

Learning to Teach and Professional Identity: Images of Personal and Professional Recognition

Aprender a enseñar e identidad profesional: imágenes de reconocimiento personal y profesional

J. Alberto Fajardo Castañeda*

Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, Tunja, Colombia

This study aims to investigate how pre-service teachers construct their professional identities from the interplay between participation in a teacher community and their systems of knowledge and beliefs. A group of six Colombian pre-service teachers in the final stage of their five-year teacher education programme were the research participants. Interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs as methods of data collection, and content and conversation analyses as the analytical approaches, were used. The findings reveal that while the process of learning to teach is individually constructed and experienced, it is socially negotiated.

Key words: Language teacher identity, personal and professional recognition, teacher education.

Este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar cómo los maestros en formación construyen su identidad profesional desde la relación de su experiencia cómo miembros de una comunidad educativa y sus sistemas de conocimiento pedagógico. Los participantes fueron seis maestros de lenguas colombianas quienes se encuentran en la etapa final de formación de su programa de licenciatura en idiomas. Los métodos de recolección de información fueron entrevistas, estimulación retrospectiva y blogs en línea, mientras que el análisis del contenido y de la conversación fueron los enfoques analíticos usados. Los resultados señalan que mientras el proceso de aprender a enseñar se construye y se vive en forma individual, este se negocia socialmente.

Palabras clave: formación de maestros, identidad del maestro de lenguas, reconocimiento personal y profesional.

* E-mail: albertofajardocas@hotmail.com

How to cite this article (APA, 6th ed.): Fajardo Castañeda, J. A. (2014). Learning to teach and professional identity: Images of personal and professional recognition. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 16(2), 49-65.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/profile.v16n2.38075>.

This article was received on May 15, 2013, and accepted on January 22, 2014.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons license Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Consultation is possible at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

Introduction

The concept of teacher identity (TI) is approached in this paper from two interconnected dimensions: What teachers do and know. The former includes social recognition (community membership), while the latter involves beliefs, motivation, or emotions (cognition). Social recognition is formed or transformed as they become members of a teacher community. Conversely, cognition emerges as a result of their experience as learners (Borg, 2004; Lorti, 1975; Malderez, Hobson, Tracey, & Kerr, 2007). This learning involvement lays the foundations of experiential knowledge, which is later strengthened theoretically as a prospective teacher enrolls in teaching education (Johnson, 2009).

It is argued in this study that teachers take on a new identity as a result of the experience gained in the process of learning to teach. This identity is formed, shaped or transformed as they participate in a teacher community and develop skills and teaching competence which, as argued in this paper, are fundamental in understanding professional identity. These two factors also represent the conceptual framework that underpins this study, and although treated separately for analytical reasons, they are interrelated. To substantiate this claim, this study answered two research questions.

The first research question concerns how the act of belonging to a teacher community, while doing the final year practicum, forms, shapes, or transforms professional identity. It is argued in this study that a teacher's role in an institution and the type of relationships that s/he builds inside and outside the teacher community contributes to shaping or transforming identity. We can see this interconnection in the following example. A teacher can hold a teaching qualification, but if s/he is not enrolled in an institution or is not teaching, her/his sense of professional identity could be very restricted.

The second research question interrogated in what ways the systems of knowledge and beliefs of pre-service teachers were manifested in their teaching practices with young learners. It is claimed that beliefs significantly guide teachers' classroom goals (Blay & Ireson, 2009; Da Silva, 2005; González, 2008; Phipps & Borg, 2009). By moving into the second major focus of interest in this study, the research methods used allowed a connection to be established between what the research participants thought about teaching and learning—their stated beliefs—and what they did while teaching young learners—enacted beliefs. Observations of classroom interaction followed by explanations by the student teachers about the pedagogical goals they hoped to achieve, allowed the researcher to substantiate the claim that an important step forward in understanding teachers' beliefs is taken by establishing a comparison between beliefs as concepts and in action (Li & Walsh, 2011).

At face value, identity is not a fixed property of a teacher but rather a process that evolves, changes, or is resisted as teachers negotiate forms of participation in a teacher community, and consolidate professional and experiential knowledge. This evolution is part of the process of learning to teach. Tsui (2003) defines it as the development of expertise, "in which highly competent teachers constantly set new goals for themselves and accept new challenges" (p. 7).

TI and Belonging to a Teacher Community

It has been argued in this study that teachers shape their professional identities by participating in and interacting with other members of a teacher community. Although there are several modes of such participation and interaction, it is commonly found in the literature on teacher education that

teachers join the profession after being in contact with other teachers and the teaching environment for several years (Borg, 2004; Lorti, 1975; Malderez et al., 2007). It is also believed that this previous experience represents an early mode of participation. Nevertheless, this first affiliation is truly confirmed when a student makes the decision to choose teaching. This early act of belonging is the beginning of a long journey of constructing, sustaining and transforming a professional identity.

