Exploring imagined communities, investment and identities of a group of English language pre-service teachers through autobiographies

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Abstract

This paper describes imagined communities, investment and identities, as a framework to explore the creativity, wish and hope in the construction of identity of a group of English Language Pre-service teachers (ELPTs) at an English language teacher education program (ELTEP) I work at. By reading the autobiographies written by these group of ELPTs I had the opportunity to realize that the imagined communities, investment and identities of these group of ELPTs had an impact on their engagement with the educational practices they are involved in, as well as on their ongoing learning. For this reason, a deeper exploration of these aspects might contribute to the development of new alternatives for the design of English Language Teacher Education Programs (ELTEPs) in Colombia.

Keywords: imagined communities, investment, imagined identities, autobiography.

Introduction

> "Imagination is the language of our soul"
> **Aristotle**

I have been teaching a course about Language, Society and Culture (LSC) at an ELTEP. One of the activities I assign my ELPTs enrolled in LSC is to write an autobiography as English language learners. I have been doing so for a couple of years now. By reading these autobiographies I have gained interesting insights about my ELPTs' life trajectories that have led me to understand their lived experiences over time, their perceptions and positions in the academic life.

Reading the studies referenced in the most prestigious academic journals in Colombia, I found that some scholars have used autobiographies and other form of narratives to study the ELPTs' and ELITs learning experiences. However, the research in the area of narratives is rather scarce. Among the studies I read is Alvarez's (2000), who researched ELITs' knowledge base and the way they construct it through interviews and journals. The results of the study showed that teachers 'knowledge base is the result of life experience and educational process. Alvarez also highlights that knowledge base of language teacher education should not merely be founded on the knowledge provided during professional training; it should also be understood against the backdrop of teachers' language learning stories and instructional practice experiences. Durán, Lastra and Morales (2013), used autobiographies to understand how ELPTs see life and construct meaning out of their experiences. The authors found that ELPTs' autobiographies exhibit human activity and diverse events that may have a significant impact on the epistemologies and methodologies of teacher education. Fajardo (2014) investigated how a group of pre-service teachers in Colombia constructed their professional identities from the interplay between participation in a teacher community and their systems of knowledge and beliefs. The author used interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs as methods of data collection. The results revealed that while the process of learning to teach is individually constructed and experienced, it is socially negotiated. Villareal, Muñoz and Perdomo (2016) sought to identify 6th to 11th grade secondary students' beliefs about their English class in a public institution in Armenia, Colombia. The researchers used interviews, drawings, and focus groups. It was found that the students' beliefs are attached to the experiences they have lived in their English class; the discipline, the monotony, the lack of interesting material, and the impact of foreign language learning are the main related aspects. The authors consider there is a need to give English language learners a voice in the development of current national policies of language learning and in the debate about the effectiveness of these policies and their impact inside schools. Other studies include the life stories of Colombian teachers as it is the case of Clavijo (2000).

By reading the studies described above, I inferred that although some of these studies focus on identity and learning experiences, there is a still a need to explore aspects such as identity and the interplay between the identity, investment and imagined communities of the ELPTs. Although the scholars' purposes in the studies were clear and perhaps imagined communities, investment and imagined identities were not topics of their interest, it might evidence an absence in this respect in the current scholar research work in Colombia. An exploration of imagined communities, investment and imagined identities of ELTPs might provide new possibilities in order to design ELTEPs

based on ELTPs' insights in a real dialogue in which TE and ELTPs' connect to each other.

I shared some of the autobiographies I had been collecting in my LSC course with a colleague who made me realize that these autobiographies were giving me information about the goals and various worlds in which ELPTs engage, they were also showing me the communities these ELPTs belong to and want to be part of. So, with this information I came across with the term imagined communities. By reading about imagined communities I discovered other issues such as imagined identities and investment (Norton, 2001). According to Norton and Kano (2013) "to envision an imagined identity within the context of an imagined community can impact a learner's engagement with educational practices." (246). For these authors, the engagement with the educational practices derives in the investment ELPTs make in time, money and effort.

Learning about the connection of imagined identities within an imagined community and the investment derived from this can be key to design language teacher education programs based on a different perspective as this information might be a source to know that what is emerging in the present that can be useful in the future (Bloch,1995).

Most of the studies related to investment and imagined communities have been carried out in L2 and multilingual contexts mainly in Canada and the USA (Norton, 2012). The studies have been carried out with language learners, not with ELTPS. According to Norton and Kano (2013) research carried out on these aspects provides possibilities for educational change since they offer a great opportunity to explore creativity, hope and identity construction, aspects that could be paramount in order to design ELTEPs from a new perspective.

In that line of thought, I would like to argue that imagined communities, investment and imagined identities are connected since ELPTs teachers invest in their learning for different reasons, which in turn subscribe them in an imagined community they connect to and at the same time develop an imagined identity they expect to achieve. In order to explain these ideas deeper this chapter is structured in five sections: The power of imagination, imagined communities, investment and imagined identities, imagined communities and teacher education, rethinking ELTEPs from the South and finally, exploring imagined communities, investment and imagined identity of a group of ELPTs through autobiographies.

