Chapter 7

Teaching Across Cultures: The Negotiation and Reconstruction of Hybrid Teacher Identities in Colombia

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Abstract

This chapter problematizes the issues and challenges transnational language teachers have faced. It discusses how they redefined and rebuilt their identities as teachers as they adapted to the unfamiliar setting of Colombia, where their current reality interacts with and sometimes contradicts their former ideas, values, and beliefs about education**.** In addition, it aims to understand how this negotiation with local beliefs and customs has led them to construct their hybrid identities.

Introduction

This chapter aims to show the challenges faced by a small group of transnational teachers of English as a Foreign Language (ELF) in Colombia. It also employs the concept of the neglected periphery to examine the current situation and development of the English Language Teaching (ELT) sector on the international and local levels. In addition, the chapter discusses how these transnational language teachers deal with cultural conflicts in their work and establish their hybrid identities. In the first part of the chapter, I will review

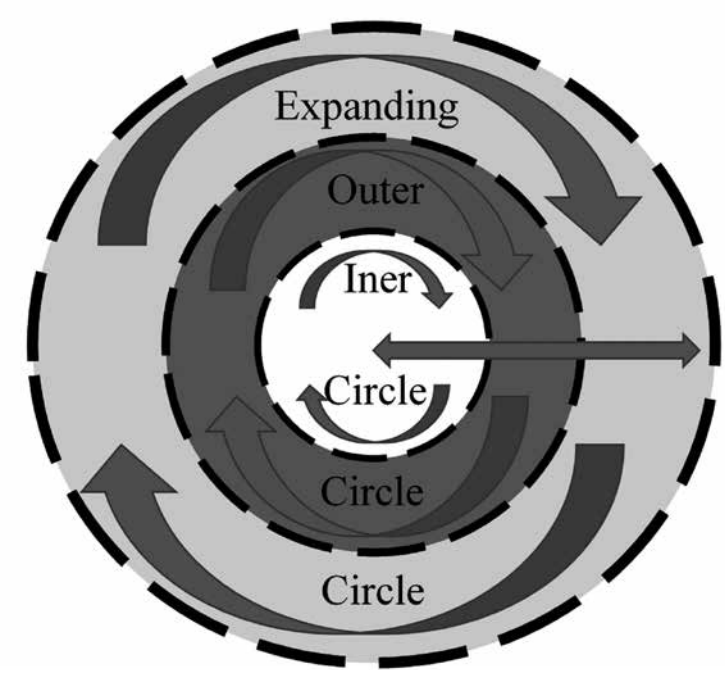
certain theories, studies, and epistemologies of English Language Teacher Identity (ELTI) in relation to the globalization of the use of English.

In the second part, I discuss issues to do with education and identity faced by transnational teachers, which intertwines my personal views with my own transnational teaching experiences. The final section describes my research, and its implications for transnational teaching practices in the era of globalization and future studies of LTI.

Modern Exile – International ELF Teachers in a Global Context

The spread of English as an international lingua franca (ELF) has enabled English language teachers to move freely in today's globalized world. In addition, bilingual/multilingual English users are claiming ownership of the English language as they have outnumbered monolingual English speakers and become a powerful force in the English language teaching industry (Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Graddol, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2016, Medgyes, 1992; Llurda, 2005; Norton, 1997). As a result, the physical and territorial boundaries of the three concentric circles proposed by Kachru (1997) have been blurred. In figure 1, I added the dotted lines to indicate the blurred boundaries of the three English-speaking circles caused by migration and globalization; and the arrows in figure 1 show the flow of ELF teachers from their homelands to the three circled countries. For example: American teachers in Colombia, South African teachers in England; and Colombian teachers in China.

Fig.1 *International mobility in ELT, adapted from Kachru's (1992) Concentric Circle Model*



As the premier international lingua franca, (Jenkins, 2007), English has created an increasing worldwide demand for English language teachers, in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Conversely, many academics from non-English-speaking countries (the expanding circle) who specialize in ELT now teach in universities in the English-speaking world (the inner circle).

