

## 6. Towards a Relational Methodological Research

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*La universidad se inscribe en lo que quisiera llamar  
la estructura triangular de la colonialidad:  
la colonialidad del ser,  
la colonialidad del poder  
y la colonialidad del saber.  
(Santiago Castro-Gómez, 2007)*

### Introduction

This research project focuses on an ELT Education Program in Colombia. Its main purpose is to develop a thorough understanding of the imagined communities, identities and investment of English Language Pre-service Teachers (ELPTs) at a public university.

The project is conducted with a qualitative research approach. My theoretical proposal underlying this project is that the ELT education program community should recognize the socio-political implications of English language teaching and teacher education, as well as the change for both ELPTs and Teacher Educators. These two groups are, more often than not, left out of any serious development within the profession or represented as superficially detached from their everyday real-life embodied experiences. It is anticipated that participants in this research project would translate such participation into a liberating encounter (i.e. an encounter that legitimizes the voices of the ELPTs) that would enable them to exercise power in their local contexts.

As a doctoral student, I need to mention at this point, that this paper is the result of a challenge that one of my teachers presented to me as part of one

of the mandatory seminars on my PhD coursework. The assignment was to conceptualize a research project within a decolonial perspective. Such was a task that seemed highly provocative, in particular because self-interrogation and countless reflections from my part were called upon.

## My Situated Position

As a language teacher educator, and on a more personal note, I would like to mention that, after reviewing the decolonial turn literature (Fanon, 2004; Quijano, 2000; Maldonado, 2006; Grosfoguel, 2011, Castro, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Walsh, 2017), I began to put together pieces of me that I had lost when I first embarked on the path of becoming a language teacher educator. I used to be a literature teacher who had had the opportunity to conduct research in the field by comparing and analysing literature written by African Colombian women from the Pacific Coast of Colombia. Prior to that, I had encountered the decolonial thought, yet unconsciously I had forgotten all about it in the passage of time. It is under these circumstances that I perceived the challenge of thinking about a decolonial methodological research project as inviting, opportunistic and most welcome. It resonated with me. In the process of writing this paper, I have revisited my previous experiences as a researcher, only to realize how conflicted I was regarding research approaches. Now, my journey to write my decolonial paper has awakened questions related to my *cultural identity* and role as ELT education program teacher, some of which are articulated in the goal of the project.

How do I communicate my own cultural values and conceptualizations instead of those of the English language? How do I express who I am and what kind of cultural background I represent? By extension, how do I empower learners to be able to develop competence to talk about their own culture and *cultural identity*? Is it, an emphasis on English=language as the target language in ELT education program, misplaced? How do I include historical and contemporary issues and themes from the whole society in my classes, by drawing students' attention to the forms how marginalized people feel or act? How do I incorporate themes from students' day-to-day lives to enable them to think about their respective situations in a way that is alternative and empowering while allows for exploring possibilities for change? If the right context for positive action were created, how could I in such circumstance transform classes into more critical settings? How, and to what extent, have

I been unconsciously colonised by teaching practices that presently seem *normal*? How, and if, have I perpetuated colonization in my teaching practices, thus making invisible other epistemologies?

## Why Mine Is a Decolonial Research Proposal: Theoretical Premises

I'd like to start this section with a brief discussion about colonialism and coloniality. First of all, according to Castro (2007), the university is inscribed in what I would like to call *the triangular structure of coloniality: the coloniality of being, the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge* (p. 79). Coloniality of being makes reference to how whiteness gained ontological density far above blackness, indigenous people and any other race; coloniality of power revolves around the construction and constitution of asymmetrical relations of power; and, coloniality of knowledge brings up the question of who generates knowledge and for what purpose (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The triangular structure of coloniality is evident in academic research where the traditional paradigms (qualitative, quantitative and mixed) determine the concepts, impose the speeches and / or theories, and organize their discourses and their generation and regeneration (Morin, 1999 p. 9). Because of all the above and returning to the challenge of a research project with a decolonial perspective in ELT, I will propose a methodological research approach through which I would like to go beyond traditional research models and attempt to incorporate an *integrative thought* as defined by Castro (2009). That means to bring to the fore "emotions, intimacy, common sense, ancestral knowledge" (p.90), with the purpose to expand the vision of the ELT research community ruled by the Western canons.