Choosing teaching is argued in this study to be the first foundational act of belonging to a teacher community. Although the meaning of being a teacher evolves as a trajectory that is shaped and transformed as teachers gain experience and professional recognition, the story of how teaching first attracted them is believed to provide some key notions about how professional identities are constructed. More importantly, it can be claimed that it is an early act of professional affiliation, as it signifies the beginning of a professional and personal development journey.

Clarke (2008) found that family connections, past teachers, and foreign language motivation are among the reasons for choosing teaching. His findings were the result of a two-year research study with 75 women student-teachers in the United Arab Emirates. Families were also found to favour teaching by implicit or explicit encouragement, as well as the influence of relatives who are teachers or former teachers.

It is also generally accepted that teachers' practice is importantly guided by the teaching models of their own past teachers (Lorti, 1975). The present author does not accept this argument, but rather conceives teaching as a permanent process of reflection and transformation in which theoretical knowledge, imagination, and sensitivity are fundamental. If teachers merely continue teaching the way they were taught, the possibilities to overcome

outdated paradigms and to offer better alternatives for the education of new generations of learners will be considerably reduced. Teacher education programmes and trainers have to assume responsibility in this area. Fettes (2005) stated that:

Teachers need to perceive possibilities beyond the factual, literal, and mundane, and willingly embrace them as part of their professional identity. Thus we see ourselves as embarking, in part, on a campaign to liberate our teacher candidates from their restricted sense of possibility—of themselves, of the curriculum, and of the children they teach. (p. 7)

Affiliation with teaching is not always a straightforward response, and teachers may experience tension with what family or teachers previously induced in them. This could indicate that some teachers may subscribe to the teaching profession without a strong sense of affiliation. This could also explain the increasing rate of early retirement reported in previous research (e.g. Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009; Inman & Marlow, 2004).

Put simply, there are different ways of being a member of a community and consequently of belonging to it. Newcomers and teachers close to retirement may perceive community membership from very different perspectives. This is a challenge for future teacher education programmes. Going beyond belonging to a community by default, and creating opportunities for teachers' professional development and growth, is in the hands of teacher educators, trainers, and trainees. The next section explores the connection between beliefs and classroom practice.

Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs

It has been argued in this study that it is crucial to explore teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs in order to understand their professional identities. Although a consensual definition of beliefs is still elusive (Pajares, 1992), this study con-

centrates on how the participating teachers used systems of knowledge and beliefs to construct their professional identities and whether or not their beliefs converged with teaching practice. “In summary, examining teachers’ systems of knowledge and beliefs fits the purpose of exploring the nature of becoming a teacher in this paper” (Fajardo, 2012, p. 134).

This paper adopts the theoretical construct of teacher cognition that refers “to the observable dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Despite the fact that there is a profound scholarly interest in the interpretation of teachers’ cognition, in this exploratory research student teachers’ beliefs are approached in terms of the way they are manifested in their classroom practice. Fajardo (2013) states:

The language classroom is a natural scenario for understanding pre-service teachers’ pedagogical beliefs. Although theories, beliefs, or attitudes may seem to be rooted in a person’s mind, they are also inextricably connected to context. Consequently, the meanings of teacher and teaching are significantly mediated by the institution or the particular classroom where the teacher works on a daily basis. Put simply, one way to approach beliefs is by describing and explaining some of the actions undertaken in the language classroom. (p. 40)

While studies in teacher cognition have proliferated in the last two decades (Borg, 2006; Peacock, 2001; Santagata, 2005) the question of how classroom interaction contributes to studying beliefs remains unresolved. At face value, teachers’ pedagogical beliefs are closely connected to classroom experience. “Put simply, the understanding of teachers’ beliefs necessarily entails looking at the interactional processes that lie at the centre of foreign language teaching and learning” (Fajardo, 2013, p. 40). This interaction provides a good sign to understand the teacher’s role, which is understood as one side of personal identity.

Pre-service teachers’ systems of knowledge and beliefs are fundamentally oriented towards the role of culture, second language teaching and learning, second language pedagogy, among some others. Although these core principles do not entirely match what is done in the classroom (Blay & Ireson, 2009; Garton, 2008; González, 2008; Li & Walsh, 2011; Phipps & Borg, 2009), it is important to note that it is beyond the scope of this study to judge the “truth” value of the relationship between stated and enacted beliefs, but rather to attempt to examine how beliefs are used to construct professional identities. Since it is widely accepted that beliefs inform professional practices and that they are resistant to change (Pajares, 2002; Peacock, 2001), a source of disagreement arises concerning what teacher education can do in order to overcome misconceptions, for example, about teaching and learning.

The debate around how inflexible beliefs are and what role education plays in changing them challenges many previous research findings about teachers’ beliefs. Phipps and Borg (2009) set a positive tone, proposing the need to look at teachers’ beliefs beyond merely understanding their levels of convergence with classroom practice. Instead, they propose the need to “explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind such tensions” (p. 338). This perspective opens new possibilities for future research in the field of teacher cognition.

The Study

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this exploratory research are:

- How does the act of belonging to a teacher community, while in the final year practicum, form, sustain, or transform teacher identities?

- In what ways do the systems of knowledge and beliefs of pre-service teachers manifested in their teaching practices with young learners reflect the teachers' identities?