To name just a few, Ahmar Mahboob born in Pakistan, is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. Suresh Canagarajah, who is Sri Lankan by birth, has been a member of the faculty of Pennsylvania State University since 2007. Phan Le Ha is originally from Vietnam, was an Associate Professor at Monash University, Australia and is now at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA.

The massive global flow of EFL teachers has made their identities more complex. Said's (1993) concept of intellectual exile may be useful for understanding this phenomenon. He analyzed how exile was perceived in

different ages. In pre-modern times, the exiled person was seen as the saddest permanent outcast; in the twentieth century, exile was the most dreadful punishment for whole communities or peoples, due to uncontrollable forces like wars, political upheavals, famines, and diseases. I would argue that in the post-modern era, voluntary exile has turned into an advantageous option or even an exclusive privilege for certain intellectuals. As Said explains, an intellectual may "work out an accommodation with a new or emerging dominant power. Or, on the contrary, an intellectual may remain outside of the mainstream, refusing to make the adjustment" (p. 116). In the same vein, in his framework in *Orientalism* (1995), he points out that like "Palestinians or the new Muslim immigrants in continental Europe, whose presence complicates the presumed homogeneity", teachers who migrate to foreign countries might be "a source of non-acculturation, and volatility and instability rather than adjustment" (p. 116), challenging the monolithic approach to ELT in those countries.

Elaborating on Said, Jacobsen (2012) notes that:

> English teachers generally choose their exile; when in exile and surrounded by the unfamiliar, they are faced with the choice of living in a cocoon of comfortable ideas brought from home or breaking with these familiar ways (p. 458).

I have spent 13 of my 20 years as an English language teacher in foreign countries. Every experience of teaching abroad is a journey of self-discovery. Such journeys help me to redefine who I am as a teacher. Confronting otherness when I teach in foreign countries has forced me to reexamine my role as a teacher. I would like to use my own experience as a way to discover whether other teachers have shared my feelings about being an intellectual exile in the field of ELF: it may be a fertile source for analyzing the negotiation of a hybrid identity, a neglected subject in LTI that is relevant to others who have had the same experience.

Transnational Teachers in the Colombian ELT

I taught Freshman English for non-English majors in the Foreign Languages and Literature Department of a private university in Taiwan for 7 years. Out of 21 full-time faculty members, at least 7 were foreign teachers from

America or Europe. There are many foreign teachers there. In addition, all the meetings, and emails were in English, not Chinese, so that both local and foreign teachers could participate. Here in Colombia, I have worked at two Universities: at the Science of Education Faculty in the former and the Language Center in the latter. There are very few foreign teachers in both. At the university where I now teach, there are only one full- time and two part-time foreign English teachers out of a full-time staff of 38: there is also one foreign language assistant affiliated to the British Council. Due to the small number of foreigners, our meetings and emails are mostly in Spanish: the foreign teachers often feel excluded.

Migración Colombia, a branch of the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Relations (2017), reported that Over 3 million foreigners entered the country in 2017. According to this report, the majority of individuals entering Colombian territory are from English-speaking countries as well as Spanish-speaking countries. There is no information on how many of those foreigners came here to teach English, but from what I have observed, their number is on the rise. This is line with Mejía's (2005), *Bilingual education in Colombia: Towards an integrated perspective,* who points out that, in the interest of liberalizing the economy, the government has authorized 30% of teachers, not English language teachers in Colombia to be foreigners. It is part of a wider State policy to adapt the country to a globalized world. A further example is the Ministry of Education´s *Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo* (PNB 2004 – 2019), which aims to increase the teaching of English at all levels, so that "Colombian citizens will be able to communicate through English at internationally comparable standards. This will help to insert the country into the processes of universal communication, the global economy and cultural openness" (as cited in Hélot & De Mejía, 2008, P111).