To demonstrate my readiness to achieve the above purpose, I will begin by narrating a *situation* (Haber, 2011) as an excuse for *re-cognition, learning, and solidarity* between the ELPTs and myself. Such is a process that I expect to be able to conduct simultaneously with my ELTPs as collaborators, with the purpose to incorporate elements of Narrative Pedagogy (Goodson & Gill, 2011) (NP); Narrative Inquiry (NI) (Barkhuizen, G, Benson, P & Chik, A., 2004; Barkhuizen, 2013; Clandinin. D. & Connelly, M., 2000), and Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) (Tuhiwai, 1999, Wilson, 2001;2008; Chilisa, 2012; Arévalo 2013). NP, NI and IRP consider experience as a common term that

yields better understandings of educational life and context, compared with other methods used in social sciences and education to conduct research. These approaches create a possibility to carry out a Participatory Action Research (PAR), which has a potential to open spaces for a more symmetrical relationship between the researcher and the participants; that should be the result of using narratives as starting point for research, which allows for the participation of everybody in a joint process with blurred lines between researcher and participants.

It is worth mentioning here that, since curricula in the ELT education programs are usually designed by teachers and faculties' administrative staffs, they tend to ignore the ELPTs' practices when designing the programs. As a result, the curriculum is imposed on the ELTPs practices, while some other issues such as students' investment and expectations rarely are a factor. Given such conditions, an effort to develop a research methodology that opens room for an intergenerational dialogue between the ELTPs and myself, is worth trying. This effort will promote a collaborative work between ELT professors and ELPTs (students), thus turning it into an opportunity to codesign ELT education programs.

## Ethical Considerations

There is a risk here, as with any other research study concerning human beings, to elicit unpleasant feelings and emotions, including a sense of intrusion to privacy. I will take a number of precautions to avoid discomfort feelings. By the moment to recruit research participants, relevant ethical considerations will be highlighted and discussed with potential candidates to ensure that their participation is voluntary; assurances that they will be allowed to withdraw from the project at any time without offering an explanation will be part of those initial conversations. I will provide writing information about the project and will ensure that all resulting materials will be kept anonymous through report writing and publication processes. I realize that despite of all that, a risk for unexpected complications would remain since there will not be a way to predict how ELPTs will experience the research activities. However, I believe that I should be able to handle any unforeseen tensions that may arise with a level of competence, given the fact that I am a professional teacher. I will be transparent all along the project and will continuously provide information about what participating in it would

entail. My expectation is to create a research relationship based on trust and transparency, and I believe that providing information in a clear and honest manner is an important factor in achieving that. My previous experiences with similar projects have led me to conclude that ELTPs would appreciate the opportunity to be made visible through telling their stories to someone who will listen with a keen interest and will strive to understand their responses from their respective perspectives.

## Dialogue: A Tool for Collaborative Research

According to Haber (2011), “Undisciplined research makes a research problem, a situation, an excuse to think and reveal ourselves to us inhabiting the world . . . so that . . . we recognize the relationships in which we already exist” (p.18). Following his viewpoints, we, ELT researchers, should be able to approach research from a perspective that abandons the traditional roles assigned to the researcher and the research participants.

Using Haber’s assertion as a starting point, I would like to describe how I came up with the idea of a research process with no researcher, no object to be investigated, and no problem of investigation; such research process rather would be an experience leading to deep recognition of the individual self of those involved on it. The ELPTs and I will work together as pairs who recognize each other through dialogue and constant negotiation, in a process mediated by collaboration instead of control. This means that the investigation process will be not governed by hierarchical principles (Castro-Gómez, 2007).

My idea to work on a *situation* related to dreamed communities, identities and investment, came from my teaching an ELT course called “Language, Society and Culture” (LSC). Regularly, I give my students in this course the assignment to write an autobiography; such autobiographies provide interesting insights about my students’ life trajectories, thus enabling me to better understand their experiences as well as their perceptions and the types of relationships they develop while in their academic life. Over the years I have come to realize that, by requesting those autobiographies, I might have started actual dialogues with my ELPT students (as described by Freire, 1970) which have turned into opportunities to perceive their life experiences as reasonable and valid. Often times, when reading about my students’ experiences with their respective teachers, I have reflected about my role as a teacher. In the

process, I have gained more insights into the reasons why their career choice was ELT education, which has helped me appreciate their behavior in class. Also, some intimate information I have become privy of as a result of the autobiographies has produced deep impact on me. I would dare to say that my relationships with my ELPTs have grown more open as a result of all that.

Following Haber's assertion (above) that undisciplined research makes us recognize the relationships within which we already exist, my students' autobiographies made me realize how little I knew about them when they disclosed their private information. Out of sheer courtesy, I felt obliged to reciprocate their trust, which came to originate the first component of the *situation*, i.e. what Haber called the recognition process (2011). Under such recognition process, it became clear to me that the reasons why the ELPTs decided to enroll in the ELT education program was a combination of the motivation coming from their significant others, social events and other external influences. Parents, relatives and friends were key factors behind their choice for learning English. The following excerpts from students' autobiographies bear testimony to this:

*One day I was talking to my father and he told me that I had to study something that opens doors everywhere . . . he recommended me to study English because I wanted to be a teacher and I could 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 studied another major (MG, p.1).*

