



**TEACHER IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION:  
exploring the nature of becoming a primary school language  
teacher**

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## ABSTRACT

Central to this study is the question of how teachers construct their professional identity. This research explores the process of becoming a teacher and consequently of the construction of identity in terms of three specific components: belonging to a teacher community, the relationship between systems of knowledge and beliefs and classroom practice, and professional expectations for the future. A group of six Colombian pre-service teachers in the final stage of their five-year teacher education programme were research participants. This case study used interviews, stimulated recall and on-line blogs as methods of data collection, and content analysis as the analytical approach. The findings reveal that while the process of learning to teach is individually constructed and experienced, it is socially negotiated. A teacher's identity not only comprises personal knowledge and action, but is also influenced by the ideological, political and cultural interests and circumstances surrounding teachers' lives and work. The research participants exhibited a permanent struggle between developing a personal professional style and coping with the restrictions imposed by living in a particular type of society that has already defined what teachers should do. Nevertheless, they manifested well-grounded principles and theories of language teaching and learning and the purpose of education, and awareness of their potential as a new generation of teachers. This suggests that they had developed a sense of professional identity; a way to see themselves as teachers. This evolving identity sometimes conflicted with experience once they had faced the reality of classrooms, assumed institutional roles or negotiated modes of participation within a teacher community. The findings could be used as a point of departure in order to introduce changes into the curricula of teacher education programmes. The study has relevance for policymakers in planning action promoting professional development in pre-service and in-service teacher education.

## DEDICATION

To my beloved Magnolia,

Sebastian and Nicolas:

The three more powerful reasons to remain dreaming

To the memory of my daddy who placed me on an exciting journey to  
become a teacher.

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## List of abbreviations

TI:	teacher identity
UPTC:	Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia
FLP:	foreign language programme
SST:	supervising school teacher
S-BM:	school-based mentor
EI:	entry interview
ExI:	exit interview
SR:	stimulated recall
BgE:	blog entry



# **Chapter 1. Background Information**

## **Chapter Overview**

This chapter gives the background information concerning the exploration of the process of professional identity construction. Firstly, an overview of how the topic has gained increasing research interest in the last decade is introduced (1.1). Secondly, a brief historical and geographic description of the Colombian context is provided, along with an overview of its educational system and the status of the teaching profession (1.2). Thirdly, the rationale of the study is explained in terms of its aims, research questions, contribution to knowledge, and the limitations of previous research (1.3). Finally, the chapter highlights the organization of the thesis, and briefly describes each of the chapters (1.4).

## **1.1. Introduction**

Research in the field of teacher identity has attracted increasing interest in the last decade (van Veen & Slegers, 2005; Richards, 2006; Clarke, 2008; Day *et al.*, 2006). The subject has generally been approached from the perspective of what constitutes both the visible and invisible domains of the work and lives of teachers. The visible side includes what teachers do, for example, classroom interaction, assessment, material design, or task implementation. This is generally represented in the literature on teacher education as the technical or functional dimension of teaching. On the other hand, the invisible side involves more personal phenomena such as cognition, beliefs, expectations, or emotions. In principle, the exploration of teacher identity might be more fruitful if these two perspectives could be reconciled. To do this, 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.

Teacher identity is argued to be constructed as part of the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2001). This process generally starts when students choose teaching as a professional alternative, even though they already have a clear notion of the meaning of teaching as a result of their experience as learners. Nevertheless, choosing teaching is a vital stage in assuming a new identity as a teacher, which evolves during the time they spend in a teacher education programme. This provides pedagogical and subject matter knowledge as well as classroom experience, which are all considered essential factors in performing the teacher's role. Little by little, students then adopt a new identity. Classroom experience is generally planned in the final year as the stage of the practicum. During this time, student-teachers realise the true meaning of teaching as well as negotiating forms of participation and interaction that are fundamental domains of professional identity.

Teacher identity develops as a trajectory of participation and interaction in a teacher community. Although different forms of participation may be involved, it is argued that engagement, alignment and imagination are three important distinct modes (Wenger, 1999). Engagement is the result of a teacher's direct pedagogical function, for example, in working with senior colleagues and members of the administrative staff, attending institutional meetings or following educational policies. But teachers not only participate within the boundaries of physically located communities. They also belong to broader professional networks. This is defined as alignment. Another form of participation is represented as imagination, which accounts for a teacher's sense of individuality which is reflected in forms of innovation and creativity.

Teacher identity is also constructed from a complex cognitive dimension that involves what teachers 'know, believe and think' (Borg, 2006: 1). Although the nature

of teachers' mental images varies and different elements are difficult to disentangle, this study generally explores their systems of knowledge and beliefs. Evidence suggests that a teacher forms pre-conceptions about teaching and learning as result of their previous experiences as a learner (Lorti, 1975; Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Borg, 2004; Malderez *et al.*, 2007). These pre-conceptions are the main source of a teacher's beliefs and experiential knowledge, which are believed to inform most of their teaching practice. But theoretical knowledge is also a fundamental domain in understanding what makes a teacher. This results as teachers become enrolled in a teacher education. The previous learning experience and theoretical knowledge are generally accepted to form teacher cognition, which is also considered vital for understanding the meaning of being a teacher in this study. This area is examined through the connection between beliefs and classroom practice.

Students come to a teacher education programme with expectations about becoming teachers. During their course, they construct identities as students, which then change into those of teachers by the end of the preparation period. Teachers take on a new identity over time and construct the sense of what it means to be a teacher (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Alsup, 2005; Clarke, 2008). This process is identified as learning to teach and it is fundamentally constructed from, for example, experience, skills, subject and pedagogical knowledge, classroom practice, and professional development. As a part of this process a teacher either builds a sense of affiliation with the teaching profession or gives it up (Nieto, 2003; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Yost, 2006; Clandinin *et al.*, 2009). If a teacher decides to assume her/his role, what follows is generally identified in the literature of teacher education as professional development. This study explores this third domain through the participating teachers' professional goals for the future. Although this is certainly an early exploration, due to the fact that pre-service teachers have not yet embarked on their careers, their first teaching experiences have generated professional expectations which can be used to explore the process of becoming a teacher.

This study explores the nature of constructing professional identity when a group of pre-service teachers experience the transition from being students of teaching to becoming teachers – in the teaching practicum. During this particular period of time, student teachers interact with colleagues and school boards of directors and parents, apply pedagogical and subject matter knowledge in real teaching situations, and manifest their sense of affiliation or disaffiliation with the teaching profession.

Concepts of communities of practice (Wenger, 1999), teachers' knowledge (Grosman, 1995), and professional development (Glatthorn, 1995) provide the theoretical foundations for this research, while case studies pave the methodological path to follow. A multi-method approach, including semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall sessions, and on-line blogs was used for data collection; using content analysis as the analytical approach to treat the data gathered. The findings are expected to contribute to building up new understandings about how pre-service teachers construct professional identities.

