?

What are the factors that motivate young people to choose the English language teacher education program or the teaching profession?

Why did you decide to enroll in an English Language Teacher education program?

Currently, do you work as a teacher? Where do you work?

What were your professional expectations before graduating? Have those expectations changed through time?

How do you see yourself in five years?

### Appendix C. Consent form

Universidad Surcolombiana  
Facultad de Educación  
Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés  
Formato de consentimiento

Título del estudio : Understanding how English language student teachers construct their teacher identities.

Investigadores principales : María Angélica Gutiérrez Sánchez y Wilson Hernández Varona.

Apreciada estudiante:

Usted ha sido invitada a ser parte de un estudio de investigación realizado por dos estudiantes del programa de Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés de la Universidad Surcolombiana. Es importante que lea cuidadosamente el siguiente texto y realice las preguntas que considere necesarias para obtener explicación de los procedimientos, detalles del estudio y su rol como participante.

Este proyecto tiene como propósito central entender cómo se construye la identidad docente durante el programa de Licenciatura en inglés de la mencionada universidad, y para lo cual se utilizará el método de investigación cualitativa de carácter narrativo. También, es necesario mencionar que este trabajo se constituye como proyecto final de tesis de grado en

el mencionado programa de maestría. La participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria. Es importante mencionar que no se obtendrá beneficio económico, sin embargo, se espera que los resultados de este estudio contribuyan a identificar los factores que promueven o que entorpecen el desarrollo de la identidad docente en estudiantes de un programa de enseñanza del inglés.

Si usted acepta participar en esta investigación, se le pedirá escribir tres narrativas, responder a tres entrevistas y participar en un grupo focal que tomará aproximadamente 45 minutos de su tiempo. Lo que conversemos durante las entrevistas y grupo focal se grabará, de modo que los investigadores puedan posteriormente transcribir las ideas que usted haya expresado. También, se le solicitará compartir los journals escritos durante y como requisito de sus prácticas docentes.

La información suministrada por usted será tratada de manera confidencial y se garantizará el anonimato de cada uno de los participantes. Tenga en cuenta que usted tiene derecho a retirarse del estudio en el momento que lo desee sin ninguna consecuencia para su trabajo o labores académicas. De ser así, sus datos, respuestas e ideas no serán tomadas en cuenta en el estudio. Si algunas de las preguntas o temas tratados durante las entrevistas le resultan incómodos, usted tiene derecho a hacérselo saber a los investigadores o a no responderlos.

Para preguntas, dudas o inquietudes respecto a este trabajo se pueden comunicar a los emails [angelicagutierrez92@hotmail.com](mailto:angelicagutierrez92@hotmail.com), [wilsonhernandez25@gmail.com](mailto:wilsonhernandez25@gmail.com); o a los teléfonos 3134332399 o al 3102716427.

Hago constar que yo \_\_\_\_\_,  
identificada con la cédula de ciudadanía No. \_\_\_\_\_, he leído y

entendido el procedimiento general del presente estudio, los beneficios del mismo, y de las medidas que se adoptaran para la protección de los datos personales de los participantes, así como la posibilidad de retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento. Por lo tanto, de manera completamente voluntaria otorgo mi consentimiento para la participación en la actual investigación.

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Firma de la participante

#### Appendix D. Written narratives guidelines

##### **First year as student in the English language teacher education program**

###### **(Artifact sharing)**

Dear all, hope you are off to an invigorating long weekend. Again, thanks for accepting our Research invitation and for being part of it. As discussed previously, the first activity requires you to attach, upload and share with us any document (exam, test results, homework, picture, video, presentation, course artifact, course name or syllabus, personal journal or blog, etc.) related to your first year as a student in the English language teacher education program. Consider when uploading: upload documents you feel comfortable with sharing, if not the whole of it, you can always trim a picture or screenshot the part that you're ok with. Please, caption the document (as allowed by seesaw) to give as some information about it.

##### **Written narrative 01 - Initial experiences in the English language teacher education program**

Dear student teacher,



Thanks for taking some time to complete this weekly journal. We are here requesting you to write about the beginning of your experience in the English teacher education program (Licenciatura en Inglés). Write freely on anything you consider appropriate and relevant for us to know regarding your initial experience, feelings, and expectations of the first year in the English teacher education program.