Context

This study was implemented at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC). A group of six Colombian pre-service teachers in the final stage of their five-year teacher education programme were research participants (three females and three males). Their identities were protected using pseudonyms: Christine (C), Julie (J), Sarah (S), Andrew (A), Jacob (J), and Nicholas (N). They were prospective primary school teachers in their final training stage in the foreign language programme. The sampling process started by inviting them to answer a short questionnaire concerning their potential interest in taking part as research participants in the study. Eighteen students out of twenty-two answered in the affirmative. The researcher wrote their names on strips of paper which were then placed in a bag, and randomly selected six who were chosen as research participants. They were informed in more detail about the aims, methodology, and expected outcomes of the study. A formal written consent form covering audio and video recording, transcription, translation, and publication was signed.

Method

A qualitative approach was used. The data were collected over a four-month period during the final year of the participants' five-year primary school level language teaching Bachelor of Education degree programme in Colombia. Concerning research methods, interviews, stimulated recall (SR), and on-line blogs were used. It was also believed that the convergence and corroboration of findings from a multi-method perspective could

provide a more grounded evidence for discussion and conclusions. Of the three methods used, two were in direct interaction with the researcher (interviews and SR), and one took place in a more personally-oriented process of reflection (on-line blogs). The data were gathered through a series of professional dialogues during the teaching practicum, as well as video-recordings of on-going lessons. Data were transcribed verbatim and then categorised and coded through the identification of themes, which are cross-referenced using the three methods of data collection.

The process of data analysis focused on themes that were manifested in the data. The analysis followed the principle of letting the text talk and not attributing meaning that was not reflected in the data. Interpretation was then supported with textual evidence. Excerpts were coded to fit into a set of categories identified. Each excerpt is displayed in the next section of this paper, including the name of the research participant and the method used.¹

Findings and Discussion

This section of the paper is divided into two parts. Firstly, findings with regard to the role of a teacher community in forming, sustaining, or transforming TI were analysed. Secondly, the connection between pedagogical beliefs and classroom practice and the development of teacher identity were explored.

This analysis begins with the interpretation of some of the reasons that underpinned the research participants' decisions to choose teaching as their profession. Although their senses of identity evolve later as complex constructs involving the interplay of several factors—teacher education, experience, and professional development, among others—this

¹ Labels include: I (Interview), R (Researcher), SR1 (Stimulated Recall 1), BgE3 (Blog Entry 3), and VRL1 (Video Recorded Lesson 1).

early act of belonging to the teacher community illuminates the way they conceived themselves as student teachers. Why did the student teachers decide to choose the teaching of languages? Who helped them make such a decision? To what extent did they align to teaching after some years of teacher education? The answers to these questions will be scrutinised in the following excerpts.

Andrew wished to study languages, although it was not his first choice. The researcher learnt that he started studying industrial design, something that had attracted his attention long before. He soon realised that it was not what he wanted. Although he was not very motivated towards teaching children, his choice was especially guided by the fact that the Foreign Language Programme provided him with the opportunity to study three languages: English, French, and German. His family played a significant role in his decision. In Excerpt 1(a) below, Andrew explained in the interview the reasons he had for choosing teaching.

Excerpt 1(a)

11. R: Your mum is a teacher (*pause*). Is she not?
 12. A: Yes, she is.
 13. R: In what subject?
 14. A: She is a psychologist. She teaches psychology.
 15. R: The fact that your mum is a teacher (*pause*),
 16. did it influence, to some extent, your decision
 17. to become a teacher?
 18. A: My mum loves pedagogy (*pause*).
 19. She always said to me that it was a good career.
 20. She warned me that teaching children was not an
 easy job
 21. but, I do not regret having made the decision.

(Andrew, 1)

It is clear that his mother played an implicit encouraging role, although he later recognised that it was his “decision” and clarified that he had “no regrets” about it. The act of becoming a teacher

began for Andrew some time before his application for his undergraduate course (lines 18-19). That repeated explicit advice about the professional benefits of teaching might have influenced his choice. His mother not only encouraged him to choose teaching but warned him about the hard work that “teaching children” involves. Thus, these data illustrate that Andrew’s choice was not only directed towards teaching but to teaching young learners specifically. The decision to become a primary school level language teacher was also signalled as a “good career” by his family. In Excerpt 1(b), Andrew provided some more insights about his professional decision-making.

Excerpt 1(b)

176. R: OK. Andrew if you had the chance to go back
 four or five years to the time you made the decision
 to become a language teacher,
 would you make the same decision again?
 177. A: My decision to study languages was
 determined by financial issues (*pause*)
 my parents could afford neither the tuition fees
 nor accommodation for me in Bogota,
 it would have been much more expensive.
 If I had a second chance
 I would opt for translation and interpretation.