In the section *The Power of imagination*, I will describe a bit of my own life trajectory. Reading my ELPTs' autobiographies, not also gave me insights about their life, but also made me remember my own experience as a language

learner. By imagining my future when I was a teacher student, I designed a life project I was able to carry out. My own autobiography, my narrative made me realize that I envisioned a community I wanted to belong to and therefore I put all my effort (investment) on becoming that imagined self I became and I am still building, and perhaps will continue building during the rest of my lifetime.

In the second part, *imagined communities, investment, and imagined identities*, I make a brief conceptualization of these terms. After having thoroughly reviewed the most prestigious journals in the field in Colombia, I can conclude that there is a gap with respect to research on these topics in this country. In the same line, I found that some studies on language teacher education and learning are more focused on motivation than on investment. I will use the term investment rather than motivation, as I agree with Norton and Pierce (1995), when they state that, unlike notions of instrumental motivation that can be seen as a primarily psychological concept in which the English language learner is conceived as having a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical "personality", the concept of investment must be seen within a sociological framework, and seeks to make a meaningful connection between a learner's desire and commitment to learn a language, and their changing identity. In this sense, the concept of investment is more concerned to the interplay of imagined communities, investment and identity since "investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity that is always changing" (Norton, 2013 p. 51).

In the third part entitled *Imagined communities and teacher education* I make the hypothesis in which I state that imagined communities, investment and imagined identities are a "tool to develop… alternative instructional practices…that are more compatible to ELPTs' imagined identities" (Golombek and Jordan,2005 p. 517).

The fourth section, namely *Rethinking English language teacher education programs from the South,* presents some aspects of the sociology of the absences and emergences by Santos (2012). ELTEPs in Colombia and abroad seem to be structured in the same way. They are designed in order to deliver the knowledge base the ELPTs are supposed to learn. For this reason, I think it would be interesting to carry out some research on pre-service ELPTs' imagined communities, investment and identity and explore the emergent possibilities hidden in these aspects. These emergences and absences might give us hints in order to design ELTEPs' from a more dialogical stance.

The last part of this chapter *Exploring the imagined communities, investment and imagined identities of a group of ELPTS through autobiographies,* includes

a description of what autobiographies are and their role in order to find out information about ELTPTs' imagined communities, investment and imagined identities. I will also show some supporting evidence derived from some autobiographies I have been collecting.

To sum up, the problem statement that will be developed in this chapter, might evidence that firstly, there is a gap in the current literature around the research of imagined communities, investment and imagined identities in EFL contexts and particularly in the Colombian context. Secondly, we still need to learn more about ELPTs' language experiences and stories in order to identify the possibilities hidden in these stories to build up alternative teaching practices that are more compatible with ELPTs' imagined communities, identities and investment.

The power of imagination

> "Sometimes I dream that I paint,
> and then I paint my dream"
> ***Vincent Van Gogh***

When I was a little girl, one of my brothers brought home some audio tapes with music in English. He used to listen to Abba's, the Beatles' and Michael Jackson's songs. I really liked the rhythm of these songs and was really intrigued by what their lyrics were about. Further on, I saw a television announcement of whisky. In this announcement, a bagpiper wearing a kilt appeared with a beautiful green background of the highlands of Scotland. I asked my mother where this land was and what language they spoke there. When I found out that it was English, I became more and more interested in this language. This is how I started to imagine that I was able to understand the songs and able to communicate with the people in Scotland. Furthermore, I was going to travel there!

When I started to learn English at school which was in sixth grade, as I did not receive any English instruction during my primary school, I discovered I was really good at languages. Therefore, my interest in English grew even more. When I finished my school, I decided that I was going to learn English well, so I enrolled in the Bachelor of Program in Education with Emphasis in English and Spanish at the local University in my hometown. When I finished my studies, I decided that I wanted to travel abroad and improve my English. I applied for scholarship as Spanish Assistant and I managed to go to my dream land: Scotland.

By recalling these memories, I can tell that dreams come true. Dreams start when one can imagine and create new images about one's own life and history. Therefore, imagination is a powerful tool that expands one's reality. By the power of imagination and action I located myself in other possibilities and perspectives: I was able to speak another language, and I was able to know other cultures and by the power of imagination and action I was able "to paint my dream", that is, what I imagined came true.

Imagining myself as someone able to speak another language and travelling to Scotland made me become an English Language TE and researcher. So, through the power of imagination I was able to understand that my projection as an English language TE, researcher and traveler demanded a commitment as a language learner, as well as someone who had to work in order to pursue my goals. In this way, imagination made it possible for me to go beyond my immediate context and project myself as someone able to reach outer worlds and adopt other identities.

Now to continue with my personal story and the problem statement that I will describe in this chapter, I will contextualize the reader with how I became interested in narratives, imagined communities, investment and identity as the main topics of my research project. The piece of my life story I describe next, occurs in my actual workplace.

I work for an ELTEP. This program obtained the approval and certification of quality granted by the National Accreditation Council (CAN, for its acronym in Spanish *Consejo Nacional de Acreditación*), according to Resolution 10742 on September 6th, 2012.