Consider the following questions as a guide if necessary: how did you feel when you first entered the English language teacher education program?, What was your initial purpose when entering the program?, what did you think about teaching or becoming a teacher before entering the English language teacher education program?, what led you to consider this as your area of study?, what were some factors (courses, activities, teachers/professors, talks, etc.) that contributed or hindered to construct your identity as a teacher?, How did you see yourself as a prospective English teacher?

Please, be reminded that you can write this journal in your first language. We suggest you write a narrative (prose), not just a disconnected set of responses to the question.

### **Written narrative 02 – second and third year in the English language teacher education program**

Dear student teacher,

First, thanks for completing the previous journal entry. According to Fajardo (2014), “teachers take on a new identity as a result of the experience gained in the process of learning to teach” (p. 50). This implies that the process of becoming a teacher is transformed as they participate in a teacher community (teaching) and gain knowledge in order to know how and what to teach. Bearing in mind the above quote, please reflect and

write about your experience as a student in your second and third year in the teacher education program. You can make reference to challenges, meaningful experiences, professors, courses, academic spaces, classmates that you think helped you to promote or hinder your preparation as a future English teacher.

Fajardo, J. A. (2014). Learning to teach and professional identity: Images of personal and professional recognition. *Profile Issues in Teachers Professional Development*, 16(2), 49-65.

**Written narrative 03 – last year in the English language teacher education program (teaching practicum)**

Dear student teacher,

Thanks for taking the time to complete the previous written entry. As you know, reflection is an essential aspect of the process of becoming teachers. Writing about your experiences in the classroom teaching will give you the vehicle to remember, recall, reconstruct, re-create, and represent what you learned of your teaching practice (Shandomo, 2010). Besides, it will shed light on how you became a teacher. This a personal and private entry in which you are requested to reflect and write about your experience as a student teacher during your final three semesters in the teacher education program. You may include experiences, professors, classes, events and academic spaces that foster, hinder or were relevant (or not) for your preparation as a future teacher. You may consider difficulties, and remarkable experiences lived throughout your teaching practicum, your initial purpose when entering the program and how this idea has changed over the duration of the program, your perception about becoming a teacher and who you are as a teacher.

## Appendix E. Written narrative

### **Second written narrative**

First of all, I have to say that the process of creating a good teacher identity hasn't been an easy task. I must confess that at the beginning of the English degree, I was not planning to become a teacher. Nevertheless, life has many ups and downs and I managed to go through all the challenges and barriers that I found through my way to become an accomplished English teacher. The second and third year in the Teacher Education Program are crucial stages in the creations of the teacher's identity since students take the methodological courses and when student have their first experiences as student teachers. In my experience, it was paramount the way teachers accomplished to make me feel that calling for de teaching act. It all began when I was asked to make class observations that I started to create that identity that now best characterizes me. During those observation sessions, I could notice that the teacher act is a demanding task that probes all the strengths and skills that teachers have when they need to improvise and to solve a great variety of problems. It also was good for me to have good experiences while teaching English for the first time at the third year of the English degree. At the same time, I was working at a kindergarten where I had the opportunity to build and recognize weaknesses and strengths that later I will keep enforcing. On the other hand, I have to mention some constraints that I consider I had while building up my identity as an English teacher. Although motivation wasn't a varying factor towards my learning process, I think I had a sense of disorientation since before entering to college I hadn't thought about becoming a teacher. I had some different plans and in second year I was still trying to convince myself and to find my vocation as an English teacher. What helped me to overcome that issue was to have contact

with real teaching experiences because I could identify that I have a relative facility to teach to children and help me to choose the right methodologies and techniques that I was going to use later on my teaching practicum.

Appendix F. **Translated quotes from student teachers' oral and written narratives**

1. "it is not too bad after all, well, we obviously have some disadvantages" (Björn, ON1, 113). **Original:** [la profesión docente] como tal no era algo malo del todo pues obviamente tenemos algunas desventajas.