## **1.2. A Brief Review of the Colombian Context**

### ***1.2.1. Geo-political view***

The name Colombia originates from Christopher Columbus, the Italian sailor who is believed to have been the first European to arrive in what is now known as the American continent. This multi-racial and multi-cultural nation located in South America officially adopted its current name, the Republic of Colombia, in 1886.<sup>1</sup> Colombia is bordered to the east by Venezuela and Brazil; to the west by the Pacific Ocean, including the pacific islands; to the south by Ecuador and Peru; and to the North

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<sup>1</sup> The name evolved from the Republic of New Granada in 1835 when Venezuela and Ecuador broke away. New Granada changed its name to the Granadine Confederation in 1858. This name changed again into The United States of Colombia in 1863, before its current name was officially adopted in 1886.

by Panama and the Caribbean Sea, including its Caribbean islands of San Andrés and Providencia. Colombia also shares maritime borders with Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. The Andes mountains dominate its geography.<sup>2</sup> The official language is Spanish, although a great variety of ancestral languages still prevail in many communities. Colombia has a population of over 47 million people. Its capital is Bogota, which is a multi-cultural city with over 7 million inhabitants. The country is administratively and geographically divided into thirty two regions (departamentos), and one capital district (Bogota Capital district) which is political and administratively treated as a departamento. Each of these regions displays a rich variety of cultural and ethnic characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

Colombia adopted a constitutional system after declaring its independence from Spain in 1811. Thereafter, a series of eleven constitutions established the present-day republic. These attempts to configure a democratic and constitutional system led to the division of powers and the strength of the chief executive. The Colombian constitutional system is recognised as one of the oldest in Latin America. Nevertheless, after a difficult 19<sup>th</sup> century, the constitution of 1886 finally consolidated democratic principles and was used as the equivalent of the country's Magna Carta until the late 1980s. Calls for modifications in order to adapt it to the country's changing economic, political, and social characteristics and demands had been regularly made. In 1988, a student political movement proposed the formation of a constituent assembly for the 1990 elections, and promoted the conducting of the 'seventh paper ballot' (séptima papeleta). Despite not being classified by the electoral counsel as a legitimate vote, the Supreme Court subsequently acknowledged the popular initiative and validated the votes. Elections were held for members of a National Constituent Assembly in 1990, and a new constitution was promulgated and adopted on July the 4<sup>th</sup> 1991.<sup>4</sup> Replacing the

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<sup>2</sup> The Andes is the world's longest mountain range of about 7,000 km (4,300 mi). The Andes are divided into three branches known as cordilleras (mountain ranges) in the south-west of Colombia.

<sup>3</sup> Overall estimates are that approximately 58% of the population is of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry. The rest are believed to have African ancestry.

constitution of 1886, this is one of the most important democratic achievements of recent Colombian history, and it has become known as the constitution of rights.

Political scandals have recently created political instability in Colombia resulting from revelations and judicial allegations of links between paramilitary groups and some members of the army, government officials, and politicians. This situation is aggravated by high levels of unemployment, social inequality, and corruption. Despite such a climate of controversy, Colombia remains a popular tourist attraction with its colonial towns, beautiful sandy beaches, and numerous festivals. The rich variety in geography, flora and fauna has boosted the development of an emerging ecotourism industry, including in the mountains, coast and national parks. The map below shows the location of Colombia.<sup>5</sup>

Map 1.1. Colombian geographical location in America



<sup>4</sup> On July 4, 1991, Colombia adopted a new constitution that established a new political and juridical model involving broad reform and setting a new course for the nation and its institutions. Some of the reforms included, for example, the creation of the Prosecutor General's Office, a constitutional Court, and mechanisms to protect basic human rights.

<sup>5</sup> This map was downloaded from Google images.

### ***1.2.2. Educational system***

Education in Colombia has been considered in the constitution to be a public service. However, the state has not been able to fulfil the increasing demand among prospective students applying for places in public secondary and higher education. This gap has been filled by a profitable private sector that offers a variety of services despite controversy surrounding quality and cost. Nevertheless, about 18% of the population of school age (approximately 2,542,863 boys and girls) still have no access to the Colombian educational system ([www.manosporcolombia.org/cifras.html](http://www.manosporcolombia.org/cifras.html)).

The Colombian educational system comprises three basic levels: nursery, basic and middle vocational education. The experience for many Colombian children begins with attendance at nursery. This level generally includes reception A and B classes for children aged 5 and 6, and it is claimed that 86% of the population of nursery age attend this level ([www.mineduacion.gov.co](http://www.mineduacion.gov.co)). There are also possibilities for nursery education for younger children offered by private schools, as well as a governmental programme led by the National Institute for Family Welfare (the ICBF)<sup>6</sup> which 46% of children under five-years of age are said to attend (*Ibid*). Nevertheless the high fees for private institutions are very restrictive for the vast majority of Colombians.

Basic education is compulsory by law. It lasts from years 1 to 9 (children from 7 to 15 years old) and includes two stages: primary and secondary education. The latter is followed by middle vocational education comprising years 10 and 11. This is planned to offer exploratory training specialities such as in the sciences, arts, humanities, or pedagogy. Each school is allowed to choose its training areas. Figures taken from the Colombian Ministry of Education show a 100% of total coverage, 83.7% of which is

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<sup>6</sup> Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF): children over one year old can apply for day care in community homes, where mothers from the community take care of children from the immediate neighbourhood.

provided by public institutions, while 16.2% are covered by the private sector. While tuition fees in public education are generally affordable for the majority of Colombians, private institutions charge high rates which are again restrictive for most of the population. Students in their final year of middle education take the ICFES test (Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education). This is a requirement to gain access to higher education.

Pedagogy is included among the exploratory options offered in middle vocational education. Prospective teachers should enrol in a complementary cycle in years 12 and 13 which are offered by the Escuela Normal. Successful candidates are awarded with a degree as qualified primary school teachers. They can then continue their teacher education programme at a Faculty of Education and be granted a B.A acknowledging their status as qualified teachers. Unlikely nursery, basic and middle education which may be offered by public and private institutions, the Escuelas Normales are under the direct administration of the Ministry of Education.

Higher education is divided into undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The former include professional (usually 5 years) and technological (2 or 3 years) diplomas. Approximately 1.7 million students attended higher education in 2010 ([www.mineduacion.gov.co](http://www.mineduacion.gov.co)). There are 292 institutions of higher education in Colombia: 81 of which are public and 211 private. Increases in tuition fees have been the cause of permanent controversy and conflict between students and the government over the last decade. Post-graduate education has proliferated in the last five years, including various specialisations, Masters and PhD degree programmes.

Language teachers achieve qualified status after a five year education programme. This generally includes pedagogical and subject matter knowledge, research foundations, and teaching experience (the practicum). While private education

is generally offered in urban areas, teachers going into the public sector may be placed in rural or urban areas. Rural areas are especially challenged by geographical and socio-political factors such as inaccessible distances, poverty, low salaries,<sup>7</sup> lack of teaching resources, few opportunities for professional development as well as the effects of armed conflict.<sup>8</sup> These factors have a negative impact on the motivation of novice teachers.