This policy for spreading the knowledge of English (both the language and culture), which follows some of the guidelines of the *Plan Distrital de Segunda Lengua,* the "The Model for the Implementation of An English Fellowship Programme" (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016) and the "Common European Framework of References for Languages", also extends to public agencies like the Bogotá Secretariat of Education (Secretaría de Educación Distrital - SED), the National Learning Service (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje --SENA), and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism" (Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo) and includes teacher-training programs and English classes for students and the citizenry at large. Colombia also administers foreign language assistantship programs through the British

Council and the Fulbright Foundation, which brings teachers from Anglophone countries like the United Kingdom and the United States to work as assistants in ELF classes at Colombian universities.

The above public and institutional policies respond to the country´s wish to engage in intercultural exchanges and prepare its citizens for a globalized market. Thus, Colombian schools and universities are establishing more and more exchange programs with their foreign counterparts, hiring more and more foreign teachers and trying to improve their international rankings.

However, this foreigner-friendly policy ignores such factors as maladaptation, cultural shock, intercultural misunderstandings and feelings of exclusion, all of which may a have a strong impact on transnational teachers.

The Invisible in-between Identities

The identity of EFL teachers suffers from a clear-cut dichotomy: non-native versus native speakers or local versus foreign ones. Jacobsen (2012) says that "the dichotomy was originally constructed by teachers from the metropole who, when faced with the unfamiliar, drew a distinction between themselves and their surroundings" (p. 459). This resulted from their inability to adapt to life in the new setting, which was mirrored in their teaching. He gave two examples of EFL teachers, Ruth Hayhoe & David Cook, who successfully adjusted to the challenging social, political and educational environment in mainland China & Hong Kong and overcame the breach between Chinese and non-Chinese teachers, as well as the one between native and non-native speakers. Introducing innovations which were suitable for the educational and socio-cultural circumstances of China during the 1960s-70s. Jacobsen's analysis of David Crook's autobiography also sheds light on the way transnational teachers rebuilt their identities. When you teach English in Colombia, you can easily be caught up in the discourses of the resistant of white native speakerism, local scholars yield for the validation and recognition of "localness" – to value locally generated knowledge and social practices. The Colombian ELT profession defends local knowledge and customs (Galvis, 2014; Guerrero, 2018; Macias, 2010; González, 2009). Furthermore, the binary categorization of teachers based on a single trait of theirs, like race, nationality or being a native speaker – ignores those who are "others" and have a different identity.

How about the in-betweens? Teachers who are non-white, non-local? Take myself, for example, a Taiwanese English teacher working in Colombia. I am sure there are other teachers like me whose existence is neglected by the dichotomous discourse which ignores our existence and specific identity as a teacher.

Said speaks of this invisibility as "the state of in-between-ness [which] can become a rigid ideological position itself, a sort of dwelling whose falseness is covered over time and to which one can all too easily become accustomed" (p. 120). However, he also calls on us to "move away from the centralizing authorities toward the margins, where you can see things that have never traveled beyond the conventional and the comfortable" (p. 120). Jacobsen (2013) complements Said's theory with the notion of intellectual detachment" (p. 445), which means that you should get away from the familiar and immerse yourself in the 'unfamiliar', as experienced by the intellectual in exile (transnational teachers), who can then develop a critical stance, from the 'outsider´s´ perspective, by becoming intellectually detached from his / her native and adopted countries.

David Crook "developed a critical perspective on both societies and yet never entirely belonged to either" (p. 459), which is in accordance with Said's definition of exile "The exile exists in the mediate state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with a half involvement and a half detachment". Because of this 'in-between-ness identity', he was able to transform himself by detaching himself from orthodoxy and building a new hybrid identity based on a critical understanding of himself as well as his observation and analysis of the local circumstances as time passed. His inspiring story demonstrates how foreign teachers can transcend the dichotomy between the native and non-native speaker and the foreign and the local.

Linguicism Reflected in the Inequality of EFL Teachers

A common experience shared by foreign teachers is linguicism. I used to think non-native English-speaking teachers were the only victims of this linguistic discrimination until I recently read an article by Kahn (2018) about her experiences as an English teacher in Bogotá. Kahn is an American woman of Guyanese decedent with dark skin, curly black hair and a petite figure.