The ELTEP is organized in cycles and components. There are three cross-curricular cycles called *Fundamentación* (Theoretical Foundations), *Profundización* (Emphasis), and *Innovación y Creación* (Innovation and Creation). In the first cycle (1st to 4th semesters), the ELPTs receive the theoretical foundations related to language teaching and learning. In the second cycle (5th to 7th semesters), they start to join theory and practice through their pedagogical practicum. In the third cycle (8th to 10th semesters), they develop and finish their research project as well as improve their competence in English. The ELPTs graduate when they have finished ten semesters of courses and have written and defended their research project.

There are five components which constitute the syllabus: Disciplinary, Communicative and Esthetic, Ethics and Politics, Pedagogical, and Research (Posada and Garzón, 2014). The course I have taught (LSC) belongs to the disciplinary component of the ELTEP and it is oriented to raise ELPTs' awareness of the elements involved in language and their connections with

society development and cultural views. The ELPTs take LSC in sixth semester. They have four hours of class each week, during sixteen weeks per semester.

One of the readings my ELPTs make in LSC, is the cultural experience based on a text by Moran (2001), this reading describes two frameworks to approach working with learners' cultural experience: The cultural knowings and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). The cultural knowings is a framework in which ELPTs are advised to teach their future English students what, why and how cultures work, and the experiential learning is connected to reflection based on the experience of learning another language. After reading this text, I usually ask my ELPTs to write a composition about their experience as English language learners and their encounters with the English-speaking cultures. They do so in the form of an autobiography.

I have been reading autobiographies for about four semesters. By means of this reading I have learned that the ELPTs struggle during the first semesters to be able to understand the classes they receive mainly in English and that they make use of some strategies in order to overcome their difficulties with the English language. I have also learned about the reasons why they wanted to learn English, and why they are studying at this program. Finally, I gained some knowledge of their dreams and ambitions.

The ELPTs teachers' descriptions of the reasons why they wanted to learn English and their descriptions of their dreams and ambitions made me remember my own experience and investment in the foreign language. The opportunity to have access to this information made me also feel closer to the ELPTs and understand some of their weaknesses and strengths. I realized that it is worth to continue working with these autobiographies, not only from the language learning experience, but also from the experience the ELPTs have been through in the language teacher education programs. It is also necessary to study the perspectives, possibilities and interests expressed in these autobiographies in order to hear multiple voices and see what these voices can tell us in order to co-construct new alternatives for the ELTEP I work at and the ELTEPs in general.

The ELTEP program has been structured and organized around areas and cycles as explained earlier in this chapter. The processes of improvement of these areas are usually carried out by the teachers of the program. However, there is still a need to hear the ELPTs voices and learn from these voices what their contributions might be in order to explore different possibilities and new ways to organize the curriculum of the program.

> "Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine
> what you desire, you will what you imagine, and at last,
> you create what you will."
> ***George Bernard Shaw***

Imagined communities are a term first coined by Anderson (1983) and it refers to "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination" (Norton, 2016 p. 8). We usually belong to communities such as the people we work with, our academic communities be it school or university, our neighborhoods, religious groups and so on. Our relationships with the people in these communities is tangible. However, according to Wenger (1998), by the power of imagination we can create bonds with people that can extend our ties beyond time and space. According to Norton (2016) the sort of relationships we imagine might have an impact on our investment and current actions.

Investment is a term introduced in language learning by Norton and Pierce in 1995, indicating "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it…if learners invest in the target language, they do so understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources" (Norton, n.d. p. 4).

Norton (2016) contrasted the term investment and motivation as, according to her, the latter is reduced to a psychological construct, in which the individual has a unitary and coherent identity with specific character traits, whereas the former "conceives the language learner as having a complex identity, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction" (p. 4), thus "investment must be seen within a sociological framework… to make meaningful connections between a learner's desire and commitment to learn a language, and their changing identity." (p. 4). In this sense, I would like to explore what the identity changes ELPTs go through during their language learning process are, and the kind of activities they develop to fulfill their desire to interact in the foreign language.

Darvin and Norton (2015) define identity as multiple, "a site of struggle, and continually changing over time and space. Identity is a struggle of habitus and desire, of competing ideologies and imagined identities" (p. 45). This definition is poststructuralist in nature as poststructuralists use the term identities rather than identity as "socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives

that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements actions and language" (Block, 2007 p. 27). In this article, I will use the term identities rather than identity as I think we do perform different identities during our lifetime. The ELPTs perform the identities such as language learners, classmates, parents and so on.

One of these identities namely, language identity (Block, 2007) is particularly relevant as this study is to be conducted with English language ELPTs who are dealing with a social and historic moment in which English is the synonym of linguistic capital and value (Norton, 2008). The Ministry of Education in Colombia has ordered that English is the mandatory language to be learnt in Colombia because it is an international language (MEN, 2006). Language identity is also a site of struggle as language is an ideologically defined social practice (Irvine & Gal, 2009; Kroskrity, 2004; McGroarty, 2008; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994) in which language learners position themselves and are positioned by others in different contexts. This is where investment and identity converge as when language learners invest in the target language, they do so in order to get wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital (Norton, 2008). Most of the studies related to language identity and investment have been carried out in second language learning contexts, so I think it would be interesting to explore these aspects in Colombia and especially with the ELPTs in ELTEPS. By doing so, we can learn about the possible futures the ELPTs are building through the practices they engage on, which is a rich source to explore new possibilities for the ELTEPS.