Figures published by the Colombian Ministry of Education revealed that public spending on education represented 8.1% of Gross Domestic Product in 2010. 3.9% of which was claimed to be invested in basic and secondary education. Although this figure is a significant increase in comparison to previous years,<sup>9</sup> the armed conflict has been used as the main argument to privilege investment in defence over education and other public services. Colombia's unemployment rate hit 13.2% in February 2011, the highest since 2004 according to the Statistics Agency DANE, which might partly explain why teaching is considered a good professional choice for many Colombians. Having provided basic background information about the context of this study, the next section introduces the rationale for the research.

### **1.3. Rationale**

#### ***1.3.1. Aims***

The overall aims of this exploratory research study are:

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<sup>7</sup> A novice qualified teacher earns roughly £350 a month in the public sector (Decree 1055, April 4<sup>th</sup> of 2011). Wages vary in the private sector, but are generally lower.

<sup>8</sup> The Colombian armed conflict has existed since 1962. This is a political and military struggle between the Colombian government and guerrillas such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). These armed movements claimed to be fighting to protect the rights of the poor and to provide social justice.

<sup>9</sup> Public spending on education as a proportion of GDP was 3.3% in 2002, and 4.7% in 2006.



- To gain a closer understanding of how the identity of teachers is constructed while doing the final year practicum, and how this identity is shaped through their professional practice.
- To describe the connection between pre-service teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices.
- To estimate the impact of teaching practice on student-teachers' professional goals for the future.

### ***1.3.2. Research questions (RQ)***

RQ1: How does the act of belonging to a teacher community, while doing the final year practicum, form, sustain or transform teacher identities?

RQ2: In what ways are the systems of knowledge and beliefs of pre-service teachers manifested in their teaching practices with young learners?

RQ3: What is the impact of the practicum on pre-service teachers' goals for the future?

### ***1.3.3. Contribution of the present research***

The formation of identity is a complex process. It evolves as pre-service teachers build up personal and professional knowledge, develop a sense of being teachers, and negotiate the cultural and contextual paradigms that frame the meaning of teaching. This research expects to contribute to existing knowledge and research in the field on

teacher education in several ways. Firstly, this study sheds light on the process of how pre-service teachers construct professional identities. Secondly, the study can add to an existing body of knowledge about the role of a teacher community in shaping professional identity. Thirdly, the exploration of the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice may also contribute to existing knowledge in the area of teachers' cognition. Fourthly, the findings and data gathered here this study may be useful in developing content for teacher education programmes regarding career organisation and the exploration of identity. More specifically, the findings could help to introduce changes in the foreign language programme (FLP) at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC) where this study took place. Finally, the findings could also spark debate among policymakers around in-service teachers' professional development as well as pre-service teachers' education.

#### ***1.3.4. General interest of the study***

Teacher education programmes have been consistent in providing pedagogical and subject matter knowledge, as well as teaching experience, which are believed to help teachers to do their job efficiently. Prospective teachers are well equipped with knowledge about the theoretical foundations of teaching and learning, skills development, or evaluation. In other words, they are trained to make informed decisions about what, when and how to teach, learn, and evaluate. However, little is usually done in order to prepare them for active participation in and interaction with a teacher community or to identify possible misconceptions about language teaching. If teacher education can prepare pre-service teachers, for example, to work cooperatively, and to conduct research into social and pedagogical problems in Colombia, this could further contribute to strengthening professional identity formation and development.

While studies in teacher cognition have proliferated in the last two decades (Peacock, 2001; Santagata, 2005; Borg, 2006), the question of how classroom

interaction contributes to studying beliefs remains unresolved. At face value, as noted in the next chapter of this thesis, 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. Consequently, the language classroom becomes a natural scenario for understanding the nature of pre-service teachers' pedagogical beliefs.

While in-service teachers' professional development has been extensively explored (Nias, 1996; Brown, 2005; Lasky, 2005; Yost, 2006; Clandinin, *et al.*, 2009), studies of what happens with pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum are scarce (Farell, 2001). The interest in this study in exploring the possible effects of early teaching experience on pre-service teachers' professional goals for the future can shed light on the conceptualisation and understanding of how teachers develop professional identities.

### ***1.3.5. Limitations of previous research***

A general overview of the current theoretical trends in the study of teacher identity indicates several research gaps in the literature. Firstly, although it is widely accepted that professional identity is fundamentally shaped as a result of a teacher's participation and interaction in a teacher community, little relevant research has been undertaken with pre-service teachers (but see Clarke, 2008). Secondly, while systems of knowledge and beliefs among teachers have attracted much research in the last two decades, few studies have addressed the level of relationship between beliefs and classroom practice (but see, for example, Da Silva, 2005; Garton, 2008; Gonzalez, 2008; Blay & Ireson, 2009; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Li & Walsh, 2011). Finally, research in the field of teacher identity has considered the meaning of being a teacher from two different perspectives: while plenty of studies have explored the role of teachers – the visible domain – (Richards, 2006; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Connelly & Clandinin,

1989; Lorti, 1975), some others have looked at the mental realm of teachers – the invisible domain (Borg, 2006; Zembylas, 2005; Peacock, 2001; Nias, 1996; Beijaard, 1995; Johnson, 1994; Pajares, 1993). Only one significant study has attempted to reconcile these two domains. Clarke (2008) conducted research investigating how pre-service language teachers constructed discourse and community in the United Arab Emirates. Research in this area is scarce in the context of teacher education.

#### **1.4. Organisation of the Thesis**

This study is organised in the following chapters:

##### ***Chapter one: introduction***

The current chapter includes a rationale of the study at the level of its contribution, limitations, and general interest, as well as a statement of the aims and research questions. The organisation of the thesis is also highlighted.

##### ***Chapter two: literature review***

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that underpins the study of teacher identity construction. The basic issues covered in this section are a historical overview of the concept of identity, as well as more specific attention to the study of teacher identity construction. This includes the three fundamental constructs of interest in this study: participation in a teacher community, systems of knowledge and beliefs, and professional expectations.

### ***Chapter three: methodology***

Chapter three describes the methodological framework used in the research in order to explore the nature of becoming a language teacher. Firstly, a rationale is given for the use of a qualitative approach. This also explains the use of a multi-method approach comprising interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs. Finally, there is an overview of content analysis as the analytical approach chosen.

### ***Chapter four: research design***

This chapter discusses methodological issues regarding the study's design and development, and the process of data collection and analysis used. This includes objectives, research questions, and research context, as well as the data collection methods, and how they were designed and developed. Additionally, this chapter discusses issues of validity, reliability, and research ethics. Finally, this chapter also reports on the experience gained in conducting a pilot study.