The excerpt above shows how the ELPTs invest in learning a foreign language because it represents social status while allows them to 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 the 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).*

While attending their courses, ELPTs go through negative and positive learning experiences that make them invest in English learning. Negative experiences are of two types: One is the fact that they must see most of their

courses in English and for that reason, they feel disadvantaged, especially with the peers who have a better level of fluency on the language. The second fact is that they often find teachers who do not support them in their learning processes or that simply make them feel uncomfortable in the classroom. For this reason, they join groups in chat rooms and bars, look for help from their classmates help, or resort to the ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies). These facts are illustrated in the following excerpts:

*My experience at the university at the beginning was a little difficult because my level was low, and my classmates were fluent and knew a lot of vocabulary (DG p.1).*

*Sometimes teachers do not help enough . . . (AC p.1).*

*In order to improve those factors (previously mentioned) I decided to search on the internet for topics that I did not understand very well (LR p.2).*

ELPTs not only think about the instrumental aspects of learning the language, they also imagine themselves as: a) good English teachers; b) professionals with continuous development processes; and, c) teachers with a strong social commitment, able to change the world and to help their students and communities. Some examples of their seeing themselves as good English teachers who can be even better than those professors they encountered during their forming years are:

*My dream is to become a very good English teacher... (CS p.3).*

*I want to be a very good English teacher, better than the ones I have had (IM p.4).*

ELTPs are, often times, professionals who are aware of the fact that studying abroad will increase their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), and who want a higher status, teaching at a university:

*Firstly, I want to travel because if I travel to the U.S.A, I would have more job opportunities in Colombia. Secondly, I want to do a specialization or master in order to grow professionally and be able to teach at a university in Colombia (CG p. 2).*

Additionally, it has been very common to find in the ELPTs autobiographies sentences such as the following:

*I see myself as someone who helps people, who teaches, who listens, who understands, and who loves the profession and obviously as a person who changes the world (JA p.2).*

*I want to change the world from my classroom (DN p.3).*

Furthermore, some ELPTs even wish to be able to combine their English-language teaching professions with other professions they have for the same purpose:

*I would also like to combine my profession with studies related to Management because I think that in that way I would be more able to help the community (DG p.4).*

Verbatim such as those above, show a strong social commitment on the part of the ELPTs. ELPTs understand that education is a political act (Freire, 1970) and as such their responsibility goes beyond teaching a language.

The lessons that I learned from what my ELPTs wrote in their autobiographies were basically related to their experiences as language learners in an ELT education program. For this reason, I believe that it would be even more interesting to go beyond and find out what is going on with the rest of their teacher education.

English is part of the disciplinary aspects that ELTPs learn, and in this sense is easy to perceive the coloniality of power, knowledge and being that Castro (2007) and Ndovlu (2013) mention. English is the dominant language worldwide (Phillipson, 1992), and the ELPTs seem to believe in a folk myth that learning this language will give them access to better opportunities. However, they also talked about the political issues implied in teaching. This is something that I would like to explore more in depth, because ELT education programs have also suffered from coloniality. As some Colombian scholars (such as Castañeda-Peña (2018), and González (2007) have already pointed out, “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). It is also stated that it is necessary to conduct more research on how such phenomena takes place, as well as 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 any research models that might have been adopted traditionally, is to seek to gaining knowledge on ELPTs learning practices as well as on the communities they affiliate. The reason is that such knowledge can bring to light alternative practices that might be occurring now but are invisible to our eyes because we are just looking at external or superficial aspects of the ELPTs.

That is, precisely, what my research project entails. Nevertheless, I would like to undertake it in a way that differs from traditional methods where I would have seen myself as a researcher who will find a solution to a problem. Rather, what I would like to do, is to conduct a research study together with my ELTPs, which would be based on a dialogue where we are expected to be able to listen to each other in a way that together we can bring about generative themes (Freire, 1970). Such exercise should allow us to think about new possibilities to design ELT education programs. In order to attain such purpose, I would like to work on a methodological research proposal under the umbrellas of Narrative Pedagogy (NP), as well as Narrative Inquiry (NI), in addition to some elements of the Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP), all of that within a participatory action research (PAR) approach. By doing so, I would be providing a real opportunity for an intergenerational dialogue to take place. Within such dialogue, the ELPTs and myself would likely get an effective recognition of, and learning from, each other, so that to be able to propose together innovative ways to design alternative ELT education programs.

## Indiscipline in ELT Research

*Mainstream research practices are generally,  
although unwittingly,  
implicated in the reproduction of systems of  
class, race, and gender oppression  
(Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg, 2001)*

According to Johnson (2001), one of the purposes of the ELT education programs is to develop research skills, mainly developed and associated with the practicum. For this reason, the ELPTs are expected to develop reflective and writing skills, to collect information, and to report data, a topic that is thoroughly discussed in my next academic paper. (Posada, in preparation). The skills that are expected from ELPTs are mainly developed through research seminars of ELT education programs, where they learn that, basically, only three paradigms are available to conduct research, quantitative, qualitative and mixed.