In Colombia, people sometimes mistook her for a '*costeña*', a woman from the Caribbean coast. Because she does not fit the stereotyped image of a white American, her 'authenticity' as a native speaker and the 'legitimacy' of her American accent were questioned by her undergraduate students at a Bilingual Education program at a private university.

Her case shows that students and even pre-service English teachers have stereotyped ideas about the identities of NEST (Gomez & Guerrero, 2018) and have posited that mainstream attitude toward the standard American accent, completely unaware of its variety of regional accents. Khan (2018) voiced her concerns in her recent study of both formal (universities) and informal venues (café-bars), which showed that Colombian students have pre-conceived ideas which strengthen the racialization of English teaching and privileges white NES.

Once I overheard a remark about my NNEST identity

by a student just before our class: "I really miss the teacher I had last year, he's from America. Learning English is hard enough, let alone with a Chinese teacher" (Memoir, April 11, 2017). It happened because the student thought I did not understand Spanish, as I have never used it in class. It struck me that the majority of EFL students do not seem to be aware of the fact that not all native speakers of English are well educated and highly literate. Colombia still seems to be influenced by a colonial mentality; one can easily see its effects in ELT (Cárdenas, 2006; Moncada 2007; Guerrero, 2009). Khan (2018) says we need to break the vicious circle where English teachers and students echo the dominant racial ideology, by recognizing the multifaceted nature of the English language and Anglophone cultures; and doing away with this colonial idea of a single and fixed type of English teacher, which amounts to an "identity theft" (Castañeda-Peña, 2018).

Studies of this problem from the Global South (Castañeda-Peña, 2018; Gonzalez, 2009; Guerrero, 2008; Khan, 2018, Macías, 2010) strongly criticize this preference for "white" and "native" English language teachers. Public ELT policies in Colombia have succumbed to this imperialistic approach, for example, by favoring the British Council´s shaping of the country´s ill-defined concept of bilingualism (Gonzalez, 2009).

Just as in colonial times, such impositions are contemptuous of local knowledge and beliefs, as they apply foreign standards to local ELT. Though apparently well-meaning, such policies have done more harm than good by

adopting inner circle ELT models like the "Common European Framework", regardless of whether they do or do not fit the local linguistic, cultural and social circumstances. As a matter of fact, Gonzalez (2009) has pointed out that there are at least five problematic issues in this respect, ranging from the abrupt adoption of such guidelines by local ELT institutions to the contempt for local knowledge.

These policies have also brought about a need to have 'model speakers' of the highly 'desired' target language, i.e., British or American English. As a result, as Gonzalez (2009) explains, regional varieties of English (that spoken in the Caribbean, for example) have a lower rank and are not usually taught or acknowledged. Language teachers from the Global South and other peripheries should unmask the stereotypes of the Global North and defend the relevance of their own practices to local contexts (Canagarajah, 2012).

Nevertheless, transnational teachers are caught up in the conflict between local practices and public policies. Do they choose to take the stance of the 'insider' or the 'outsider'? Attempting to strike a balance will require negotiation and the creation of a hybrid identity. As transnational teachers go through the transition from one sociocultural context to another and confront the different objectives of and approaches to ELT in each country, they must deal with challenges to their identities.

Professional Transition and Identity Repositioning

Monereo (2017) points out that recent studies have focused on the identity repositioning that occurs when professionals make a transition from teaching to research or from university posts to ones in other fields or from one cultural context to another. These transitions imply a discontinuity in the work and role of a teacher, which forces the teacher to 'revise' or 'rebuild' aspects of his or her identity as his or her thoughts and emotions are challenged by the changes.