### ***Chapter five: data analysis***

Chapter five deals with the analysis of the qualitative data gathered through the multi-method approach including interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs. By using a content analytical approach, an analysis of the data is presented which aims to answer the research questions. Data are analysed through the identification of themes, which are cross-referenced from data gathered using the three methods of data collection. Finally, the main findings are reported and discussed in direct connection to the objectives and research questions of the study.

### ***Chapter six: discussion***

This chapter critically discusses the findings in relation to trends in the literature on teacher identity. The research questions are re-examined followed by an interpretation of the significance of the findings and their similarities or differences with the results of previous studies. This section aims to integrate the findings of the literature review, data analysis, and the present discussion so as to generate an in-depth understanding of the findings in this study.

### ***Chapter Seven: Conclusions***

Chapter seven includes a summary of the research undertaken, the limitations of this study, suggestions for future research, and the implications of the findings in the context of teacher education.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **Chapter overview**

This chapter describes the theoretical framework that underpins the exploration of how teachers construct their professional identities. Firstly, the concept of identity is defined, as well as the notion of teacher professional identity (2.1). Secondly, a historical overview of how identity has been conceptualized is introduced (2.2.). Thirdly, the concept of learning to teach and identity is explored (2.3). Fourthly, a review of three specific and interrelated components used in exploring identity construction is undertaken: communities of practice (2.4), teachers' knowledge and beliefs (2.5), and teacher development (2.6). Finally the chapter introduces a brief review of the research topic in Colombia.

### **2.1. The Concept of Identity**

Despite increasing scholarly interest in identity in the last two decades, consensus about what precisely this term means is far from being reached. In fact, an internet search including the word 'identify' in publication titles generated 44,557 results in the 1990s increasing to 98,933 in the 2000s (Vignoles, *et. al.*, 2011). Identity has become a powerful issue, despite its complex and varied meanings and interpretations including those relating to people's internal systems (Schwartz, 2001); group membership (Brown, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986); nationalism (Schildkraut, 2007); or positions taken in conversations (Bamberg, 2006; Benwell & Stoke, 2006).

In considering a definition of identity, a core issue which must be addressed concerns the fundamental question 'who am I?' or 'who are you?' This apparently

simple way to begin exploring the meaning of identity turns out to be rather complex. Such a question could entail a self-concept originating from an introspective reflection (I am South American, a lawyer, a university lecturer, married, a father, and/or a cyclist, for example). Identity here is something personal (Who I am?). But it could also be a response to an external inquiry from another individual or group (Who are you?). This domain essentially entails a more social perspective, and these two dimensions might also involve plural meanings ‘who are we?’ or ‘who are you?’ The personal and the social then become inseparable.

The personal dimension can be said to evolve from the conception of the individual as a ‘self-sufficient subject’ (Gill, 2000: 54). This entity is generally acknowledged as ‘the self’ and is therefore associated with people’s minds. Nevertheless, ‘the self’ cannot escape the challenges of interpretation.<sup>10</sup> Lemke (2008: 19) raised awareness about the complexity of understanding the meaning of ‘who we are’, because this ‘changes with interactants and settings’. He expands on this in terms of subjective as opposed to projected identities. Put simply, while the former represents notions of who ‘we are to ourselves’; the latter entails ‘who we wish to seem to the others’. This notion of identity is also determined by the effects of a globalised society, which is increasingly ruled by consumerism and the access to complex systems of information. The idea that ‘the self’ does not exist in isolation but rather exists in relation to others must be therefore explored.

The role played by others in the construction of identity is argued to be crucial (Hall, 2004). Identity evolves as individuals participate in social life or as they act as members of a group. This leads towards the conceptualisation of collective identities when an individual identifies with a group and builds up a sense of group membership (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Nevertheless, we might relate to several groups at the same

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<sup>10</sup> Feeling and sensibility rather than cognition were theorised as constitutive of the self within Romanticism. The influential work of Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, framed an understanding of the workings of the psyche as a defining characteristic of identity. Post-modernity argues for a dislocation of the self, which results from globalised patterns of communication and interaction.



time, and so this relationship is changeable and dynamic rather than static. We might also experience different levels of affiliation and alignment with the groups we belong to (Lemke, 2008). Therefore, our roles and personalities may also correspond to those varied settings and interactants. Our affiliation with broader social structures and cultures may also be part of this. As a result of these processes, identity is constructed, shaped, or transformed.

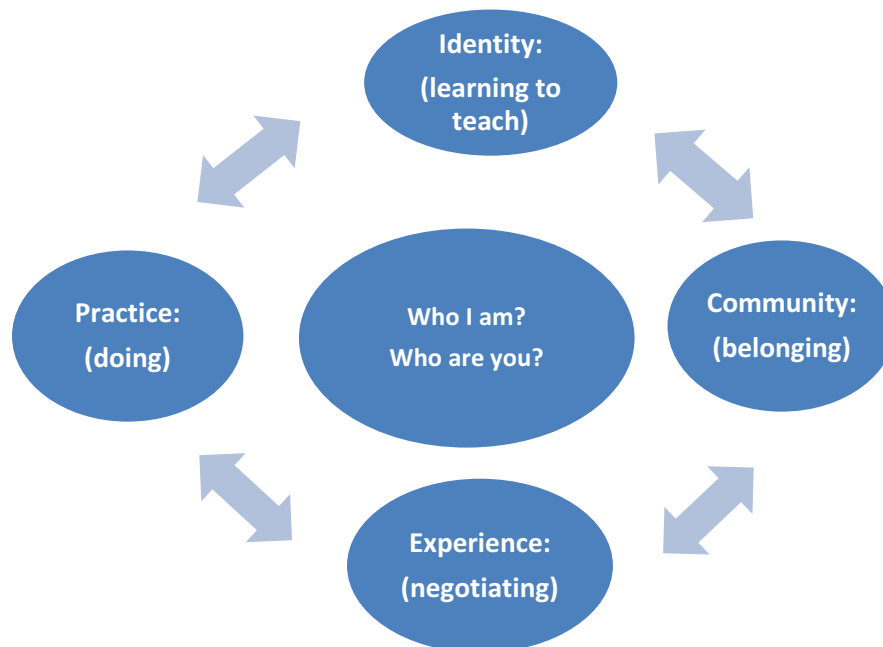
In summary, the concept of identity necessarily engages the meanings surrounding the person, as well as her/his experience as a member of a social community. Talking about identity in personal terms implies psychological, affective, and cognitive notions. On the other hand, the sociological dimension includes labels such as gender, race, age, or nationality as well as social, historical and cultural factors. Although these two perspectives have been approached separately by psychologists and sociologists, it is difficult to locate precisely where the person ends and the social starts, so that ‘the focus must be on the process of their mutual constitution’ (Wenger, 1999: 146).