(Andrew, 1)

Choosing teaching was strongly determined by financial reasons and because his family was unable to support him, language teaching became a “good career.” Apart from the explicit encouragement of his mother, the family budget also played an important role in his choice of teaching as his profession. However, after a five year teacher training process, he wondered if language teaching was ultimately what he wished to do (“If I had a second chance I would rather go for translation and interpretation”). In short, what Andrew seemed to say here is that although he followed his mother’s advice and

was aware of his family's budget constraints, he also bore in mind that he might have preferred a profession in some other linguistic-related area. Here, the data suggest a divergence between what Andrew's family advocated and the way he sustains this professional orientation.

The stories reported by the student teachers revealed the influence of their former teachers in their decisions to choose teaching. The connection between experiences of being taught in the past and the wish to become a teacher seemed to be strong (see, for example, Danielewicz, 2001; Johnson, 1995). It is apparent from the data that teachers provided models to either imitate or surpass. What teachers did as result of their daily practice, behaviour, discourse, or subject knowledge, for example, seemed to have had an impact on the aspirations of all the participating teachers, either positively or negatively.

Christine made the decision to become a language teacher because she thought it was a great profession. Her first contact with the English language was in her third year at primary school. Her teacher taught her basic things such as numbers and children's songs and she has loved English since then. She was aware that languages would give her a better chance of travelling abroad and of realising more of her personal and professional potential. Excerpt 2(a) illustrates the role of past teachers for choosing teaching.

Excerpt 2(a)

38. R: OK, primary school. Any special memory from that time?
39. C: Uhm...primary school. There are surely things that had a huge impression on me. I would say the games and classmates. If I met them I would still remember a lot of things.
40. R: Any special memory? I mean a teacher, somebody special because of her

attributes or the way she treated students?

41. C: Oh yeah. My second year teacher was an extraordinary and tender person. I would like to be like her. I loved the way she taught. She treated us with affection. Some people think that it is counterproductive to treat kids with lot of affection but in my opinion that is not true. I loved her. So I decided to choose teaching because of her.

(Christine, 1)

Christine explained in the interview how her enthusiasm for teaching had begun a long time ago, in her "second year" of primary school. She was also inspired by a teacher who had been able to awaken in her an early motivation to teach as well as her capacity to understand that teaching is also a matter of emotion (Line 41). Feelings of tenderness and affection resulted in an enduring image of this primary school teacher and established a model to follow. Christine was also against opinions that indicated there were counterproductive effects from treating kids with affection was not true. Christine directly explained that her decision to choose teaching was rooted in the impact that her primary school teacher had had on her. She not only included the emotional dimension of teaching but added another dimension that may clarify what she meant by an "extraordinary" teacher. Pedagogy is then represented as an important constitutive feature of her happy learning experience. The data here show a clear congruent relationship between the model provided by her former primary school teacher and Christine's decision to choose teaching. In Excerpt 2(b), Christine reflected on teaching models that were not inspiring.

Excerpt 2(b)

357. R: OK. Let's talk about the university. How do you judge the quality of teaching at the UPTC?

358. C: Uhm. (*pause*). Right. I think my language teachers, I mean my teachers of English and French, were very good. But I also had a teacher who missed half of his teaching sessions. When he did turn up, he just gave us old silly activity. I asked myself if there was no supervision or if he was really committed to teaching or why he did not do something else instead. He only had a degree and since he had a job already, he did not care about planning a good lesson.

(Christine, 1)

From the data in this interview, Christine highlighted important considerations about the role of teachers. Their responsibilities and professional engagement became a matter of scrutiny for her. She also called attention to the people who should have been in charge of the school's academic administration and, hence, wondered what the role of supervision was. Christine also exercised her right to stake a claim for quality in education. It is apparent, therefore, that for Christine being a teacher requires both pedagogical knowledge and professional development. Christine introduced a contentious debate in education: the teacher's commitment. Although she did not provide further details about this particular teacher, she claimed to be responding to a fundamental critical sense of the social and ethical meaning of teaching. Thus, her teachers provided her with models to imitate, on the one hand, and on the other, to surpass.

The role of past teachers as inspiring models has been illustrated in this section. While affection and tenderness were directly understood as essential characteristics to be followed, a teacher's lack of professional commitment was mentioned as a model to surpass. In short, the findings show here that teachers provide inspiring and non-inspiring models which seem to affect pre-service teachers' decisions about choosing teaching. However, the

way those models actually influence their teaching practices remains to be explored.

The findings about the role played by family members in choosing teaching as a profession suggest that relatives and economic factors had a direct influence on the group of student teachers' decisions to choose teaching. The next category of analysis explores the nature of belonging to a teacher community, which is fundamentally connected to the daily experience of teachers' work and lives. This entails being in contact with other members of a community and establishing forms of interaction, cooperation, or recognition. Moreover, this does not necessarily presuppose a harmonious environment, and could result in tension related to power or dependence (Creese, 2005). As a consequence, each member of a community negotiates "ways of being a person in that context" (Wenger, 1999, p. 149).

Learning to teach is characterised by continuous interaction, communication, and social participation within the school community, local educational authority, and broader contexts of professional connection. Teachers' institutional agendas (e.g., course planning, assessment, or professional development) can then be argued to play a significant role in the process of identity construction. In the context of this exploratory research, pre-service teachers' practices implies a particular context of conflicting levels of professional recognition due to the fact that they are still under teaching supervision. Being students and teachers at the same time may in itself become a source of tension.