2. "since I started the program, I was aware that the degree I was going to obtain was that of a teacher of English, anyways, I did not like teaching" (Björn, WN1, 2). **Original:** Desde que inicié el programa era consciente de que el título que iba a tener era el de licenciado en inglés a pesar de que no me gustaba la docencia.

3. "Well, it is the first time I have an experience teaching English. I've always said that there is like a barrier, a certain fear about my English performance because it is not that good" (Frida, ON3, 45). **Original:** Bueno, pues es la primera vez que tengo experiencia enseñando inglés. Siempre he dicho que hay cierta barrera o un cierto temor por mi desempeño en el inglés porque no es muy bueno.

4. "One enrolls in the [teacher education] program a bit unmindful because I did not know this was for teaching, simply, teaching English. I thought it was for learning English, that's it. Learning English and then I will travel around the world" (Camilo, ON1, 58). **Original:** Llega uno perdido. Porque... porque primero que todo yo no sabía que esto era para docencia, simplemente: 'ah! licenciatura en inglés, aprender inglés y ya'. Aprender inglés, hablar y escuchar inglés y ya, después me voy a viajar alrededor del mundo.

5. “the fifth semester was when dropouts reach the highest number because this was no more about grammatic or English, but it was about how to teach a language” (Taystee, ON2, 405). **Original:** Ahí me di cuenta de que en quinto semestre es donde se da más deserción porque pues ahí ya no es tanto gramática ni inglés, sino que es más de cómo enseñar un idioma.

6. “More than teaching English, all the basics of English, he [the professor] motivated me. He was excellent at motivating people. He said things like ... ‘Look, you are good at this, you should do this, try changing this, follow this’ (Camilo, ON1, 66).

**Original:** él, aparte de lo que es el inglés, enseñarme todas las bases en inglés, aparte de eso la motivación. Es un profesor excelente para motivar a las personas. ‘Mire usted es bueno en esto, debería trabajar en esto, trate de cambiar esto, siga por este lado’.

7. He motivated me and told me that I could do better every day. So, that is very important in the formative part of the student, not only what knowledge I can give, as a teacher, but how I can act in favor of your personal development. Occasionally, he told me he was proud of me. (Frida, ON1, 254) **Original:** Él siempre como que me estuvo motivando y diciéndome que yo podía dar más siempre, que yo podía más. Entonces, es muy importante en la parte formativa del estudiante, no simplemente yo qué conocimientos puedo darle sino en que puedo favorecer su crecimiento personal.

8. “I felt like an empty recipient that needed to be filled with grammatical structures, but not with the didactics or love for teaching, not even the development of critical thinking” (Björn, WN2, 38). **Original:** Sentí que era un recipiente el cual debía ser llenado con estructuras gramaticales, pero no con la didáctica o el amor por la enseñanza, ni siquiera el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico.

9. “in one way or another, those kids made me change those perspective about being a teacher, we should try to contribute a little more to their reality, so they won't continue living bad situations” (Bjorn, ON3, 33). **Original:** digamos que es experiencia llegó a marcar como esa parte profesional mía como docente porque hizo que esos niños tocarán mi corazón de una u otra forma, que cambiarán esas perspectivas y que ello intentara también como aportarles un poquito a ellos para que no siguieran viviendo esa situación.

10. “In fifth semester you are like, uy what's this? A course about didactics. And what is didactics? It is about how to teach English. Juepucha, am I going to teach English?” (Camilo, ON1, 60). **Original:** Ya en el quinto [semestre], ya uno: ‘¡uy! ¿eso que es?, que una materia de didáctica, y ¿qué es didáctica?, que como enseñar el inglés. Juepucha, ¿es que yo voy a enseñar inglés’...

11. “the experience of the teaching practicum allows you to know yourself as a teacher, in terms of responsibility, methodology, and the principles that you apply to your English class” (Frida, WN3, 81). **Original:** la experiencia de las practicas permiten conocerte a ti mismo como docente en cuanto a la personalidad, la metodología y los principios que aplicas para tu clase de inglés.

12. “when I was alone teaching, I felt more as a teacher. I didn't feel as a ST or the cooperating teacher's assistant. I felt like I was the teacher.” (Frida, ON3, 375).