In this train of thought, the ELPTS learn that the *quantitative paradigm* “relies on the collection of quantitative data (i.e. numerical data) . . . focuses on the scientific method . . . and . . . is said to be confirmatory because researchers test or attempt to confirm their hypotheses” (Johnson and Christensen, 2004 p. 30). The *qualitative paradigm* “relies on the collection of qualitative data (i.e nonnumerical data such as words and pictures) . . . and on the inductive component of the scientific method . . . and is often exploratory” (p. 30). Lastly, the *mixed* research involves mixing of quantitative and qualitative research method, approaches or paradigm characteristics (p. 30). Finally, the ELPTs also learn that these paradigms are useful to solve the problems faced in the field of ELT, while in our field we adhere to the qualitative paradigm as it is considered more relevant to social sciences and education.

Additionally, the ELPTs learn all the characteristics of the research process such as how to formulate questions and objectives, as well as how to develop a research design. They learn that, traditionally, research was conducted outside the school context by *experts*, and that teachers and students were considered *recipients* of others’ people knowledge (Falk & Blumenreich, 2005). For this reason, conducting situated research within the lived experience of teaching and learning is the opportunity to empower teachers and transform them into teacher researchers (Bailey, 2001), therefore into knowledge producers.

Along this tradition, teachers, including myself, start reproducing the research paradigms that have been inspired by the positivist view of research, which for a long time has seen the quantitative and the qualitative research as conflicting or opposed. We all know that the qualitative paradigm still follows some protocols that adhere to the quantitative paradigm, so that to be validated, and that even within the qualitative paradigm some innovative and recent trends derived from post positivism have come to be in contention (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, 2017). With that, any attempt to develop a proposal for a decolonial research project seems to be quite a challenge, since it implies to think about an ontology, an epistemology, and an axiology that might be contentious too.

For this reason, I would like to propose a research methodology that incorporates some elements of the Western tradition, and some elements of the indigenous research paradigm. What I expect to accomplish here is, again, to bring to the fore what Sarasa has described as, “the so far unheard, ELPTs’ voices, narrating their curricular paths and investments towards becoming graduate English teachers” (Sarasa, 2016 p.112). I intend not only to learn with them, but also to learn about their curricular paths, and, additionally, about how it might have contributed or not to the colonization of their minds

The only possible research approach that seemed suitable for such purpose was to use narratives as a way to continue the dialogue that, as described, commenced in one of my classrooms.

The next paragraphs discuss narrative inquiry, narrative pedagogy, the indigenous research paradigm and PAR and how their elements intersect. The intersection of all these approaches has given birth to the methodological research proposal that I will explain in detail further down, where the ELPTs and myself together will become co-constructors of knowledge.

## Narrative Inquiry, Narrative Pedagogy, and PAR: Intersections and Resonances

Narrative inquiry (NI) “brings storytelling and research together either by using stories as research data or by using storytelling as a tool for data analysis or presentation of findings” (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2004 p.3). NI is

also “an alternative paradigm for social research” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber 1998 p.1).

Although Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik only mention storytelling, narratives can take several other forms, including essays, blogs, interviews and journals, among others (Arfuch, 2002). What is key in narrative inquiry (NI) is that it is “the best way of representing and understanding experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p. 18). For Dewey “experience is both personal and social . . . People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals, they are always in relation, always in social context” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p. 3). Clandini and Connelly also consider that the word experience helps us understand those occurrences that take place with *others* including people’s individual learning which happen with a teacher, in a classroom, etc. One criterion of experience is *continuity*, which refers to the fact that our past and present experiences have an influence on our future and therefore, experience is a moving force.

As a research approach, NI entails an interest in experience, because it allows for deep dig into the context and the content of stories in terms of temporality (the times in which experiences unfold), place (the place or places where the experiences are lived), and sociality (personal emotions, desires and interactions between people), as discussed by Barkhuizen (2013).

The characteristic of NI described above, makes this approach especially relevant in Language Teacher Education because, on one hand, “it helps to understand the inner mental worlds of language teachers and learners and the nature of language teaching and learning as social and educational activity” (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2004 p.2); on the other hand, “it can also help us to understand language teaching and learning from the perspectives of the . . . learners . . . a focus on narrative content can certainly contribute to a richer . . . understanding of language . . . learning as lived experience” (pp. 5-6).

Understanding these lived experiences in context has constantly intrigued me; that is because, as researchers, we tend to make generalizations when talking about the *language learners* and frequently forget or ignore the individual nature of experience already discussed. The individual learner is a micro cosmos, and by learning about this individual learner’s representations and understandings related to the academic world surrounding him/her, we might arrive to findings that have not been visible due to the generalization and homogenization of the term *language learner*.