Pre-service teachers' experiences included significant events of professional inclusion or exclusion. An example of the latter is provided when senior teachers resisted giving them the status of true teachers. However, student teachers' direct relationships with school-based mentors (SBM) or supervising university tutors (SUT) provide impor-

tant insights into explaining the way a teacher community forms, sustains, or transforms professional identity. Excerpt 3(a) below examined these issues.

Excerpt 3(a)

My three school-based mentors introduced me as the new teacher of English and French today. Nobody used the word pre-service. A teacher even mentioned the stages I had gone through before becoming a teacher. I liked it. (Julie, BGE2)

The social act of being recognised as an authentic teacher made a positive impression on Julie. By being acknowledged as a teacher rather than a student teacher, Julie adopted a professional demeanour, and this helped to shape her sense of professional affiliation. She went on to describe how the SBM explained to pupils what the process of becoming a teacher involved. This particular experience of professional inclusion may contribute to the formation of a sense of professional identity. However, Julie also argued a case for all teachers, including pre-service teachers, to have full participation in all relevant school activities. In Excerpt 3(b) below, Julie mentioned an incident whereby the student teachers at her school were not invited to an institutional meeting.

Excerpt 3(b)

10. R: OK, Julie and the opposite. What disappointed you?
 11. J: uhm...for example, on Tuesday parents came to school to collect the kids' academic progress reports. We were not invited to the meeting. The school did not recognise us as teachers. We are also teachers and we have the right to interact with our kids' parents.

(Julie, 1)

From the data in the interview, Julie staked a claim for recognition as teachers of their status. She regretted that the institution neglected their right to be fully integrated into school life. Julie wanted

the voices of her pre-service teacher colleagues to be heard. This contextual meaning of identity formation suggests that far from being a harmonious process, belonging to a teacher community may also result in tensions of power and dependence. Excerpt 4(a) below expands on this.

Excerpt 4(a)

I was nervous. Being observed by two supervisors is not the same as being on my own. There were four eyes looking at what I was doing. As I knew that my SUT was also going to grade my teaching, it put me under a lot of pressure as well. (Sarah, BGE2)

Sarah revealed how insecure she felt by being observed by her two supervisors. She then went on to express her feelings of being exposed to judgment (assessment). She also raised some concern about the effects of the evaluation of her teaching by her SUT and the pressure that it put on her. The data seem to confirm here that her professional status as a novice teacher i.e., her teaching effectiveness and achievement was under scrutiny and evaluation. Excerpt 4(b) below sheds some more light on issues of the relationship between pre-service and school based mentors.

Excerpt 4(b)

34. R: How do you feel about capturing the attention of pupils, controlling discipline, and delivering the Topic? Are you happy with the results?
 35: S: My experience here was not as good as I would have wished because I got into trouble when the teacher left me alone in the classroom, and they took advantage of it and started talking and playing. I was trying to figure out how to stop their games but I was totally invisible to them.

(Sarah, SR2)

Sarah regretted her SBM's absence. She reported a lack of teaching achievement which seemed to be explained by the fact of being "alone" in the class-

room. Her status as a pre-service teacher spurred pupils to take advantage of it. Sarah experienced anger and uncertainty about how to rectify the situation. She also portrayed a sense of professional frustration. The data here clearly suggest that Sarah needed support from more experienced colleagues—her SBM in this case. It is a type of thinking which is normal for beginning teachers. Also, it is interesting to note that there is a degree of ambivalence in Sarah's narrative of affiliation with her SBM. While in Excerpt 4(a) she is concerned because of her supervisor's judgement and evaluation, Sarah's perception changed and she then claimed that her lack of pedagogic achievement was due to her SBM's absence. Although this issue is not explored further in this part of the analysis, it may be the subject of future research.

The exploration of pre-service teachers' sense of professional identity showed an appreciation of inclusion and recognition and, at the same time, there was also an energetic rejection of exclusion. Sarah also reported a dual feeling in being judged and assessed by her teaching supervisors, and in explaining her poor classroom performance during her SBM's absence. This finding may help to explain that gaining the status of teacher community membership is not always an easy or straightforward task.

An increased awareness of the world emerges in the data as a foundational trajectory that contributes to explaining the act of becoming a language teacher. This is represented in the data in student teachers' understanding of the role of culture associated with the target language as an empowering teaching skill. By being in direct contact with people, situations, and daily events, they assume that this understanding gives a real chance to improve their communicative competence and their professional profile. Excerpt 5 below examines this issue.

Excerpt 5

118. R: Right, Nicholas. Are there motivations to become a teacher?
119. N: Oh, yes. After living in the USA for a while and improving my English. I know that I would not only have teaching opportunities here but also abroad. I am aware that this is a valuable profession
- (Nicholas, 1)

Nicholas highlighted how his trip abroad resulted in language improvement and better professional prospects. Although the initial interest of this study is not related to second language proficiency, this is an important domain in the construction of language teachers' identities. The data clearly suggest here that Nicholas had developed a sense of intercultural awareness which contributed to facilitating his own sense of professional alignment. The emerging reality of second language proficiency is also referenced in the account given by another research participant.