In retrospect, I see that I have gone through three radical transitions in my professional life, moving from teaching non-English major students at a private university in my native country Taiwan, to teaching English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in Australia, to teaching BA in English Language Education in Colombia. These major changes have

had a huge impact on my identity repositioning at personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels. Monereo (2017) notes that:

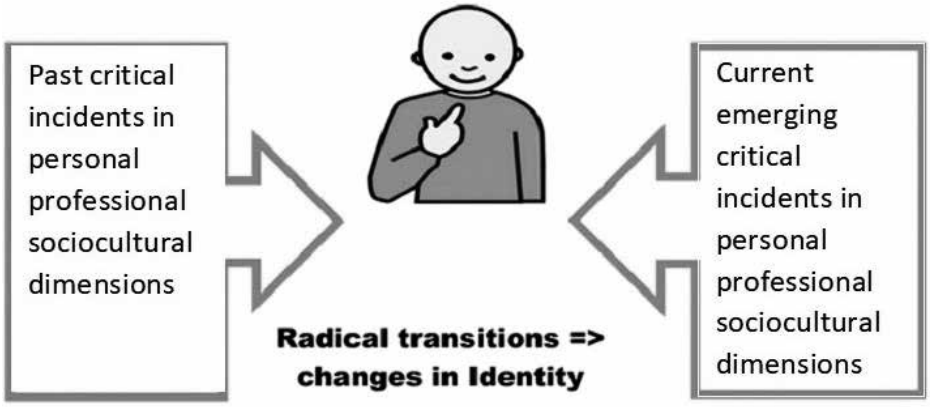
> Radical life changes or transitions, either in a personal, professional or social situation, often affect identity. The reasons seem obvious, there is a move from a known, stable and controlled situation to one characterized by uncertainty and risk, in which individuals have to show that they possess the necessary competences to confront whatever problems may appear (p. 5).

In Taiwan, English is taught as a foreign language, a compulsory subject from primary to higher education. In that regard, it is similar to Colombia. However, the B.A. in English, Applied Linguistics, or English Language Teaching in Taiwan are mainly taught by professors with a Ph.D. who publish studies in academic journals.

Thus, in my first teaching job in Colombia, I felt underqualified as a supervisor of theses and practicum courses, until I learned that most of my colleagues in B.A. program did not have doctorates. That made me realize that academic standards and requirements vary, in accordance with the political, economic and social conditions of each country. To adopt to my new post, I had to quickly learn by doing the unfamiliar tasks and roles assigned to me. This reminds me what Said (1993) says about the positive side of exile, which includes "the pleasure of being surprised, of never taking anything for granted, of learning to make do in circumstances of shaky instability that could confound or terrify other people" (p. 121). On the personal level, a life-changing moment was the birth of my daughter six months after I settled in Colombia, when I had to quickly learn to cope with motherhood in an unfamiliar environment. Similarly, my social environment changed from a Chinese-speaking Confucius Heritage Culture (CHC) in Taiwan, to a multi-racial English-speaking one in Australia, and then to a Spanish-speaking culture, with a colonial heritage, in Colombia. The many changes in my life have had a huge effect on my identity and my repositioning as a language teacher.

Inspired by my own experiences, I would like my doctoral research to explore the experiences of other international teachers in Colombia and analyze how the milestones in their personal and professional lives have affected their identities as teachers, as shown in figure 2.

Fig. 2. *Identity repositioning in relation to critical incidents, on three levels*



Reconstructing Teacher Identities in a Foreign Context

Even in a familiar setting, teaching is a challenging profession and more so in a foreign country. As Jacobsen (2012) points out: "teachers working in their own native country face issues which can be significantly different from those faced by the same teachers in less familiar settings abroad, and the experiences of these teachers on short-term stays can be quite different from those for whom the locale becomes familiar over time" (p. 447). In the post-modern era, more and more teachers and other professionals are working in a multicultural environment. However, this makes the question of a teacher´s identity more complex and causes cultural conflicts, since people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have different beliefs, values, and attitudes towards life. Teaching is a socially constructed practice; therefore, it is sensitive to the specific context. When teachers and students from different cultures work together in the classroom, they behave differently and have different expectations about their respective roles and misunderstandings may easily occur (Zhao, 2007). When they do, how can they work together and learn from each other? Whose notion of the teacher-student relationship should we adopt in the classroom? Can we find a middle ground? Can we accept the differences and embrace diversity in the classroom?