So far, this brief exploration of the concept of identity may still not be enough to encompass the minimum characteristics of a coherent definition of the term. Part of the explanation for this is that it is interpreted in terms of the personal and social dimensions. Nevertheless, both become relevant in the attempt to answer the questions ‘who am I?’ or ‘who are you?’ This may be expressed broadly in the two complex domains of seeing the person as an individual and as a member of a social group.

The concept of identity deployed in this study privileges the social perspective of the person. Identity is argued to develop as a result of becoming members of a community. ‘There is a profound connection between identity and practice’ (Wenger, 1999: 149). We fundamentally define ‘who we are?’ in terms of how we relate to other members of a group and how we negotiate our participation within the community.

Practices and experiences within a community significantly determine the answer to ‘who we are’ and how we feel and think as a person. Rather than being a straightforward process, this evolves as part of a trajectory and engages varied forms of community membership. In fact, we belong to different communities, which may be either spatially or virtually located. The concept of identity is summarised in figure 2.1 below.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 2.1. The constitutive characteristics of the concept of identity



## 2.2. A historical Overview of Identity

Identity is a term that has historically evolved from the interpretation of human behaviour. It has also been represented as an external or internal phenomenon. Sociologists claim that identity is ‘the result of external, social, political, and economic forces’ (Cote & Levine, 2002: 9) while, on the other hand, psychologists argue that it

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<sup>11</sup> This figure has been adapted from Wenger (1999): A Social Theory of Learning.

concerns – the self- ‘internal, individual, wilful potentials’ (*ibid*). Both fields have contributed to understanding the meaning and principles of identity.

Cooley (1902) introduced the concept of the ‘looking glass’, seeing the formation of the self as ‘part of a reflexive, learning process by which values, attitudes, behaviour, roles and identities are accumulated over time’ (cited in Day, *et al.*, 2006: 602). This interpretation contrasts with the claim that identity is a process linked to social interactions in which language and experience play a significant role (Mead, 1934). To substantiate this claim, Mead introduced three core principles: personality (mind), interaction (self) and social structure (society). Cooley and Mead’s early concepts of identity sparked a great deal of scholarly interest. For example, Kuhn & McPartland (1954) introduced the Twenty Statements Test (TST), also called the ‘who I am? test’ which was considered a very popular instrument for studying identity. They also suggested the notion of a fixed and relatively stable self. How do scholars assess the concept of fixed identities?

Goffman (1963) prompted a new debate by proposing that each person has a number of ‘selves’, where each one behaves according to a particular situation at any given time. He concurs with Mead that there are three structural levels of identity namely ego, personality and social identity. Nevertheless, the notion of multiple selves generated fresh debate inside and outside the sociological field.

The assumption that identity involves several dimensions is echoed in the work of Erickson (1968). Erickson (cited in Cote & Levine, 2002: 15) includes: ‘ego identity (a sense of temporal-spatial continuity); the personal dimension (a behavioural and character assemblage that distinguishes individuals); and the social dimension (the roles played within a group)’. According to Erickson, all three of these dimensions together generate a consistent ego identity, making behaviour and character stable. This new theoretical perspective locates identity as a complex entity with both psychological and

sociological characteristics. But is the notion of a fixed and stable identity, although multiple, still pervasive? This question is answered by Ball (1972), who differentiated between situated and substantial identity. Situated identity means for him a kind of adaptive presentation of the self that changes according to specific situations for example, at school, and by substantial identity he points at a more stable condition that includes the way a person thinks about her/himself.

The contemporary saturation with technology, it is argued, progressively transforms the life of a person (Gergen, 1971). The impact of new forms of interaction and communication is part of the post-modern debate concerning what identity is. There is no doubt that this mutating reality shapes new images of the self, as well as social interactions of a person who has to adapt according to those scenarios. ‘The post-modern self comes to exist only in relation to external images (conveyed to, reflected on, and received from others). The interior self is now populated by others and their images’ (*Ibid*, cited in Cote and Levine, 2002: 26). This early perception of a vertiginous ever-changing post-modern reality anticipated a more malleable representation of who I am, how I see myself, and how others acknowledge or recognise me. The self and the social have thus now gain consensus as being essential dimensions in the definition of identity.

The controversies between sociologists and psychologists have not been entirely resolved in the last two decades. Meanwhile, the study of identity has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars and researchers in other disciplines. Sociolinguistics, like psychology and sociology, has also contributed important perspectives. This field sees language in socio-cultural, economic and geographic contexts, as well as considering the reasons a person has for using it. Although the primary focus of sociolinguistics has not been specifically concerned with the study of identity, sociolinguists have historically recognised that variations in speech can be used to ‘signal important information about aspects of speakers’ social identity’ (Eckert 1997: 64). Moreover, the connection between social identity and language use has been a

subject of study of variationist sociolinguistics. Research in this area has analysed linguistic variables such as accent, dialect change or syntactic or morphological features, and has attempted to establish a relationship with social factors such as sex, age, or social class. Eckert (1997-98) studied variations in patterns of speech in terms of gender and age, and argued that how language is used reveals important information about certain aspects of the social distinctiveness of the speaker and his local context. Research in this area also tries to explain why ‘individuals speak differently from each other (inter-speaker variation), and why an individual’s own speech may sometimes vary (intra-speaker variation)’ (Dyer, 2007: 101).

The study of identity has also captured the interest of discourse analysts. Discourse is used by people to accomplish social actions. It is through discourse that we reveal who we are, how we talk, what we say or what we mean. That social construction of identity is ‘accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse’ (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 4). The conversation analytic view, for example, looks at the way identity is performed and negotiated in discourse. This perspective concentrates on how actors ascribe themselves in terms of interactional patterns, actions accomplished, turn-taking, and organisational choices. The analysis of the complex connections between talk and the accomplishment of institutional goals is argued to develop a picture of the way identity is co-constructed or negotiated in interaction.

This overview of former and current trends in the conceptualisation of identity provides a general frame of reference for the context of this study. Some of the relevant historical perspectives have been summarised, which is not intended to diminish other valuable sources. Rather, the concepts illustrated may allow this study to reconcile the psychological perspective of identity which supports the interest in exploring teachers’ systems of knowledge and beliefs, whereas the sociological stance supports the argument that a teaching community forms, shapes, or transforms professional identities. Table 2.1 summarises the historical overview introduced in this section. These two general constructs are substantiated and explained in subsequent sections.

Table 2.1. Summary of trends in the study of identity

Source	Focus
Cooley (1902)	Looking glass self: values, attitudes, behaviour, roles.
Mead (1934)	Social interaction: language and social roles.
Kuhn & McPartland (1954)	The self as fixed and relatively stable.
Goffman (1963)	Several 'selves': each behaves according to situation.
Erikson(1968)	Ego identity, personal & social dimension.
Ball (1972)	Situated and substantial identities.
Gergen (1991)	Technology impacts new images of the self.
Benwell & Stokoe(2006)	Discourse and Identity.
Dyer (2007)	Speech variation.