Target language competence is represented in the data as pre-service teachers' beliefs about subject matter knowledge and its pedagogy. The participating teachers argued that living in a target language community and learning from its people and culture, for example, is an enriching experience which also contributes to improving the language competence and consequently the teaching skills. In what ways do target language competence and its pedagogical knowledge correlate with classroom practices? The next excerpts explore this answer.

Excerpt 6(a)

520. R: So how to teach a foreign language then?
521. J: I think that teaching another language is a question of pushing students to understand it.
- If I had to stand on my head, draw a picture, or do some mime, I will do it.
- I will do whatever is needed

in order that they learn the language.
I do not want them to translate for example.
I expect them to produce, to feel confident
that they are making progress.

(Jacob, 1)

Jacob exhibited a clear awareness of the use of available didactic resources with the intention of helping students understand rather than translate, for example. These core principles in Jacob's pedagogical knowledge of the subject matter offer a well-grounded conception of the role of teachers in the language classroom. He also built up a coherent rationale of expected learning outcomes. Those images of teaching, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom interaction can then be compared with what Jacob did while teaching English to young learners. How do pedagogical beliefs correspond to classroom practice? This answer is explored in Excerpt 6(b) below (See Appendix for a list of the transcription system).

Excerpt 6(b)

The topic of the lesson is "parts of the house." The teacher is delivering a two hour lesson to a mixed 4th year group. Students are organised in six rows. He stands at the front of the classroom. Students are following him attentively.

01. T: tenemos
((we have here))
02. ↑kitchen (0.4)
03. a donde por lo general está la estufa (0.1)
La nevera (0.4)
((where we generally have the stove the fridge))
04. hasta el lavaplatos (4.0) # he draws on the board #
((even the sink))
05. el lavaplatos (0.3)
((the sink))
06. ↑kitchen (0.4)
07. ↑y tenemos(.)
((and we have))
08. ↑living room (0.8)

09. ésta es la casa de mi abuelita ↑no (0.2)
((this is my granny's house, right))
10. entonces mi abuelita (0.4) tiene
((so my granny has))
11. in the living room
12. tiene (0.5) tiene # he draws on the board #
((she has she has))
13. a↑picture # he draws on the board #
14. tiene un cuadro acá (1.5)
((she has a picture here))
15. tiene
((she has))
16. ↑a picture (2.0) she has a picture
(Jacob, VRL1, 00: 06': 25")

Jacob used an extended turn (from 01 to 16) to introduce vocabulary about the house, which was the topic of the lesson. He drew a picture of each new word on the board in an attempt to help students decode its meaning. Although the teacher made creative use of drawing as a pedagogical resource, in terms of target language exposure and interaction, there was no interaction between the teacher and students or among the pupils, for example. The mother tongue almost entirely dominated communication in the classroom, with occasional code switching into the target language which was minimised by the teacher's clarification in Spanish (Line 14)—language 1. Although English was used meaningfully at the end of his turn (Line 16), the lesson at that particular moment reflected that the mother tongue was the main means of instruction, which seems to contradict his belief about the use of the target language with interactional and learning purposes. What is the effect of retrospection to explain what happens between stated and enacted beliefs? Excerpt 6(c) helps to unveil this issue.

Excerpt 6(c)

174. R: Let's talk about the use of Spanish and English.
Has it gone according to what you planned?

175. J: No, it has not. In fact, I planned to use many more commands, to speak more English and to use less and less Spanish.
176. R: But it is not precisely what you are doing. What happened then?
177. J: You are right. Now I am aware that there was too much Spanish and little English. I have to use more English and progressively less and less Spanish in the lesson.
178. R: So, your idea is to increase the use of language two and reduce Spanish?
179. J: Yes, you are right.
(Jacob, SR1)

Jacob also noted the restrictive use of the target language. Jacob introduced an interesting topic of discussion regarding the relationship between the lesson plan and the implementation of it. The data show clearly that this belief did not align with his classroom practice while he was teaching English to young learners. Despite the importance of using relevant didactic strategies in order to help students understand and interact in the target language, no congruent connection was observed between Jacob's pedagogical knowledge of the subject matter and his interactional directions adopted in the language classroom.

This analysis raises some interesting questions concerning how the research participants' beliefs about knowledge of the subject matter and its pedagogy correlated with classroom practice. Although these findings are not conclusive, there is clearly a need for further research and exploration. Student teachers' discourse reflected beliefs about the role of primary school teachers. Those beliefs are considered in this paper as a form of constructing the meaning of teaching which is grounded in personal experience. They are used to illustrate how the participating teachers understand educational principles, and how those principles could

contribute to forming, sustaining, or transforming professional identity. Excerpts 7(a), (b), and (c) add on the analysis of the connection between believing and doing.