After describing NI as a research approach that is relevant to understand language learning, I would like to discuss Narrative Pedagogy (NP) and why I have decided to also resort to it. The first time I read about the term Narrative Pedagogy, I was reading an article written by Sarasa (2015), an Argentinian researcher who used NP in a Teacher Education Program with the purpose to explore the identities of her future language teachers.

Goodson & Gill (2011), theorize NP as “the facilitation of an educative journey through which learning can take place in profound encounters . . . by engaging in meaning-making and deep dialogue and exchange” (p.123).

According to NP, any person’s narrative allows for getting to know him/her, while such narrative also elicits a self-learning process for the narrator. Hence, NP enriches each other’s humanity as well. NP permits a new way of learning where “firsthand and existential narratives . . . become legitimized as part of the academic curriculum, generated by all actors at the university” (Sarasa, 2015 p. 21). Knowing the lived experiences of the ELPTs and their investment in their learning process could make them aware of their capacities to wellbeing and flourishing; it also would bring to the fore new sites and practices that “allow for the construction of true knowledge in English teacher education” (Sarasa, 2015 p.21), which should be relevant to teacher educators, ELPTs, and the educational community in general. Hence, it would be helpful to move away from the linguistic and imperialist practices (Phillipson, 2012), while opening a room for more local perspectives.

The learning process within the NP occurs in a cycle described as an spiral that is comprised of three key moments: *narration*, *collaboration* and *theorization* (Goodson & Gill, 2011). The *narration* is the starting point, where teacher and students look for the creation of a space for the narrative to get started. Two phases can be identified in this starting point: In the first phase, the narrators choose how to present their narrative; that is why this phase is considered the room for creativity. In the second phase, the narrators, including the teacher, start working on their writing, which can take the form of a story, a myth, or a blog, among others. The moment of *collaboration* is conceived as an event where stories and interpretations are exchanged, reconstructed and revisited. The moment of *theorization* also includes three specific steps: *location*, *theorization* and *integration*. Within the step of *location*, readers identify the pertinent place where their own narratives would fall from historical, cultural and social viewpoints, so that to detect and/or gain awareness of the influences they had been through. Such

*location* leads to a *theorization*, which brings about abstract understandings of the person's story; this is how a bridge between what has been reflected in terms of experiences is built to connect time, space and the person's own life. Finally, everything finishes with an *integration* where the reflection on *location* and *theorization* would allow the person to craft a new and holistic vision of selfhood.

NI and NP are two approaches that complement each other, since they both are focused on experiences as a valid resource to help people make sense of their life and place in history, as they relate to each other. Such understanding could also be complemented by a PAR, where learners and teachers can examine practices that are taking place in the classroom and might prompt process of social transformation and/or personal development to the individuals involved in research studies conducted within this type of approach. The resulting transformations would be originated in a mutual caring for each other among learners and teachers, with understanding of the others required for responsible agency (Medina, 2013 p. 138).

According to Medina (2013), we, the Teacher Educators, have the responsibility to find out who are the students with whom we are sharing our daily life, as well as to develop familiarity with the different people that make part of our communities. PAR can be considered a valid resource of achieve the purpose, where it is conceived as “a social process of collaborative learning realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world where, for better or worse, we live with the consequences of one another's actions” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007 p. 277). PAR connects experience, reflections, the knowledge of the others, and the knowledge that these others can bring to us. For this particular case, this would be applied to the ELPTs and myself who are part of an ELT education program, where most of the knowledge is derived from the program that establishes what we have to teach and learn, while that does not take into account what the ELPTs bring with them. “Through participatory action research, people can come to understand that—and how—their social and educational practices are located, and that they are the product of the particular circumstances of material, social, and historical nature that produced them and by which they are reproduced in everyday social interaction within a specific setting” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007 p. 278). This understanding is particularly relevant as ELT education programs have been constructed around theories of language and learning that were generated mostly by White European or American theorists whose

knowledge has been consumed religiously and has been “maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self- image of people and in many other aspects of our modern life” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013 p. 13).

Previously in this article, I mentioned that achieving the levels of English fluency that commonly universities require is a challenge for ELPTs, while they see such fluency in English language as an actual opportunity to obtain higher social or professional status, as well as a means to make their dreams come true. Sometimes ELPTs strive to improve their English-language speech competences to sound *British* or *American*, i.e. to reach a native-speaker accent. Additionally, textbooks that they have to use for their English classes focus on “teaching culture in celebratory or neutral terms by emphasizing the most emblematic elements that define a cultural group . . . Learners are taught to appreciate positive characteristics of other nations, such as that Americans are well-organized, the British enjoy having tea every afternoon” (Gómez, 2015 p. 169).