Language identity is "the assumed and/or attributed relationships between one's sense of self and a means of communication which might be known as language, a dialect or a sociolect" (Block, 2007 p. 14). According to Block (2007), language identity is about three types of relationships with the means of communication: *Expertise*: how a person is proficient in a language. *Affiliation*: individual's attitude towards an affective connection to a language, dialect or sociolect and *inheritance*: a matter of being born into a family or community associated with a specific language, dialect or sociolect. At this point, I would like to identify the sort of relationships the ELPTs have with English. Do they want to be proficient language speakers? Do they want to sound as a native speaker or are they proud of their non-native accent when they speak English? What sort of feelings do they have when they speak the foreign language?

If we look at the second and third types of relationships with the means of communication we can see that our language identities might be likely to change dramatically during one's life and this fact is particularly connected with the imagined communities we seek to affiliate, particularly those

associated with the language we are learning. This ongoing identity work is conflictive and changing. Therefore, it would be interesting to find out if the ELPTs experience any conflicts with English and what sort of conflicts they face, as this also seems unexplored widely in the local literature.

The view of language identity as an ongoing work stands from a poststructuralist point of view since it takes into account the struggle over meaning and making sense of the relation in the world human beings go through in the constitution of themselves (Weedon 1987, 1997). At this point, it is worth examining the struggles our ELPTs go through in the construction of the different identities they perform in the different communities they belong to and the ones they imagine and how we can contribute as teacher educators to make this construction fruitful.

From the poststructuralist view language and identities are mutually constitutive and it is through language that a person negotiates their identities and position in society in different sites and time during their lifetime and is given or denied the right to have access to certain communities or to speak (Weedon, 1997). For this reason, Norton (2016) highlights that "language educators and researchers have the primary goal of examining the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which language learning and teaching takes place, and how learners and teachers negotiate and sometimes resist the diverse positions those contexts offer them" (p. 2). I will add that teacher educators should also aim to examining the realm of the imagination—what Norton has called imagined identities (Norton, 2013; Kanno & Norton, 2003) in which language learners are able to express their desire and re-envision how things are as how they want them to be in order to build up transformative pedagogies that can be introduced in the ELTEPs. As I stated previously, it would be interesting to conduct research on imagined communities, investment, and imagined identities in our ELTEPs, as these aspects are the source to explore the visions of future and current investment of ELPTs and therefore a means to explore new possibilities for ELTEPs in Colombia.

Imagined communities and English language teacher education

> "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."
> ***Albert Einstein***

In the previous part, I stated that reading about the ELPTs' trajectories, provide us with some information about the struggles they go through during their

academic life. I also stated that this reading also gives us hints about the ELPTs' learning experiences and the identities they construct and imagine within these experiences. In this part I will explore some connections between imagined communities and ELTE.

According to Wenger (1998) learning is a situated process of participation communities of practice, which may entail the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context as learning "transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity" (p. 215). For Wenger (1998) learning is not only the accumulation of skills or facts, it is about becoming a person. However, learning is usually associated with school practice and face-to-face encounters in communities. According to Pavlenko and Norton (2007) through imagination human beings are capable to make connections with people beyond their immediate surroundings and social networks. As stated before, this is known as imagined communities and these imagined communities might have an impact on people's identities and engagement in their everyday life.

The concept of imagination coined by Wenger, (1998) as a way to make sense of the world and create new identities is perhaps the best way to go beyond the ELPTs' immediate context and understand their projections to reach out other worlds (Kramsch, 2000; Kramsch & von Hoene, 2001; Norton, 2001). Through these projections ELPTs teachers make investments in different communities to improve their language or teaching practices and this inform us about their participation or non-participation in certain communities acknowledging which they consider a source of knowledge and learning and which they do not. Imagined communities therefore might become the starting point in order to design ELTEPs as far as they inform us about the communities of practice in which ELPTs get involved and the sort of practices they consider sources of knowledge, knowing and learning.

Traditionally ELTEPS provide the structure and sequence of the knowledge base ELPTs must acquire. In this sense, the knowledge ELPTs gain "relies on an authority" (Yadan, Herron and Samarapungavan, p. 27). On the contrary, from the perspective of imagined communities, knowledge "can be conceived as contextually-situated and constructed by the individual." (op.cit, p. 27).

Learning is a constant affair of the human beings. We are always experiencing, we are always learning and becoming, and in that sense, it is necessary to return to the original notion of "primordial (original) learner" as opposed to "being educated" or "being taught" (Magrini, 2014 p.41). We are curious by nature (Magrini, 2014). However, the process of schooling with its institutionalized knowledge determines what and how we should learn at expense of our real interests.