Excerpt 7(a)

I think that a teacher needs to be a multifaceted person. For instance, a clown, like in this situation when I am painting my face. I am also a counsellor when I advise them to behave properly or to be quiet. I become a kind of daddy or mummy at times when they ask me to take them to the toilet. I am also a nurse when they fall down. (Nicholas, BGE3)

Nicholas showed self-awareness of the role of a primary school teacher as a multifaceted professional whose responsibility goes beyond pedagogical duties. He mentioned distinct aspects of the relationship with pupils and alertness to their needs. These situations where a teacher has to go beyond the teaching domain seemed to cause a great impact on his own understanding of teaching and, consequently, in creating a notion of professional identity. The findings are not conclusive here, and further research would be needed, but the connection between Nicholas' belief and his classroom practice is explored in Excerpts 7(b) and (c).

Excerpt 7(b)

The teacher is kneeling down on the floor. He is teaching a lesson to a mixed nursery class. He is using some face-painting while he teaches some vocabulary with regard to "parts of the face." Students are sitting on the floor in a kind of semi-circle around the teacher.

01. T: i have ↑thi::s colour (0.6)
T shows a box of face-paints to Ss
02. S1: jis [colour]
03. S2: [ye::s]
04. T: re::d
05. Ss: re::d
06. T: red yeah (0.2) i have red (0.3) and i have my (0.5)
↑e::ars

07. Ss: ears(.)
 08. T: ↑e::ars (0.2)
 # he takes another box of face-paints #
 09. S3: e::ars
 10. T: and i'm gonna paint (0.2)↑my=
 12. S1: =profe tengo chichi
 ((teacher, I have to go to the toilet))
 (Nicholas, VRL2, 00:18': 27")

There is an image of a dynamic classroom with a teacher who was determined to engage learners in a creative process of language learning. Nicholas created a relaxing atmosphere by facilitating a suitable classroom arrangement with students sitting on the floor. By painting his face as a clown, he appeared to be a resourceful language teacher who designed his lesson imaginatively. The flow of the lesson then suddenly changed because of an extra pedagogical demand. This particular requirement changed the direction and focus of the lesson at that moment. What is the teacher's explanation for such a commitment? Excerpt 7(c) explores this fact.

Excerpt 7 (c):

240. R: That double condition of being a daddy,
 and a teacher, especially at this nursery level.
 How do you assume this role?
 241. N: Well. I once read in a newspaper a story by
 Quino about teachers.
 A boy asked a teacher "What do you do?"
 and he replied: I am a doctor, a solicitor, an
 explorer, a scientist, a judge, a daddy, a mummy, a
 nurse, a policeman, a fireman, a gardener, biologist,
 and so on. And that is truly what a teacher does.
 242. R: How important is this for a teacher?
 243. N: Very, very important. I think a teacher needs to
 make thousands of faces, to have thousand
 personalities.
 It also involves assuming a dictatorial role at times.

(Nicholas, SR2)

Nicholas showed full awareness about the meaning of becoming a primary school language teacher. He paraphrased Quino's² illustrative message about the meaning of being a teacher. This metaphor allowed him to explain what was going on during the lesson and the way he understood the role of primary teachers. The data here clearly show a strong congruent relationship between Nicholas' stated belief about the multifaceted roles played by teachers and what he did in the language classroom.

The connection between student teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs and their classroom practice has been explored in this second category of analysis. While target language competence offers an interesting dimension, constructing the meaning of teaching then provides some insights into the role of primary school teachers. Together they provided some of the foundations for understanding the process of learning to teach and consequently adopting a new identity as language teachers.

In summary, this paper has explored two basic constructs in the process of becoming a primary school language teacher and consequently in the trajectory of identity construction. Belonging to a teacher community was considered on the assumption that practice and participation have a direct connection with constructing professional identities. The types of connection found between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice showed two different realities. While there were significant cases of coherence between beliefs and classroom behaviour, there was also evidence of some incongruent relationships.

Conclusion

It is argued in this paper that the consideration of two interconnected domains helps in under-

² Joaquín Salvador Lavado, better known as Quino, is a Spanish-Argentine cartoonist. His comic strip "Mafalda" is very popular in Latin America and Europe.

standing how teachers construct professional identities: participation in a teacher community and the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice. Firstly, the study found that a teaching community plays a fundamental role in forming, sustaining, and transforming professional identities. Choosing teaching appeared to be socially driven by family influences and past and present teachers as well as economic factors. Although the participation of a new member within a teaching community was characterised by tension in relationships with senior teachers and supervisors or difficulties in terms of, for example, cooperation or team-work, the participating teachers generally adopted a sense of community membership.

Secondly, the findings suggested two different realities in the connection between beliefs and classroom practice. While there were significant cases of coherence between beliefs and classroom behaviour, there was also evidence of incongruent relationships. One of the limitations of this study is that the meaning of professional identity for pre-service teachers is still under construction. They are at a time when their identities as students overlaps with their identities as teachers. This may suggest that the identity with which the teachers begin their trajectory is quite strongly influenced by past experience. Furthermore, they are permanently supervised and this might restrict the possibility of their acting more independently. Nevertheless, the trajectory of constructing professional identity has just begun and there is still a long way to go. Self-reflection and professional development are likely to determine a more stable identity in the future.