A teacher working in a foreign context does not only face the problem of 'otherness' in his or her professional life, but in the teacher´s daily life as well. Therefore, teachers who move from one country to another normally

have to go through a process of adaptation (William, 2007) on three levels: the internal (I), external (how others see me) and community ones.

One becomes a "beginner" or feels like one in the new circumstances, and this beginner´s status opens up the possibility of a different career, or an 'unconventional' lifestyle (Rilke cited in Said, 1993). Clarke (2009) argues that the identity of a language teacher is not only pedagogical but also political; self-defining is done through an antagonistic process of inclusion and exclusion, in which contrasts are made between being included and being an excluded "other". Lacasa et el (2005) discusses the construction of identity in terms of the combination of 'insideness' and 'outsideness'. The former refers to personal perspectives, the latter to social, historical, and cultural factors. When they work in a foreign country, teachers must create a sense of themselves in the face of unfamiliar interlocutors.

I have found that the attitudes of students in Taiwan and Colombia stand at opposite ends of the spectrum and I therefore suffered from a cultural shock when I had to deal with certain aspects of my students´ behavior in the latter: some of them find it hard to adapt to my personal style as a teacher, which is understandable, since what is regarded as a social norm in one society may be regarded as insane in another.

Speaking of the concept of "insanity" Foucault (1982) insists that you first have to determine what a society means by "sanity". In the same manner, being a teacher in South America might lie on the opposite side of the spectrum from being a teacher in countries with a Confucian tradition, like China, Japan and Korea.

I remember how a fellow student in a doctorate seminar told me that "During a training course with a senior visiting professor from Korea, we were very shocked to see him scolding our teacher in front of the class. She, a junior Korean professor, burst into tears" (class discussion, March 27, 2019). I should explain that in the abovementioned countries, it is not uncommon for a teacher to scold a student, in front of the class for an unsatisfactory performance. The victim may wind up crying but he or she will be remembering the embarrassing incident and work hard to avoid another one. I went through the same experience in Taiwan myself. There is an old Chinese saying "愛之深，責之切" (Ài zhī shēn, zé zhī qiè), which literally means **"**Love well, whip well." It is one of the core Confucian beliefs and applied in families and schools in countries with a Confucian tradition. However, as teaching and

learning are context sensitive, I realized that it is thought to be "extremely rude" and "unacceptable" in Colombia. And in my experience, some students seem to be overly sensitive to criticism and they take it personally. I even had students telling me that "here, it is disrespectful to openly criticize a student in front of the class, it is regarded as a personal attack and insult" (informal talk, May 13, 2016). The above is an example of the "unresolved" conflicts between my previous teaching context and my current one in Colombia.

Reshaping Teachers' Professional Identities in the Post-Modern Age

Said´s comparison (1993) of an intellectual in exile to "a shipwrecked person who learns to live in a certain sense with the land, not on it" (p. 121) can be applied to a transnational teacher´s identity, which transcends geographical boundaries. We are living in a globalized world; however, a teacher´s identity is still often defined by his or her nationality and ethnicity (Khan 2018; Kubota & Lin 2009). I can recall an academic event where my fellow American teacher and I gave a presentation about cultural shock we experienced teaching EFL at a private university in Colombia. After the conference, some of my colleagues remarked, "We understand that Asian cultures are very different from ours, so teachers behave in a different manner, but we don't think Americans are that different from us, they're kind of similar" (conversation, November 4, 2018). As a result, the criticisms my American colleague made of Colombian students were more resented than mine were. I guess that some of those colleagues had studied or lived in the United States and thus did not see a big difference between the two countries in classroom behavior. By contrast, very few had been to Asia and knew very little about Asian cultures, so they assumed there was a strong contrast between Asia and Latin America.

It is an example of how geographical, linguistic, and ethnic differences are a determining factor in identity. Thus, it is not surprising that pre-service teachers often view their identity in fixed terms (Kumaravadivelu 2012; Mugford, Sughrua & Lopez Gopar, 2015) and this tends to be true of in-service teachers as well.