PAR might bring an opportunity to reflect upon the aspects described above, as well as, to unveil alternative practices that might be more compatible with the ELPTs’ dreams and aspirations, which are assumed not only based on the Eurocentric dream, but also, on their own realities. This is due to the fact that PAR promotes a process of communication through dialogue where researchers and participants do listen to each other. This process of communication leads not only to transformations in the community; it also fosters up the development of critical thinking. (Balcázar, 2003).

PAR is also structured in a spiral cycle that comprises: Planning a change; acting and observing the process and consequences of the change; reflecting on these processes and consequences; replanning; acting and observing again; reflecting again; and so on. (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007 p. 277). Although the process is iterative, it does not necessarily follow a strict order.

Finally, it is important to highlight that PAR considers the participants as “social actors, with their own voice, ability to decide, reflect . . . and actively participate in the research and change process” (Balcazar, 2003 p.67). Therefore, PAR also implies a change in power relations as these power relations become more symmetrical.

In Figure 6.1, I have included a summary of the main intersections and resonances of NP, NI and PAR, in terms of epistemology, ontology, methodology, voice and values. In terms of epistemology these three approaches (NI, NP and PAR) focus on experience as the main resource for the construction of knowledge between the reader and the narrator, with the purpose of transforming their realities. In ontological terms, narratives help people understand who they are in relation to others, as well as the places and times where their stories unfold (Barkhuizen, 2013). PAR and NI belong to social research while NP entails a notion of pedagogy as mutual engagement between students and teachers, where both co-construct a knowledge that goes beyond the delivery and consumption of given contents, rather focusing on existential narratives as a key element to design curricula.

NP, NI and PAR promote processes of communication through dialogue, which permits mutual understanding that in turn enhances the creation of generative themes in order to bring about social and educational transformation; and finally, these approaches promote values such as mutuality of interaction where “relationships between entities and processes are mutual, rather than unidirectional” (Longino, p. 47).



**Figure 6.1****Narrative Inquiry, Narrative Pedagogy and PAR: Intersections and Resonances**

Subject	Narrative Pedagogy (NP)	Narrative Inquiry (NI)	Participatory Action Research (PAR)
Epistemology	<p>Meaning-making and deep dialogue and exchange.</p> <p>(Goodson and Gill, 2011)</p>	<p>Learning is a social activity influenced by time, place and sociality</p> <p>Storytelling is a cognitive activity; it makes experience meaningful and permits the co-construction of knowledge</p> <p>(Barkhuizen, 2013).</p>	<p>Extended epistemology of experiential, propositional, and practical knowing; co-created findings. (Guba &amp; Lincoln, 2005).</p>
Ontology	<p>Reflection on the location and theorization permits the individual to craft a new and holistic vision of selfhood (Goodson &amp; Gill, 2011).</p>	<p>Experience is key in the construction of who we are.</p>	<p>Knowledge is socially constructed.</p> <p>(Kilgore, 2001).</p>
Methodology	<p>Narrative Turn into Education</p> <p>Education endeavours ought to be focused on facilitating dialogue through narrative exchange (Goodson &amp; Gill, 2011).</p> <p>Narrating one's life. A narration whose interpretation is carried out in a spiral cycle (Goodson and Gill, 2011) that entails a process of narration, collaboration and understanding.</p>	<p>Social Research</p> <p>Interrelation among the eight dimensions of narrative analysis namely, epistemology, methods, content, form, practice, co-construction, categorization and storying (Barkhuizen, 2013).</p>	<p>Social Research</p> <p>A research process carried out in a spiral cycle that entails: Planning a change; acting and observing the process and consequences of the change: reflecting on these processes and consequences; replanning; acting and observing again; reflecting again; and so on (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007 p. 277).</p>

**Figure 6.1** (Continued)

**Narrative Inquiry, Narrative Pedagogy and PAR: Intersections and Resonances**

Subject	Narrative Pedagogy (NP)	Narrative Inquiry (NI)	Participatory Action Research (PAR)
Voice	In facilitating narrative learning, the teacher and the learner share their understanding, knowledge, worldviews and personal experiences.	Narrative is a sense-making activity between the narrator and the one who reads the narrative. Stories re-shape our experience.	A process of communication through dialogue where researchers and participants, listen to each other. This communication process leads not only to transformations in the community, but also, to the development of critical thinking (Balcazar, 2003).
Values	The teacher cares for and is cared by the learner in an act of reciprocity.  Teacher and learners mutually enrich each other's humanity (Hayden, 1995)	Mutuality	Mutual caring where learners and teachers care for each other with understanding of the others required for responsible agency (Medina, p. 138).