**Original:** porque también me dejaban más solita, entonces me sentía más la profesora, no me sentía como la practicante o la auxiliar de la cooperadora me sentía era la profesora.

13. “may not teach a strategy in an explicit manner, but they did it somehow through their actions, their way of being, which shaped and touched [them] in becoming

teachers” (Himura, ON3, 274). **Original:** hay maestros que de pronto no le enseñan una estrategia como tal, sino que ellos mismo con la forma de ser en la forma de enseñar a uno lo moldean y le dan a uno un toquecito.

14. “for having had the chance of knowing his teaching style, his love for the profession, and his spark that motivated and moved you forward at a gigantic pace even though you are not motivated” (Camilo, WN1, 22). **Original:** por haber tenido la oportunidad de conocer su estilo de enseñanza, su amor a la profesión y esa chispa que tiene que realmente motiva y hace salir adelante y avanzar a pasos agigantados hasta al estudiante más desmotivado.

15. “crucial role model in my formation and growth as an English teacher” (Camilo, WN1, 19). **Original:** un rol crucial en mi formación y crecimiento como maestro de inglés.

16. “I decided to drop out the course in the middle of the semester and give me a break and reconsider my future goals. Sometimes, teachers have a direct influence on the decision of becoming a teacher or not.” (Björn, WN2, 37). **Original:** Por lo anterior, decidí renunciar al curso a mitad de semestre y darme un respiro para replantear mis metas. Muchas veces los profesores que tenemos influyen directamente en la decisión de querer o no convertirnos en maestros.

17. “good advice and offering students guidance” (Björn, ON1, 264). **Original:** nos daba muy buenos consejos, nos daba su acompañamiento.

18. “I do not want to be a teacher like her”, ‘I do not want my students to see me the way I saw that teacher” (Chata, ON1, 170). **Original:** no quiero que mis estudiantes me vean como nosotros veíamos, la veíamos a ella.

19. “my cooperating teacher seemed like my practicum supervisor since he always gave me some pieces of advice. Since the very beginning he provided me with comments because he wanted to help me in my formation as a teacher” (Taystee, ON3, 473). **Original:** Mi cooperador parecía mi asesor porque me daba muchos consejos. Desde el principio hizo comentarios porque él me dijo quiero ayudarle en su formación como profesora.

20. “my cooperating teacher gave me lots of advice. All of his comments were helpful to improve or avoid things in class” (Himura, ON3, 14). **Original:** me dio muchos consejos, me comentó muchas cosas. Las horas de permanencia para hablar con él me sirvieron para mejorar o evitar cosas.

21. “my practicum supervisors really helped me because I think that there are things that are not covered in the program, but the practicum allows you to wake up and learn” (Himura, ON3, 16). **Original:** mis asesores también me ayudaron muchísimo. Entonces, pues creo que hay cositas que no se ven durante la carrera como tampoco en las materias, pero pues las prácticas le permiten a uno despertar y aprender.

22. “he [practicum supervisor] told me ‘Chata you are doing this right’ or ‘you should check this’. While he was my supervisor, he was excellent. He [the practicum supervisor] helped me to construct the teacher I am.” (Chata, ON3, 620). **Original:** El profesor Juan, fue muy bueno la retroalimentación que me daba era bastante buena al corregir los planes de clases, al decirme: Chata, usted está haciendo muy bien esto, debería corregir tal aspecto. Entonces, en lo que pudo acompañarme, el profesor Juan fue excelente. Él me ayudó bastante a formarme como docente.



23. “a friend helped me to fit in the classes, sometimes I didn't understand, so he always helped me to translate, and together we did the exercises” (Frida, ON1, 154).

**Original:** él me ayudó a... no sé cómo se dice... a encajar en las clases. Y que siempre... Paola entiende lo que está diciendo o siempre me ayudaba a traducir hacer los ejercicios.

24. “they were good, they never left me behind. On the contrary, they helped me to understand the things that were not clear” (Himura, ON1, 73). **Original:** Pues eran muy buenas personas, también... nunca como que me marginaron porque no sabía, sino que al contrario me ayudaron a cómo entender las cosas en ese curso.