As Said (2000) says, "Exiles cross borders and break down barriers of thought and experience" (p. 185). Despite the fact that both my American colleagues

and I have taught in different foreign countries, still, our teacher identities are seen in terms of narrow national, ethnic or cultural categories. As Said (1993) notes, "the exile sees things in terms of both what has been left behind and what is actually here and now: he or she has a double perspective, never seeing things in isolation" (p. 121). Mugford, Sughrua & Lopez Gopar's (2015) study urges teachers to question whether "the consideration of multiple identities would more accurately reflect classroom realities, because trainee teachers often see their identity in terms of fixed ethnic, gender and geographical categories" (p.10). However, I believe that not every teacher has multiple identities to be "considered": they need to be built in the course of a long and sometimes trying experience of exile.

Identities are determined by the context, including institutional, political and social factors (Schatzki,2002; Van Lier, 2004). Capitalism and consumerism have 'commercialized' education and changed people's attitudes towards it, which in turn has created ever more complex conditions for teachers and made them feel 'deskilled' (Gao, 2016). The traditional virtues of education have been deeply instilled in countries with a Confucian heritage, like Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam. However, by the turn of the 21st century the impact of modernization, Westernization and globalization on education was evident.

The imposition of those standards has changed socio-cultural conditions for education, which in turn has confused the identity of teachers and challenged their authority. The power of stake-holders like parents and institutions has upset the traditional relationship between teachers and students (Codd, 2005; Gao, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2005; Troman, 2000). Education has become more 'business-centered' and 'service- oriented' in some countries than in others. As a teacher from a CHC country, it is frustrating to see how education is being driven by commercialism in Colombia and has changed the conduct of teachers and the teacher-student relationship far more than in Asia. I was very shocked when a colleague in Colombia told me that "I failed a student for having missed too many classes. However, she just told me that I can't fail her because her parents pay for my salary". I could not believe what I heard: under the rules of my native country, students would receive a warning or even be expelled from university for offending their professors with such a disrespectful comment. My colleague further explained that:

"Some of the teachers at our institute are turning a blind eye to the underachievement of students; the reason why they are lenient about it is that the students' evaluation of their work can affect the renewal of their contract or even jeopardize their job" (conversation in the teachers´ lounge, May 30th, 2018).

Even though such evaluations of a teacher´s effectiveness have been criticized as biased (Marsh & Overall,1980), many private universities use them as a determining factor when hiring their staff. That colleague´s remark helped me to understand a student of mine who said: "teacher, you're stricter and much more demanding than Colombian teachers. Colombian teachers indulge us more!" (conversation, April 23, 2018). The word the student used was "*consentir*", which means "to spoil, indulge or tolerate". The comment projected a comparison on how teachers should perform their role or tasks as most of them have never been abroad or in contact with foreign teachers or students from different cultures in academic setting, hence, they make judgments on teacher's role and identity based on their world view. I guess the student was trying to tell me that I had to be more flexible and understanding of their behavior. In the same vein, since I come from a highly disciplined society in Asia where teachers are strong authority figures, it made me more aware of the power struggle in the Colombian teacher-student relationship. Students in private universities in Colombia seem to think that they have the right to negotiate their grades with teachers.

> "I went to a public university, where the academic culture was rigid; the teacher wouldn't allow me to enter the class when I was late. And there was no make-up exam if you failed a subject. Now I'm teaching at a private university where students seem to think they are the clients and have the right to negotiate deadlines, absences or even their grades. I feel that teachers have an additional role: to provide a satisfactory
>
> customer service and thus obtain a good evaluation of their work, which is rather sad: it shouldn't be like that!" (conversation in teachers lounge, April 24, 2018).

In the private school sector, where the students´ retention rate is the top priority, it is not uncommon for students to complain about their teachers to the area coordinator or even the principal in Colombia. A fellow language teacher from Taiwan told me about a colleague of hers who was criticized by the principal in front of the students in the private school where she works.