### 2.3. The Concept of Teacher Identity (TI)

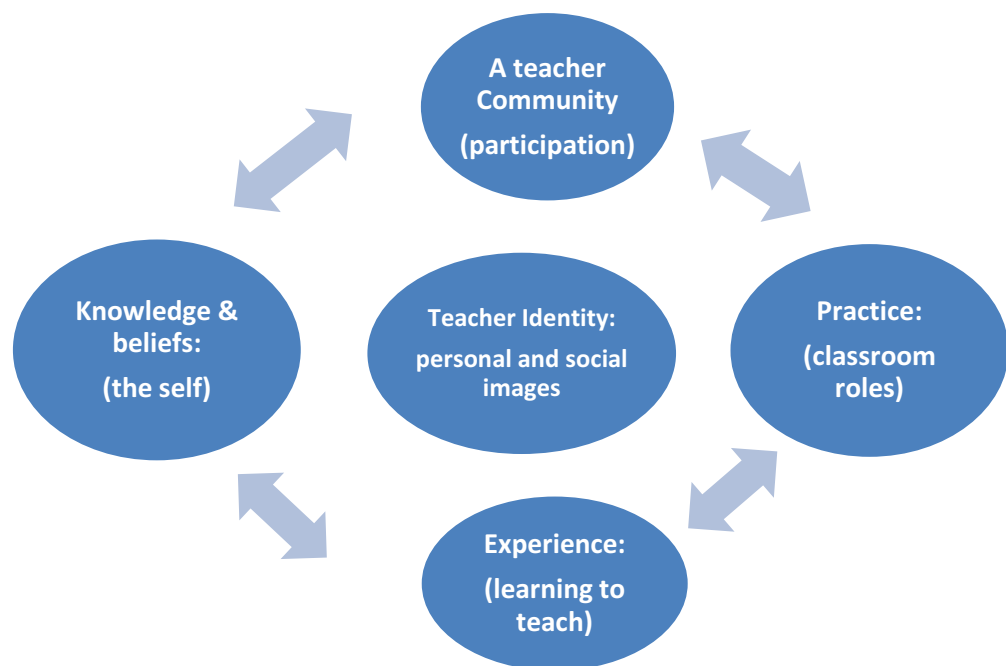
The meaning of being a teacher can be generally revealed by what constitutes the visible and invisible domains of work and life. While the former includes what teachers do, for example, classroom interaction, assessment, materials design, or task implementation; the latter involves more personal phenomena such as cognition, beliefs, expectations, or emotions. These two domains seem to be explained in the long standing debate conceptualising identity as an internal (the self) or external (social) phenomenon, as briefly explored in the previous section. TI is then explained according to two complex dimensions regarding knowledge and roles, which include broad characteristics and meanings. While the selves of teachers may entail an understanding of, for example, their knowledge, beliefs, emotions, or motivations; the social element implies macro-cultural structures intimately linked to the professional actions undertaken in performing their roles. The personal and the social inform and complement each other.

TI is fundamentally linked to the concept of ‘who am I?’ and ‘who are you?’ which comprise internal (personal) and external (social) realities. The former entails cognition, while the latter denotes roles. The internal images constructed by teachers, which are considered vital in the development of teacher identity, come from a lengthy process which starts in their experiences as learners (Lorti, 1975; Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Borg, 2004; Malderez *et al.*, 2007). During this time, for example, professional expectations, motivations, emotions, and core beliefs about teaching and learning emerge. The experience gained in classrooms, the notion of what teaching is about as well as the capacity to judge models of good and bad teachers, enable prospective teachers to construct a predefined notion of what makes a teacher. This source of experiential knowledge is strengthened with professional or theoretical knowledge as they enrol in a teacher education programme (Johnson, 2009). This decision represents a vital stage in the process of constructing professional identity. The process then expands as part of a long trajectory in terms of development and affiliation or disaffiliation with the profession. This is generally defined as the process of learning to teach, a time when teachers construct personal images of being a teacher, which are fundamental notions in professional identity. Nevertheless, there is no absolute border of ‘the self’, which is surely the result of social processes shaping the way an individual feels, thinks and experiences emotions or motivations.

The recognition of others – the social dimension of TI – is fundamentally linked to the roles of teachers. Although these roles may be experienced by learners (who in fact are able to distinguish, for example, between good and bad models of teachers, task effectiveness, or assessment goals), they are substantially constructed in the experience gained as members of a teacher community as well as in engagement with classroom practice (Tsui, 2003). Community and practice are vital constructs in understanding the meaning of being a teacher and consequently of professional identity. While the act of belonging to a teacher community translates into direct interaction and the negotiation of forms of participation, classroom practice helps teachers to get a real sense of the role of the teacher. These general domains evolve as a dynamic process resulting from the experience of becoming a teacher: a learning to teach trajectory where all of the constructs described here come together to frame the meaning and identity of teachers.

In summary, teacher identity is viewed as ‘relational, negotiated, constructed, enacted, transforming and transitional’ (Miller, 2008: 174). This is not a fixed property of a teacher but rather a process that evolves changes or resists as teachers gain experience, consolidate professional knowledge, and adopt plans of personal and professional development (Tsui, 2003). This process is significantly influenced by culture and the socio-political context in which teachers live and work. They are summarised in figure 2.2. below.

Figure 2.2. The constitutive domains of the concept of teacher identity



At face value, identity is not a fixed property of a teacher but rather a process that evolves, changes, or is resisted as teachers gain experience through classroom practice, consolidate professional and experiential knowledge, and negotiate forms of participation in a teacher community as well as adopting plans for personal and professional development. This evolution is part of the process of learning to teach. Tsui



(2003: 7) defines it as the development of expertise, ‘in which highly competent teachers constantly set new goals for themselves and accept new challenges’. Table 2.2 summarises some of the leading trends in definitions of teacher identity in the last decade.<sup>12</sup> An overview of the way scholars have interpreted the concept of identity is explored in the next section.

Table 2.2 summarises some of the leading trends in the definition of teacher identity (adapted from Miller (2008)).

‘identity references individual’s knowledge and naming of themselves, as well as others’ recognition of them as a particular sort of person’	Clarke (2008: 8)
‘the influence on teachers, how individuals see themselves, and how they enact their profession in their settings’	Varghese (2006: 212)
‘instantiations of discourse, systems of power/knowledge that regulate and ascribe social values to all forms of human activity’	Morgan (2004: 173)
‘relational, constructed and altered by how I see others and how they see me in our shared experiences and negotiated interactions’	Johnson (2003: 788)
‘Who we are and who we think other people are. Reciprocally, it also encompasses other people’s understanding of themselves and other (which includes us)	Danielewicz (2001: 10)
‘Being recognised as a certain ‘kind of person’; identity is connected not to internal states but to performances in society. It is also ‘an important analytical tool for understanding schools and society’	Gee (2000-2001: 99)

#### 2.4. Overview of Teacher Identity

The study of teacher identity (TI) gained increasing interest in the literature of teacher education in the last decade (Sutton, 2000; James-Wilson, 2001; Zembylas, 2003; van Veen & Slegers, 2005; Day *et al.*, 2006; Richards, 2006; Clarke, 2008). The traditional debate in psychology and sociology as explained in the previous section, looking at

<sup>12</sup> This table is adapted from Miller (2008).

identity either through the lens of ‘the self’ or the social roles that an individual plays in the community, has been echoed in the way scholars and researchers have explored TI. While cognition, beliefs, motivation, or emotions of teachers may provide notions of the self, the institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis becomes relevant as well. These two complex dimensions of the professional lives of teachers can be explored in different ways.