ELTEPS fall within this schooling structure, and in this way student teachers receive the instruction is thought they need in order to be successful language teachers. For this reason, the "the reign of technical-hyperrational knowledge in curriculum might be…challenged in a legitimate and powerful manner" (Troutner,1975 in Magrini. p. 187). On possible way to do this, is by exploring the imagined communities, investment and identities of the ELPTs through autobiographies, as a means to know their perceptions of the schooling system in which they are enrolled.

Magrini (2014) proposes that one way to challenge the establishment is to go back to original questions linked with philosophical inquiry which include an ontological vision of the student and learning as understanding. The author insists on the fact that these questions "seek to open us to moments of dis-closure and truth" and that "they inspire in us (the educators) human potential and learning" (p. 54).

Previously, I stated that I asked my ELPTs to write autobiographies describing their language learning experiences. I think that these autobiographies might be a source of information about the different positions ELPTs take in their academic communities, the different roles and identities they perform and of course the ways they learn. The activities they consider worthy and unworthy that is, their imagined communities, imagined identities and investment. This in turn, will provide us with a different perspective about how to design and organize the instruction in English language TEPs from a more dialogical perspective.

By considering what ELPTs do, how they experience learning and how they project their academic life we might "incorporate other ways of approaching ELPTs in the curriculum and classroom inspired by one or another aspect of *original learning"* (Magrini, 2014 p. 59). This has not been done in the English language TEPS as I will show in the next section. Most of the Englsh language ELTEPS have been designed from a top-down perspective providing ELPTs with the knowledge they have to acquire, the activities they must perform and even the time needed for this as it is the case of national and international programs, I will describe next.

Rethinking English language teaching education programs from the South

> "Imagination is the critical spirit that creates."
> ***Oscar Wilde***

According to Magrini (2014) social efficiency of education has equated knowledge to a set of information, facts and disciplinary methods and

structures that are imparted within environments in which the student is supposed to learn what the educational system has for them to learn. In this normalized environment the ELPTs are supposed to be motivated to perform certain activities and their learning is monitored and assessed according to what they are expected to learn.

In social efficiency to have access to the educational system is also equated to learning and knowledge. Deciding what people are supposed to learn and how, implies issues of power that hide the interest of certain groups within a given society.

The scenario described above also applies for ELTEPs as far as they are part of the educational system in society. ELTEPs must sometimes adhere to norms and educational reforms imposed by the government. In the case of Colombia, the decision of what needs to be learned in ELTEPs was made more explicit by the Resolution 2041 from February 3, 2016 from the Ministry of Education that establishes a set of characteristics the ELTEPs in Colombia should meet. These characteristics include the names ELTEPs should have, the curriculum contents and competences the ELPTs should develop, methodologies, and language standards among others.

The implementation of this resolution is mandatory for all the ELTEPs, and the Ministry of Education made very clear that its implementation will be strictly monitored and that the breach of the same will entail the closure of the programs (art. 12. 1.3 1.4. MEN, 2016). This resolution unifies, universalizes teaching and makes not only the teacher educators, but also the ELPTs' voices invisible.

ELTEPs have been affected by the way knowledge has been thought of and transmitted in the language classroom and the historical role and function of the ELTEs has been developed within this tradition, a tradition and development that has shaped the nature and scope of institutionalized education. Kumaravadivelu (2003) states that the concept of the role and function of teacher has been developed into three main categories, namely, passive technicians, reflective practitioners and teachers as transformative intellectuals.

In the first category, passive technicians, the teacher is an uncritical transmitter of knowledge produced by "experts". In the second category, reflective practitioner, the teacher is a conscious and sensitive problem solver. In the third category, transformative intellectual, the teacher is an agent of change, aware of the power and inequality issues involved in education. The passive technician and the transformative intellectual manage theory and practice in a different way. The former just receives theory from "experts"

and transmits it to their ELPTs and the latter finds the connection between theory and practice and is even able to produce theory.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) asserts that the three roles overlap and that teachers lean toward one or the other at different stages in their lives. This scholar highlights that teachers need to move from technicians to intellectuals in order to create their own personal theories of education and in this way empower themselves. One way to make this move might be exploring the imagined communities, investment and identity of the ELPTs as they might be the source to create personal and local theories of education.

Wallace (1991) notes that teacher education moved from the view of training to development as the first term regards education as "something that can be presented or managed by *others*; whereas development is something that can be done only by and for *oneself*" (p. 3). This author also affirms that the professional models of education that have appeared are the craft model, the applied science model and the reflective model.

In the craft model "the wisdom of the profession resides in an experienced professional practitioner: someone who is the expert in the practice" (p. 6). The applied science model is "instrumental in nature" as its framework consists on "relating the most appropriate means to whatever objectives have been decided on" (p. 8). This model splits the difference between research and professional practice. In the reflective model "teachers and student-teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching" (p. 1).

Reflection connected to experiences brings about professional competence that is the main tenet of the reflective model developed by Wallace (1991), in which professional development is a never-ending process. Thus, the reflective model is a structured professional development model that acknowledges teaching as a profession in the sense that to become a teacher, one must master some knowledge that other professions do not have and that teachers can also produce knowledge through research.