25. “in the course ‘Second learning theories’, we focused on concepts about learning and teaching (...). I did not understand [the academic concepts]. So, I gathered a friend of mine who was a brilliant student to studied together” (Taystee, ON3, 104).

**Original:** en Second Learning Theories sí era mucha teoría y era bastante... no enseñaron la gramática sino teoría en investigaciones y enseñanza que habían hecho personas. Entonces, sí, casi no entendía. Entonces, ¿qué hacía yo? Iba a la casa de una amiga, que a ella pues le iba bien y entonces pues estudiábamos juntas.

26. “it [the symposium] helped me to nourish the teacher persona I am trying to construct” (Björn, ON3, 276). **Original:** Pues la verdad me siento como a gusto porque me ayudó de una u otra forma o nutre ese perfil que yo intento construir.

27. “when I talked to STs from other universities, I found different things that were going to be useful to conclude my teaching practicum and to start my second practicum” (Björn, ON3, 267). **Original:** hablé con cuatro muchachos de esa universidad y pues encontré distintas cositas que me van a servir como para terminar mi primera práctica y comenzar la segunda.

28. "I see myself like in a movie, trying to assimilate everything he [the professor] tells us to change the concept of teaching English... Now, we talk about Englishes and English as a lingua franca" (Frida, ON2, 149). **Original:** me veo como en una película como tratando de asimilar todo lo que nos dicen: cambiar el concepto de inglés de enseñanza de inglés... ahora nosotros hablamos de Englishes o hablamos del inglés como lengua franca.

29. "the situations these kids have experienced were hopeless, (...) and those things touch you as a teacher" (Chata, ON3, 317). **Original:** Estos niños habían pasado por cosas muy difíciles... hay cosas como que lo tocan a uno.

30. "[he] used to tell him 'no, you have to be stronger than your peers'. (...) 'use those capabilities that you have so that you do not get left behind'" (Björn, ON3, 100).

**Original:** yo le decía no usted tiene que ser más fuerte, sino que tratarlos con esas capacidades que usted tiene para que no se quede atrás.

31. "the research project was the light that illuminated my path, also my life totally changed because of this experience" (Björn, WN2, 42). **Original:** La que escogí fue semillero de investigación. Puedo decir que esto fue la luz que alumbró mi camino.

32. "thanks to God, this easiness with kids has always been part of me. Although, I had not realized about it before and I came to find out about it with the experiences teaching kids and in the didactic courses" (Camilo, ON1, 183). **Original:** gracias a Dios la facilidad con los niños siempre se me dio, tengo ese feeling con los niños, siempre lo he tenido. Aunque no me había dado cuenta y me vine a dar cuenta acá, con la experiencia y con el trato con los niños más que todo en las didácticas.

33. “I was always a leader. I was the school representative and I always liked to work with children” (Camilo, ON1, 171). **Original:** yo siempre era líder. Yo fui el personero de la normal y a mí me gustaba siempre trabajar con niños.

34. I can feel somewhat tensioned when working with adults, but I feel safer and more myself when I am with curious and attentive kids, who want to learn new things in English, who welcome you with a smile, those smiles that can fix, sometimes, a broken heart. (Taystee, WN1, 32) **Original:** Puede que me sienta algo tensionada al trabajar con adultos, pero me siento más segura y más Taystee al estar con niños curiosos y atentos que quieren aprender nuevas cosas en inglés, que los reciban con una sonrisa inmensa, esas que no se pueden fingir y que alivian a veces un corazón roto.

35. “So, it is good that not just one person, but many, see the good things in you and tell you about them” (Taystee, ON3, 309). **Original:** Entonces, es bueno que no solamente una persona, sino varias personas se fijen en las cosas bonitas que uno tiene, y se las digan a uno.

36. “too perfectionist, because [she] wants to do everything too well. (Interviewer interrupts) Because [she] wants to be better, because [she] cannot stay in the level [she is] now” (Frida, ON3, 241). **Original:** por qué tengo que ser tan dura, porque yo soy muy perfeccionista, porque yo quiero hacer todo muy bien, por eso... Porque quiero ser mejor porque no me puedo quedar con lo que tengo.