Source: Own

Although the approaches mentioned above could be integrated in PAR, and despite of the fact that they are mutually complementary, I feel that even now another element could be added up so that ancestral knowledge might be incorporated as a decolonization tool in research (Corona Berktin & Keltmeier, 2012). Such element, that could be taken from the Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP), is relationality. Relationality implies understanding of the fact that relationships are linked not only to place, time, and to other human beings, but also to everything, to nature, to the universe in general. (Arevalo, 2013). Besides, the IRP complements the Western research tradition.

## The Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP)

“The indigenous research paradigm is a proposal that emerges in the particular context of exclusion of the indigenous perspective of doing research in universities, and as a way to consolidate an indigenous research approach at the end of the twentieth century” (Arevalo, 2013, p. 60). As every paradigm, the IRP is composed of an epistemology, an ontology, a methodology and an axiology.

In the IRP, knowledge is co-constructed. From the indigenous ontology, the reality is wider than in the Western vision. To put it in some way, the composition of indigenous reality contains the Western (the rational-material version) but goes beyond to include what the Western vision fails to capture by the senses. From this point of view, reality can be explained holistically and relationally as a totality of what we are all part of. Methodology in the IRP refers to the tools that might help to facilitate our understanding of the world. The tools can take different forms such as observations, the use of stories or even proverbs. The use of the tools depends on the purpose of the research project.

Axiology makes reference to ethical issues and the research position. The set of ethical principles that underpin the IRP are contextual and relational in nature. Research should be developed under the principles of respect, reciprocity and responsibility, and should connect mind and heart, reason and feelings, so that the emotional and cognitive experiences are linked; research should also acknowledge the multiplicity of subjectivities of both the researcher and the participants (Arevalo, 2013).

The basic principle of IRP is the concern for the role of research in social transformation, as well as its contribution to the strengthening of relationality. This principle is highly important because it goes beyond obtaining a research professor status within the world of scholars. Here, the concern is that research can really contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the communities in a holistic way.

IRP is very connected to NP, NI and PAR, all of them dealing with experience, while all of them also focusing on transformations. However, IRP includes relationality and a serious desire of transformation that goes beyond the material life and includes a more holistic view. In the next section of this

article, I would like to propose a way to link elements of the Western tradition such as NP, NI, and PAR with elements of IRP, with the purpose of revisiting PAR as a form to enable an *integrative thought* to arrive to a relational research methodology.

## Revisiting PAR

According to Chilisa (2012), the IRP enhances “the exploration of local cultures . . . collective experiences . . . and . . . knowledge systems to theorize and imagine other possibilities” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 16). It also should be a commitment of the researcher to deal with colonialism and imperialism. (Smith, 1999; Chilisa 2012, Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2010).

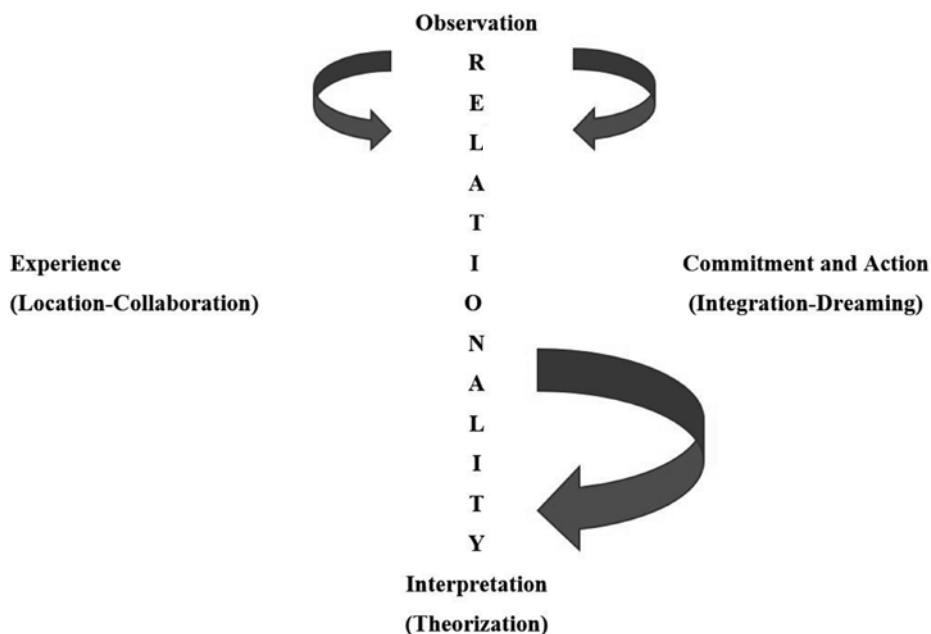
A relational methodological research might contribute to the exploration of the expansion of our knowledge about our ELPTs’ experiences, while at the same time, it might foster an awareness of the colonial mechanisms that have shaped our knowledge, being and dreams. When I say we, I refer to the ELPTs and myself. It might also contribute to imagine other possibilities for the ELT education program curriculum design beyond those that one which we have been used to follow.