Cooper & Olson (1996: 80) claim that TI ‘is continually being informed, formed, and reformed as individuals develop over time and through interaction with others’. James-Wilson (2001: 29) notes the relationship between personal and professional identities by explaining how teachers ‘feel about themselves and how they feel about their students’. Zembylas (2005) explores TI in terms of the role that is played by emotions in understanding meanings of teacher and teaching. Emotions are not only considered as psychological manifestations, but are also socially constructed and managed. One conclusion that may be drawn from this brief introduction is that TI engages several complex dimensions, and that any attempt to look at it from a single perspective might yield a very limited understanding.

The self, for example, could include motivational factors, values, pedagogical and subject matter knowledge while the social recognition of others also admits several facets. McCornick & Presley (cited in Beijaard *et al.* 2004) define the self as representations of a person’s theories, attitudes, and beliefs. These phenomena seem alike, although each one involves different and complex meanings. For example, questions of teachers’ beliefs have attracted different interpretations in the literature of teacher education. Considerable research evidence suggests that beliefs are resistant to change (Pajares, 1992), but his assumption was questioned by Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) who found that teacher education can do a lot to transform previously stated beliefs. This is examined in more detailed later on in this chapter.

Although theories, beliefs, or attitudes seem rooted in a person's mind, or even biologically in nature, they are inextricably connected to context, power, and culture. Consequently, the meanings of teacher and teaching are significantly formed from teachers' mental images and the socially constructed paradigms that others assign to them. Those paradigms are highly mediated by macro-social and political tensions such as globalisation, privatisation, or budget cuts; as well as micro-contextual ones at the level of the institution or the classroom where the teacher works on a daily basis. The latter may include lack of team-work and cooperation, class size, conflicts inside the classroom, or difficult relationships with pupils and other members of staff, which may have a great impact on the social image of teachers. Understanding these complex dimensions would be too difficult to explore in a single study, but substantiate claims of the need to integrate various dimensions of the nature of teachers in order to achieve a clearer picture of the process of learning to teach and identity. The analysis of TI, as has been generally accepted, explores both the individual's internal and external images. How does teacher education approach this reality?

## **2.5. Learning to Teach and Identity**

Becoming a teacher is undoubtedly a demanding and complex task. The process starts with students' enrolment in teacher education, which in the Colombian situation, for example, is not an easy goal to achieve. Prospective teacher candidates need a minimum score in a national examination,<sup>13</sup> which allows them to apply for a place in higher education. Places in public institutions are offered to a low percentage of applicants.<sup>14</sup> Limitations to becoming a teacher in Colombia involve financial issues, including tuition fees and personal expenses. Once the candidate is offered a place in a teacher education programme, coping, for example, with assignments, assessment, or the practicum may challenge motivation and the professional expectations of student

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<sup>13</sup> The ICFES' (Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior) test is a compulsory national examination for final year secondary school students. It is required for application to higher education.

<sup>14</sup> 35.5% of applications were reported to be successful in Colombia in 2010 ([www.sigob.gov.co](http://www.sigob.gov.co)).

teachers. After successfully finishing teacher education, further obstacles remain. Finding a job and dealing with administrative and pedagogical problems such as schedules, class size, job stability, low salaries or the assessment of their professional capabilities may also be important factors in understanding the process of constructing identity. Why do students persevere in considering teaching as a professional option? Although there is no a simple answer to this question, the explanation may entail notions of social commitment and idealism.

The meaning of teacher and teaching has been seen in teacher education from two distinctive perspectives: being and becoming a teacher. Being a teacher might be temporal and role dependent, while becoming a teacher involves a more dynamic and lasting perspective. Mayer (cited in Clarke, 2008: 8) states that:

“Learning to teach can be learning the skills and knowledge to perform the functions of a teacher or it can be developing a sense of oneself as teacher. In the former, one is ‘being the teacher’, whereas in the latter, one is ‘becoming a teacher’”.

Teacher education can focus on preparing student teachers to perform teaching roles efficiently. To do this, a lot of emphasis is placed on pedagogic knowledge, for example, classroom management, lesson planning, task implementation, or assessment. Pedagogic and subject knowledge are also central. University tutors and school-based mentors make a lot of effort to guarantee that pre-service teachers prepare and follow the steps of a lesson. In that way, teaching can be assessed and learning is believed to be assured. The present author’s experience as a pre-service teacher educator over the last decade in Colombia indicates that a significant number of institutions follow this approach. The literature of teacher education acknowledges this cycle as the technical dimension of teaching. Could teacher education programmes go beyond this technical dimension and foster a more proactive teaching and learning climate concerning, for example, cooperative learning, reflection or networking?

Britzman (2003: 31) argues that ‘learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become’. This process of the construction of the meaning of teaching includes forces of commitment, motivation, and professional growth, as well as notions related to the functions of teaching – assessment or task implementation, for example. During this process, teachers gain professional experience, work with other teachers, and establish professional relations with local and broader communities. Although learning to teach evolves as a long term trajectory, including stages of professional development, this study focuses on the period of teacher education. There is no intention to diminish the value of learning to teach as a result of the experience gained as in-service teachers, but the need to look at teacher education is significantly determined by the research focus in the current study.

Learning to teach and consequently constructing professional identity entail more than developing teaching skills. While skills are linked to function, expressions of identity lead to the voicing of ‘investments and commitments’ (Britzman, 1992: 29). Learning to teach becomes then a matter of personal scrutiny comparing what is already established and what we can become. Put simply, the meaning of being a teacher could involve either reproducing pre-established identities or re-signifying them as an alternative for change and transformation. The former positions the teacher in the realm of practice and experience. Under this paradigm, a teacher is an expert whose main function is to accomplish teaching and learning goals. By contrast, re-signifying the meaning of teacher entails an understanding of her/his role in the context of political and social struggles for voice and recognition. Under this paradigm, a teacher is not merely somebody who informs, but who transforms or provides opportunities for learners to interpret reality critically. Although learning to teach evolves as a long term trajectory during the teacher’s life, teacher education could play a fundamental role in favouring one paradigm or the other.