She felt it was a blow to the teacher's self-esteem and authority, "From a very early age, we were taught to respect our teachers and their doctrines (尊师重道Zūn shī zhòng dào), which is the core value of Confucianism and is instilled in our minds. Hence, students would normally reflect on their wrongdoing rather than complain about the teacher, because they know school directors always support their teachers" (telephone conversation, 19 of April, 2019).

Such incidents make us wonder if teachers around the world will soon have an additional role, as a 'client service provider', in line with the global trend of a consumer-oriented education. Society is changing rapidly and so is education. As a result, teachers are dealing with far more complex situations at work.

Engaging in Reflective Practice to Gain New Insights on Language Teacher Identities

Professional identity is essentially about how individuals enact roles in different settings (Richards, 2008; Farrell, 2016). Therefore, there has never existed benchmark standards to clearly define or measure teacher professional identity (Varghese et al., 2005). Farrell (2016) also stresses the importance of being a 'reflective language teacher´ in order to continue to construct one´s identity. Oda (2016) confirms Farrell's remark by pointing out that reflection has become a keyword in recent teacher identity research. Without reflective practices, it is impossible for teachers to articulate the 'self' (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, 2004). After some reflective practice myself, I realized, in retrospect, that I have carried the same expectations about my students' academic behavior and performance I had in Taiwan and Australia to Colombia, and it was time to adjust to my new context. As when you make space for new information in a USB full of old files, I have two options: to increase the USB´s capacity by broadening my worldview or delete the old files. Unfortunately, the latter has not been feasible, as some of the values of our native culture are too deeply rooted inside us. Therefore, to fit into my new teaching context, I will have to fuse the academic cultures of my past and present ones. The following is Jacobsen (2012)'s comment on Said's defense of the intellectual exile:

> The fact that exiles never belong entirely to either the new or the old society frees them from the powers of control exerted by the orthodoxy on either side and to develop a position from which they may criticize both, the position of intellectual detachment of the exile. (p. 458).

This chapter is the result of my reflections on the problems of identity faced by transnational teachers. Teacher identity has been increasingly dealt with in different disciplines during the past five years, like psychology, sociology and education (Stenberg *et al*., 2014, as cited in Hong, Green & Lowery, 2017). Among those done so far, there are many on the identity development of pre-service teachers (Allen & Wright, 2014; Stenberg *et al*., 2014; Smagorinsky *et al*., 2004; Trent, 2018), but few on that of in-service teachers. I cannot help wondering whether the formation of a teacher´s identity ends when he or she obtains a license to teach.

In my view, the development of a teacher´s identity is an ongoing process, shaped by the teacher´s professional experience and interaction with different agents. Thus, we in-service teachers need to revise our professional role, "reshape our experiences" and "find a meaning in them" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4). As Oda (2016) says, good teachers are able to "use their past experiences as resources for their further development as teachers" (p. 225). Last but not least, there are plenty of articles about sojourners, especially students who study abroad and their adjustments to a foreign environment (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2018; Schartner, 2016). But what about teachers who work abroad? Don't they too have to make self-adjustments in a foreign context? However, studies on how teachers who work abroad reconstruct their identities remain scarce.

Since educational policies and the attitudes of students vary from country to country, this opens up a fertile field for research. Hence, I hope my research will help to fill the gap. This study seeks to answer the following question:

How do the transnational EFL teachers' identities get negotiated, transformed, and /or hybridized in educational contexts in Colombia?

Objectives:

- To identify the challenges these transnational teachers face when they move from a post in another country to one in Colombia.

- To explore the interaction between these teachers' native identities and Colombian educational customs
- To understand the problems of identity these teachers face when they adjust to the academic culture of Colombia.

De Costa and Norton suggest (2018) that there is a need to carry out deeper analysis to explore how teachers´ identities have evolved in the wake of globalization. It would help us to better understand how transnational teachers reconstruct their hybrid identities by reflecting on their past experiences in order to deal with their future in transnational settings, a topic which has received little academic attention so far.

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