The reflective model entails two key dimensions that give weight to experience and to the scientific basis of the teaching profession: *received knowledge* and *experiential knowledge*. The former refers to the facts, data, theories, research methods and approaches ELPTs learn in their program. It is what must be learnt in their syllabus and is related to what ELPTs are expected to learn by tradition or conviction. The latter is derived from "knowing in action" and "reflection" (Schön, 1983), derived from experience. Exploring the imagined communities, investment and identity of the ELPTs'

through their autobiographies can give as a view of what they are reflecting upon.

I mentioned the reflective model because this is one of the main tenets at the ELTEP I work at and where I am going to carry out my research project. The received knowledge and experiential knowledge seem to be the main axis not only of this ELTEP, but also of the main ELTEPS in some private and state universities in Colombia.

I searched for information about the above-mentioned universities ELTEPs. I also read their mission and vision. I will mention only three of the programs organization, so I do not extend this chapter much, and because the other two do not show any significant difference, they are rather very similar.

The first B.Ed. in Modern Languages belongs to a private university and is organized around what they call *units of study*. These units revolve around learning two languages: English and French, and the methodologies for the teaching of those languages. Another unit of study is focused on developing research skills through research seminars and a teaching practice and finally, there is a unit devoted to carry out a research project that makes part of the graduation requirements

The second B.Ed. in Philology and Languages' program consists of three main components: Disciplinar (Disciplinary), Fundamentación (Foundations) and Graduation Project. In the first component the ELPTs receive all the education related to the foreign language: English, pedagogy, didactics, research and they carry out their practicum. In the foundation's component the ELPTs learn about, sociolinguistics, culture and education. Finally, they must develop a graduation project.

The third B.Ed. in Foreign Languages, requires ELPTs to complete basically the same areas described in the former programs: English and French language studies, pedagogy, didactics, teaching practicum, research and a graduation project. As it can be seen, all these ELTEPs seem to be organized around disciplinary and research components that make part of the received knowledge the ELPTs are taught. The graduation project which is one of the requirements ELPTs must accomplish in order to graduate is part of the experiential knowledge as well as some work on reflection derived from the practicum.

In other countries the situation seems to be similar. According to Johnson (2001) the view of learning to teach offered by ELTEPs programs is about three contexts: the language teacher education program, the practicum and, eventually the induction teachers receive when they start teaching. This view

also has incorporated the research skills mainly developed and associated with the practicum where most of the ELPTs are expected to develop reflective skills, to collect information and develop their graduation research project. For this reason, this author and others "call for changes in the policies for curriculum design in FL (Foreign Language) teaching training programs as well as professional development programs" (p. 99).

To respond to Johnson's call for changes in the curriculum design in FL training programs, one could resort to the sociology of the absences and emergences (Santos, 2012). Sociology of emergences "is the inquiry into the alternatives that are contained in the horizon of concrete possibilities… enlarging the present …by adding to the existing reality the possibilities and future expectations it contains." (Santos, 2012, p. 57). Imagined communities and identities expand the scope of reality and create a shared reality in which to act and construct an identity. What sort of imagined identity are our ELPTs constructing in their language teaching education program? And what does this imagined identity inform us about these education programs? The answer to the two questions posed above might give us a rich source of information about those alternatives contained in the ELPTs' present, a present that can be enlarged.

The sociology of emergences is governed by the concept of Not Yet (Noch Nicht) developed by Ernst Bloch (1995), who introduces two new concepts: Not (Nicht) and Not Yet (Noch Nicht). "The Not is the lack of something and the expression of the will to surmount that lack." (p. 54). As stated in the previous section, for Wenger (1998), learning is not accumulation of skills and facts. The ELTEPs track description shown above might evidence that the learning process of ELPTs is reduced to provide the ELPTs with skills and facts. Skills related to the language they are learning, namely, listening, speaking, grammar and so on. Skills related to language teaching and all the theory they learn in the ELTEPs. Most of the times the teaching practice is controlled through checklists that confirm that ELPTs are making use of the skills they have been informed a language teacher needs to have: Personal qualities: Presence, style, voice; planning: Shape and balance of activities, aids/materials/methods; implementation: classroom management, presentation techniques, teaching aids (among others);evaluation: ability to evaluate own performance and ability to respond constructively to evaluation from others (Wallace, 1991 p. 162).

By reducing ELPTs learning to received and experiential knowledge, we are denying other possibilities. Santos (2012) expresses that to say No is to say yes to something different. In this sense, we could give room to imagined communities and identities in order to explore learning from a different

point of view: The point of view of the ELTEPs by getting to know how they participate in their construction of knowledge, the activities they participate or resist, the communities they affiliate during their studies and the possibilities they envision. "The Not Yet is the way in which the future is inscribed in the present" (54). It is the field of all possibilities.