37. Considering how weak my speaking skill was, if I could see him [professor Juan], I would thank him for everything he did on that. He would be proud now [...] A teacher who cares for a student impacts more than a teacher who simply goes to teach a class” (Frida, ON1, 276). **Original:** por mi cuestión de que mi *speaking* era muy flojito. Yo

nunca pude agradecerle todo lo que había hecho. Si me lo encontraré, le diría que muchas gracias. Sé que estaría súper orgulloso de mí. La parte formativa; se queda más un docente que se preocupa por un estudiante que un docente que simplemente que va a dar clases.

38. “escape from the cruel reality they belong and turn their lives around for the good” (Björn, WN2, 47). **Original:** para que así se escaparan de la cruel realidad a la cual pertenecían, y darles un giro a sus vidas para bien.

39. I had never thought in something that is very common, that sometimes I don't understand a word in English and I feel bad, and say to myself I don't speak English. Later, in a course, the professor gave us the example that this also happens in Spanish with some words, and that doesn't mean I don't speak Spanish. (Himura, ON2, 67). **Original:** nunca había pensado en algo que es muy común, que muchas veces yo no tengo un término en inglés entonces yo me siento mal y digo no sé inglés. Pero, luego en una de estas materias, no recuerdo en cuál vimos, nos pusieron el ejemplo que en el español a uno le pasa con algunas palabras y no quiere decir que no sepa hablar español.

40. “Well, I would say that I was uncertain about becoming a teacher, that I did not know about that and did not want it” (Camilo, ON1, 161). **Original:** Pues yo diría que yo estaba perdido en cuanto a ser profesor, que yo no sabía y no quería.

41. “I want to travel around the world (...) and learn English. I wanted to speak, listen and understand the language” (Camilo, ON1, 48). **Original:** yo estaba en el mismo cuento que quería viajar alrededor del mundo y quiero aprender inglés, quiero hablar y quiero escuchar y entender inglés.

42. “At the end, I liked studying foreign languages, instead of Law. (...) Let's say that the perspective changed, and I inclined myself more to teach and not only to learn

the foreign language.” (Björn, ON2, 45). **Original:** quizás la parte de las lenguas me gustó más que las partes de las leyes, al final... Pues, digamos que esa perspectiva fue cambiando y me fue inclinando más por la parte de la docencia y no solamente la parte de aprender la segunda lengua o lengua extranjera en este caso.

43. “I always wanted to be an interpreter, but as time [went] by, my vision and objective changed” (Björn, WN1, 5). **Original:** Yo realmente he querido ser intérprete, pero a medida que el tiempo pasaba dentro del programa, mi visión y objetivo cambiaban.

44. A teacher who is not skillful in all linguistic skills; in this case, writing, cannot be called ‘a teacher.’ I couldn’t ask my students to improve their writing skills, knowing that I had the same problems or even worse ones. (Björn, ON2, 237) **Original:** un profesor también digamos que no es hábil en las cuatro habilidades del inglés, en este caso en la escritura, digamos que para mí no era como un profesor. No era alguien que podía llegar al aula de clase y decirle al estudiante ‘usted tiene que mejorar esta parte de su texto’, en el texto que acaba de crear, sabiendo que yo tengo los mismos problemas incluso algunas peores.

45. “I saw my classmates and they answered, and the professor said: very good. So, it was that fear, if I made a mistake, my classmates would laugh at me, and that created a barrier to develop the oral skill” (Frida, ON1, 145). **Original:** ver que mis compañeros ya responden y que el profesor les decía muy bien entonces era ese cierto temor que, si uno se equivocaba, pues los compañeros de cierta forma se le burlaban a uno. Entonces, todo crea como una barrera en poder desarrollar su personalidad oral.

46. “I have a barrier or a fear regarding my English language proficiency because it is not so good. But when teaching in front of younger students, I like it. So, I can

overcome the fear of my English, when I teach” (Frida, ON3, 45). **Original:** hay cierta barrera o un cierto temor por mi desempeño en el inglés porque no es muy bueno. Pero, el hecho de estar enfrente de los estudiantes me gusta, entonces como que ese temor de inglés o el estar ejerciendo supera mi temor al inglés.