The study explored how the participating teachers constructed the meaning of becoming a teacher during the last stage of teacher training—the practicum. This necessarily involved looking retrospectively at their biographical stories in order to

gain a better understanding of their previous experience and motivations to follow a teaching career. Future research should be conducted over a longer period of time in order to gain an in-depth understanding of this process. To do this research, data could be gathered at different stages of a teacher education programme in order to get more insights into the factors contributing to forming, shaping or transforming professional identities. Additionally, data could be gathered from formal and informal events where the participating teachers have to participate and interact on daily basis.

References

- Blay, J. A., & Ireson, J. (2009). Pedagogical beliefs, activity, choice and structure, and adult-child interaction in nursery classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(8), 1105-1116.
- Borg, M. (2004). The apprenticeship of observation. *ELT Journal*, 58(3), 274-276.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.
- Borg, S. (2006). The distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers. *Language Teaching Research*, 10(1), 3-31.
- Clandinin, D. J., Downey, C. A., & Huber, J. (2009). Attending to changing landscapes: Shaping the interwoven identities of teachers and teacher educators. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(2), 141-154.
- Clarke, M. (2008). *Language teacher identities: Co-constructing discourse and community*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Creese, A. (2005). Mediating allegations of racism in a multiethnic London school: What speech communities and communities of practice can tell us about discourse and power. In D. Barton & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice: Language power and social context* (pp. 55-76). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves: Identity, pedagogy, and teacher education*. Albany, NY: University of New York Press.
- Da Silva, M. (2005). Constructing the teaching process from inside out: How pre-service teachers make sense of their perceptions of the teaching of the four kills. *TESL-EJ*, 9(2), 1-19.
- Fajardo, A. (2012). Teacher identity construction: Exploring the nature of becoming a teacher. In Doctorado en Lenguaje y Cultura (Eds.), *Lecturas y escrituras: lecciones doctorales* (pp. 111-140). Tunja, CO: Imprenta y Publicaciones UPTC.
- Fajardo, A. (2013). Stated vs. enacted beliefs: Looking at pre-service teachers' pedagogical beliefs through classroom interaction. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 18(2), 37-57.
- Fettes, M. (2005). Imaginative transformation in teacher education. *Teaching Education*, 16(1), 3-11.
- Garton, S. (2008). Teacher beliefs and interaction in the language classroom. In S. Garton & K. Richards (Eds.), *Professional encounters in TESOL: Discourses of teachers in teaching* (pp. 67-86). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.
- González, M. E. (2008). English teachers' beliefs about communicative competence and their relationship with their classroom practices. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 10(1), 75-89.
- Inman, D., & Marlow, L. (2004). Teacher retention: Why do beginning teachers remain in the profession? *Education*, 124(4), 605-614.
- Johnson, K. E. (1995). *Understanding communication in second language classrooms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Li, L., & Walsh, W. (2011). Seeing is believing: Looking at EFL teachers' beliefs through classroom interaction. *Classroom discourse*, 2(1), 39-57.
- Malderez, A., Hobson, A. J., Tracey, L., & Kerr, K. (2007). Becoming a student teacher: Core features of the experience. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 30(3), 225-248.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307-332.
- Pajares, M. F. (2002). Gender and perceived self-efficacy in self-regulated learning. *Theory into Practice*, 41(2), 116-125.
- Peacock, M. (2001). Pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about second language learning: A longitudinal study. *System*, 29(2), 177-195.
- Phipps, S., & Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System*, 37(3), 380-390.
- Santagata, R. (2005). Practices and beliefs in mistake-handling activities: A video study of Italian and US mathematics lessons. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(5), 491-508.
- Tsui, A. B. M. (2003). *Understanding expertise in teaching: Case studies of ESL teachers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- van Lier, L. (1988). What's wrong with classroom talk? *Prospect*, 3(3), 267-283.
- Walsh, S. (2006). *Investigating classroom discourse*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

About the Author

J. Alberto Fajardo Castañeda is a full time teacher at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, where he coordinates the doctorate programme in Language and Culture. He holds a PhD in Education and Applied Linguistics from Newcastle University, UK, and is a member of the ENLETAWA (Enriching Language Teaching Awareness) research group.

Appendix: Transcription system

The transcription system is taken from Walsh (2006) and adapted from van Lier (1988) and Johnson (1995).

T: Teacher

L: Learner (not identified)

s1, s2, etc.: Identified learner

/ok/ok/ok/ overlapping or simultaneous utterances by more than one learner

[do you understand?}] overlap between teacher and learner

[I see]

= Turn continues, or one turn follows another without any pause

... Pause of one second or less marked by three periods

(o4) Silence; length given in seconds

↑ Rising intonation—question or other

correct emphatic speech: Falling intonation

((4)) unintelligible 4 seconds: A stretch of unintelligible speech with the length given in seconds

Andrew: Capitals are only used for proper nouns