Taking into account that ELTEPs can develop alternative teaching practices that are appropriate with imagined identities and communities (Pavlenko, 2003; Golombek and Jordan, 2005) we can think of a new paradigm consistent with Santos' (2012) *sociology of emergences* in the sense that they replace "the emptiness of the future according to linear time (an emptiness that may be all or nothing) by a future of plural and concrete possibilities, utopian and realist at one time, and constructed in the present by means of activities of care" (p. 54). What possibilities emerge in the imagined communities and identities of the ELTEPs? Answering this question might be one way to promote new practices from an epistemology of the south and a way to design ELTEPs based on ELPTs' insights in a real dialogue in which the TEs connect with the ELPTs through the information obtained from autobiographies.

Exploring the imagined communities, investment and imagined identity of a group of ELPTs through autobiographies

> "I believe in the power of imagination to remake the world, to release the truth within us"
> ***J.G. Ballard***

Last year, I attended a seminar with Gary Barkhuizen[14] on narratives. My interest in this seminar was derived from the fact that I had started to work with autobiographies in my LSC course as I described in the first part of this chapter. I had become excited with the idea of narratives and I decided to learn a bit more with Barkhuizen, one of the main representatives of the area I had the chance to meet in person. In this seminar, I realized that the work with autobiographies I had been doing was framed within narrative research.

In this way, I found that autobiography is one form of narrative among blogs, stories, journals, interviews essays and others, and that narrative is a "recounting of things spatiotemporarilly distant" (Toolan, 2001, p. 1). I also

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14   Gary Barkhuizen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of Auckland. He has published widely in the areas of ELTE, sociolinguistics and narrative inquiry. He is also the co-editor of the journal Language Teaching Research and was guest editor of a special–topic issue of TESOL Quaterly on narrative research in TESOL (2011).

learned that autobiography was part of a larger area named autobiographical research.

Being autobiography one of the objects of study of autobiographical research, we can define this type of research as the one that "explores the interweaving between language, thought and social practice. It examines how individuals integrate, structure, interpret spaces and temporalities of their historical and cultural contexts to examine, in that way, the process of construction of the subject (or group) in the dialectical interaction between social space and personal space through (the) language (s)" (Passeggi, 2011, p. 29). Autobiographical research inquiries the ways in which individuals give shape and meaning to their experiences and their life in their interplay with others.

After all this reading on narratives, autobiographies and autobiographical research, I focused my attention on some of the autobiographies my ELPTs wrote during the second semester of 2015. When I started to read the autobiographies I found very interesting information about ELPTs' reasons for learning English, the way they invest in the foreign language and their plans and ambitions. The main reason expressed by the ELPTs for learning English was basically derived from an instrumental motivation coming from the influence of people, events and external influences. Parents, relatives and friends were key for the ELPTs to choose English as these people always made them see the advantages of learning this language. In one of the autobiographies a student wrote:

> "One day I was talking with my father and he told me that I had to study something that opens door everywhere... he recommended me to study English because I wanted to be a teacher and I can be an English language teacher...he thought that English opens doors everywhere and if I spoke English I could get a good job, a better job than if I study other bachelor's degree" (MG, p. 1).

This excerpt shows how the student invested in the language because it represents social status and gain (better job opportunities, traveling and interacting with people from other cultures). The ELPTs also had access to information in English and this fact made them curious about this language:

> "I found some books of Meyer's Institute and looked at the images of London and some comics and I was interested because I did not understand anything so, I took a dictionary, some cassettes and tried to understand what those books were saying" (FB p. 1).

> "I became interested in English because of the music..." (SH p. 1).

Some school events as school performances and going to the movies also increased the ELPTs interest in English: "An important tradition at school was to prepare a big role play to present at a private university and only the students who were doing well in English classes could take part in it. So, I think that I did my best to belong to that "privileged group" (ES p. 1). The use of the word "privileged group" might evidence that the student is talking about an imagined community he wants to belong to and that made them to invest in learning English to be able to be part of the community who spoke that language.

ELPTs invest in the language learning time and effort to overcome difficulties they find with the language and the activities they must carry out in that language. In order to be able to cope with academic duties, they make use of new technologies, they join communities of people to practice English and they look for help from their peers and teachers.

> "My career has not been easy, because in my first English class the teacher started to speak in English all the time, in the second week I had to do a presentation in English and speak all the time in English and my knowledge about that was not enough" (JR p. 1).

> "During the semester I had a terrible teacher, so I realized that it is too important the autonomous work. That's why I started to improve by myself, watching movies, reading books, looking for free English courses online, talking to native English speakers in chat rooms, and so on; mixing my love for computers with my love for languages" (CS p. 2).

The ELPTs foresee themselves as humanistic teachers that will improve education and change the world. For them, it is paramount to teach another language as a way to help people. One of the most important points to highlight is that they want to continue their preparation with further studies:

> "A teacher is someone who helps people, who teaches, who listens, who understands, and who loves the profession and obviously is a person who changes the world" (JA p. 2).

ELPTs' visions of the teacher have a lot to do with the pedagogical and humanistic aspects of it. ELPTs recognize teaching as a profession and some of them have clear that they have a role as teacher researchers as well. Teacher development is an ongoing process that makes part of their life project.