Taking into account the similarities in epistemology, ontology, methodology, voice and values between NP, NI and PAR described in Figure 1, and the fact that the same apply to IRP, I have designed a spiral cycle for a relational methodological research process that includes elements of the approaches described so far (Figure 6.2). The spiral is crossed by the word relationality that in the IRP is one of the main tenets of an ontological position. In ELT, this relationality has to do with the communities the ELPTs affiliate, the way they care for the people and the materials they interact with, as well as the attitudes they bring with them to their classrooms. All of these create the learning environment, which is considered as fine strands of energy that nourish our relationships in the classroom for good or for bad, but which we rarely consider; should we consider it, we might be an effective help to the enhancement of the academic life.

The relational methodological research process that I would like to propose here as a way to revisit PAR, comprises four specific stages: *observation*, *experience*, *interpretation* and *commitment and action* (see Figure 6.2). It is important to highlight that each stage is a process itself while also each one depends on the other.

## Figure 6.2

### The Spiral Process of PAR Revisited



Tools<sup>17</sup>: Autobiography - Interviews

Source: Own

For the *observation* stage, the ELTPs and I will choose a specific tool to tell our stories; it might likely be a written autobiography focused on narrating our experiences as ELTPs. These autobiographies correspond to what is called *tools* in Figure 1. Autobiographies will be accompanied by interviews through which we can undertake a deep exploration of those aspects from the autobiographies that catch our attention. The observation process should entail a reflection that revolves around questions such as who we are, and how and why we have become who we are, so that to gain perspective of our own stories from our own inner sides.

<sup>17</sup> Arévalo, 2003

In the second stage, labeled *experience*, we will choose a specific location, such as a particular classroom, where we will read our own autobiographies as well as those from others in order to make sense of all of our life stories and their connections with time and place; here, place will be seen not only as mere physical surroundings but actually as an environment that affects our learning process. We will also connect with individuals pertaining to our social environments at the times when they occur. On making these connections we will enter in the third stage, called *interpretation* under the expectation that those interpretations would possibly bring about generative themes that should open spaces for more interpretation and theorization. Such interpretation also would imply understandings of the experiences lived, leading to mutual commitment. Finally, *action*, which comes to be the last stage on the process, would be directed by *dreaming* as an inner force that connects past, present and a future with better possibilities for everyone.

In the stage called *experience*, location also means that our experiences are situated in time, space, social spheres and relationality, and that the knowledge we gain from our experiences is co-constructed with the relationship we have with the environment and with the people with whom we interact. Such processes are not of individual nature but rather a collective learning: we learn with others. Learning is then, situated and collaborative. The spaces where our learning takes place also influence the way we learn; spaces are considered an important part from the holistic viewpoint subjacent to IRP: we are connected to everything.

In our research study, interpretation will not be considered only a matter of identifying categories. Rather, it would be seen as deeply connected to *integration*, i.e., to the cumulative process of meaning-making, which should allow to integrate our life process in a way that enable us to realize who we are, who we want to become, and why. We will also keep in mind that integration is also connected to dreaming, i.e., the act of envisioning all the possibilities hidden in the present. Furthermore, we will acknowledge that integration is a recognition of our strengths and weaknesses so that to help us build a better future for the communities to which we belong.

In making sense of our stories, we expect to be able to develop a more critical view of the historical moment in ELT that have led the English language to gain the status of the most powerful in the world; we should also rethink how this fact has shaped our investment in this language and has influenced our dreams as future language teachers. We should then analyse

the neoliberalist project behind education, thus gaining deeper understanding of the whitening processes through which we have been in the constitution of ourselves. Needless is to say here that we should also be able to uncover the struggles, dreams and hopes of the ELPTs; that would help to creatively envision alternative angles to design ELT education programs.

## Conclusions

This paper discusses a research proposal with a decolonial perspective in ELT. The main purpose of such a proposal is to combine elements of the Western tradition such as Narrative Inquiry, Narrative Pedagogy and Participatory Action Research with the Indigenous Research Paradigm, so that to incorporate an integrative thought where emotions, intimacy and relationality are taken into account as a means to create more symmetrical relations within the research process.

The incorporation of the IRP also seeks to expand the Western research tradition with the ancestral knowledge promoted by indigenous intellectuals, where relationality as an axiology, epistemology and ontology represent a more holistic view for a knowledge production that takes place in a heterarchical process, thus conveying collaboration instead of control.

A research process carried out in this fashion allows for a dialogue between the researcher and the research participants that contributes to a social transformation where all voices count. In the particular case of ELT education programs, this approach should lead the integration of ELPTs in the construction of programs that are better aligned with their expectations.

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