The aspects described above show some of the reasons why and how the ELPTs at the ELTEP invest in the foreign language English. They also show the communities the ELPTs affiliate in the present and the future. In the present, the ELPTs communities are made up mainly by their families, classmates, some of their teachers, the English clubs and the people they

meet in social networks. In the future, these communities are universities where they continue their teacher development by doing master's or PhD degrees. They also envision themselves as citizens of the world interacting with people from other countries and travelling around the world. Finally, they foresee their role as social changing agents.

The present and future the ELPTs described in the autobiographies I read, made me realize that it is important to explore a bit more on the sort of activities ELPTs engage so, we could implement alternative practices in the ELTEPs. For as Norton and Kano (2003) state "we can invest our time and energy to strive for the realization of alternative visions of the future" (p. 247) and therefore "Research in this special issue suggests that investment in such imagined communities offers intriguing possibilities for social and educational change" (Kano and Norton 2003 p. 247).

Exploring the imagined communities, investment and identity might also give us a clue to understand the identities the future teachers perform within the different communities they affiliate as part of their learning process.

Transforming the imagined communities, investment and identities derived from the reading of autobiographies in wellbeing and flourishing of the ELPTs is related to the introduction of narrative pedagogy as a resource for the explanation of the narrative processes that can lead to meaningful change and development for individuals and groups within a learning environment and in life learning (Goodson and Hill, 2011).

Conclusion

In this chapter I started by narrating a bit of my story as language learner. By doing so, I realized that my experience as such was led by the power of imagination as foreseeing myself as a bilingual person made part of my life project.

I also found that there were some similarities between my personal story and the ones written by my ELPTs in some autobiographies as language learners I read. By reading my ELPTs' autobiographies I learned that their life projects were subscribed to their ability to locate themselves in other possibilities and perspectives by the power of imagination and that this action was connected to three key terms coined by Norton (2013) namely, imagined communities, investment and identities.

The connection between my ELPTs' autobiographies and imagined communities and identities made me realize that it would be interesting to explore these aspects more in depth as they could provide us with information in order to bring about changes in the curriculum through a more dialogical relationship between teacher and ELPTs.

While I was documenting myself in order to write this paper, I found that the structure of the ELTEPs in Colombia and abroad still rely on a model based on received and experiential knowledge (Wallace, 1991). The first one, connected to the content knowledge, methodology and language the ELPTs must learn. The second one is more related the practices the ELPTs carry out as part of their formation. This experiential knowledge is accompanied by making ELPTs reflect on their practices and ends up by writing a research project which is one of the requirements for graduation. Received knowledge and experiential knowledge make up the knowledge base of the ELTEPs. As I stated previously, these models are based on what is thought to be the best for ELPTs to learn and their view of learning is the accumulation of skills (abilities to speak English and to teach and research) and facts (methodologies, theories) as we can see in Wallace (1991); Harmer (1998); Hedge (2000). However, we need to know what ELPTs consider worth learning and how they learn. We can do this as Alvarez (2009) states "Knowledge base is not only the product of what they (ELTEPs) give to ELPTs, but also, the result of the ELPTs' previous experiential and educational processes" (p. 75).

Some authors have claimed for reforms in teacher education knowledge base and organization, as well as, for changes in the curriculum design policies and professional development of the ELTEPs (Strom, 1991; Freeman 1998; Johnson; 1998; Alvarez, 2005; Johnson,2001, González 2005). According to some Colombian scholars "We are still exposed to models of training and education in which our local reality and knowledge is displaced by a colonial academic perspective imposed by the view of native speakers as the source of knowledge and expertise" (González, 2005 p.35) and it is necessary to conduct more research on how this takes place and how "to take a stand in national political actions to be part of the decision-making process in the defense of the right to participate in the construction of in-service agendas sponsored by the Colombian educational system" (González,2005 p. 34).

One possible way to detach from the models we have adopted traditionally, might be to gain knowledge about the learning practices our ELPTs engage in and the communities they affiliate as they can bring to light alternatives that might be occurring in the present. Practices that are happening now and which are invisible to our eyes because we are just looking at the current layout of the ELTEPs.

Imagined communities and identities might give an account for the Not and the Not Yet (Bloch in Santos, 2012), a determinant source of knowledge about the emergences in our ELTEPs. Getting to know how the ELPTs exceed the present in the practices they invest beyond the classroom and their projections, might give us clues to develop alternative practices consonant with what ELPTs usually do and imagine in their daily practices. These imagined communities and identities might also give us a hint of what the ELPTs consider knowledge and the ways they construct this knowledge within certain communities.

In sum, I would like to explore the imagined communities, investment and imagined identities through the autobiographies of the ELPTs at the ELTEP I work at, in order to find out the possibilities they hide and how these possibilities can contribute to the development of new alternatives for the curriculum design and practices of this particular ELTEP and why not see if this could be transferred to other programs or contexts. In order to achieve these purpose, I have posed the following questions:

What do the imagined communities of an ELPTs inform us in terms of their initial teacher education? And What is the connection between these imagined communities their investment and future language teacher identities? Finally, What sort of alternative practices are more compatible with ELPTs imagined identities and communities?

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