Teacher education concerns the formation of professional identity (Danielewicz, 2001). It fosters the transition from being students of teaching to becoming teachers. It is important to note that when students enrol in a teacher education programme, they are not yet teachers. However, by the end of the training period they have adopted an identity as teachers. Although this identity is not fixed and is shaped or transformed during a teacher's biography, a teacher education programme is vital by virtue of awarding a teaching degree, as well as providing pedagogical and subject knowledge. While the former becomes essential for their recognition as teachers (the visible domain); the latter frames what teachers know and believe (the invisible domain). Both become fundamental in an understanding of professional identity, as has been explained in previous sections of this chapter.

Teacher education lays the foundations of professional identity. As explained above, teachers adopt a new identity as a result of their experience as students of teaching, especially at the end of the training period in the practicum. How teacher education helps in attaining this identity is a more complex issue. A curriculum fostering this development may be an important step forward, and the implications for professional growth and transformation might be significant. Although there is no specific formula for adopting a particular identity, Danielewicz (2001: 9), for example, proposes asking students 'to develop personal theories of action – how they might act if they were teachers'.

Learning to teach is a highly demanding activity. It requires making decisions, for example, about content, materials, learning goals, and assessment. It also asks teachers to relate their teaching to the cultural context, policies, the learners, and different approaches, among other things. But it also involves good relationships and behaviour with students, colleagues and parents. Additionally, teachers need to cope with the demands of the classroom, including, for example, lesson planning, task implementation, and assessment. It seems that learning to teach and adopting professional identity requires more than normal moral and social concepts. Put simply,

if learning to teach involves social and personal dimensions, it is clear that helping students to adopt a new professional identity entails more than training them to perform the role of teachers. ‘Identities require the commitment of the self to the enterprise in a way that acting out a role does not’ (Danielewicz, 2001: 10). Attention now turns to second language teacher education.

## **2.6. Identity and Second Language Teacher Education**

Second language teacher education is fundamentally concerned with preparing students to become foreign language teachers. To do this, teacher education programmes generally focus on developing foreign language competence and teaching skills. These two dimensions guide the concept of how language teachers come to know what and how to teach. Although this process is not concluded in the cycle of teacher education, but rather develops as part of a long trajectory of participation in school environments, personal and professional development, target language competence, and classroom experience, teacher education becomes vital in understanding what a second language teacher is and what other expect of her/him.

Prospective language teachers come to a teacher education programme with previous experience as language learners. This might have raised awareness of, for example, what language learning entails and what the process is like as well as what kind of teaching and learning activities are promoted in language classrooms. Students of foreign languages have deep experience of the process of learning a second language themselves. However, as a result of students’ enrolment in second language teacher education, these assumptions might be reconceptualised as a result of exposure to various theoretical trends, conceptions, or scientific paradigms concerning skills development and language as well as teaching and learning. This connection ‘enables learners to move beyond the limitations of their everyday experiences and function

appropriately in a wide range of alternative circumstances and contexts’ (Johnson, 2009: 21).

Second language teachers are asked to possess communicative skills in one or more foreign languages. This has guided teacher education programmes to define learning goals concerning levels of target language proficiency (Kamhi-Stein, 2009). Some of these include native speakers as ideal models to emulate. Nevertheless, the distinction between native and non-native speakers has been a thorny issue especially when language teachers’ competence and pedagogical ability is judged, leading to ‘dichotomise the world neatly into “us” and them’ (Kaplan, 1999: 5). This selective and discriminative linguistic categorisation means that language teachers whose mother tongue is not English, are invariably labelled as non-native speakers ‘regardless of their actual proficiency in English’ (Pasternak and Bailey, 2004: 156). This hidden practice has a great impact on the personal and professional identity of language teachers. There is a need not only to improve the use and knowledge of the target language, but to deal with the social disadvantage of always being judged less competent than the native speaker.

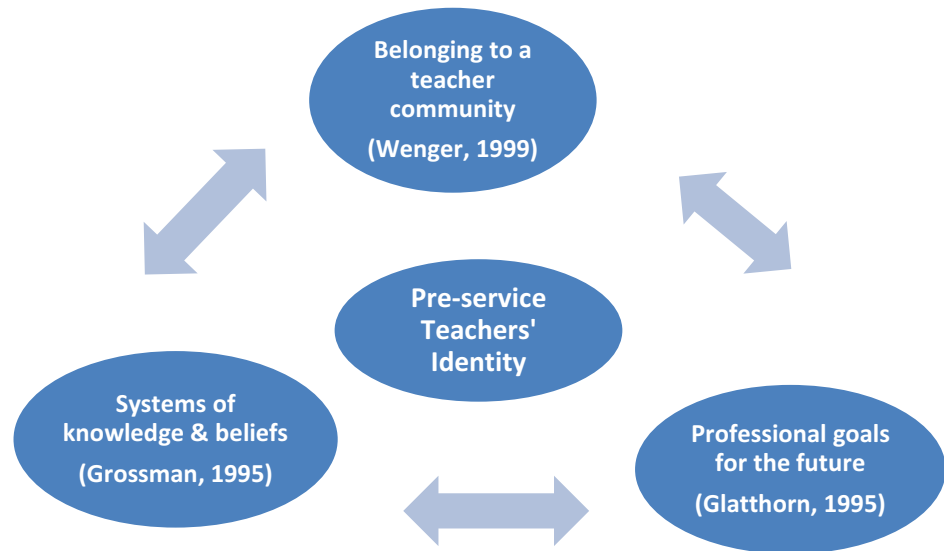
Learning the language, and about the language, become vital principles in second language teacher education. The experience of the present author as a language teacher educator in the last decade in Colombia provides evidence of how the curriculum of FLP at UPTC, where this study took place, has focussed on knowledge of syntactic, phonetic and phonologic rules as well as grammar and vocabulary. Nevertheless, research attempting to examine how linguistic knowledge shapes the instructional decisions of language teachers has shown discouraging results (Bartels, 2005). Evidence suggests failure ‘to transfer this knowledge to classroom language teaching’ (Johnson, 2009: 43).



In summary, this section has attempted to explore some general notions of how second language teachers come to be. This includes the role played by a teacher education programme in developing second language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge about second language acquisition. These domains have guided the principles for language teacher education and have become fundamental in understanding who a teacher is and how others acknowledge her/him.

This chapter has so far explored different perspectives of what constitutes the concept of identity in general and the identity of teachers more specifically. If identity fundamentally entails the recognition of others, this could be explored in terms of the experience of pre-service teachers of belonging to a teacher community. The theoretical framework that underpins this first domain is derived from the notion of communities of practice (Wenger, 1999). But identity also implies ‘who I am’, which in this study is explored through the connection between beliefs and classroom practice. The theoretical framework of Glatthorn (1995) is used in this respect. Identity is also explained in terms of projected identities, which are represented in this study as professional goals for the future. Grosman’s theoretical framework is used. Each domain is explained in turn in the next sections. Figure 2.3 below summarises the three main domains.

Figure 2.3. Three main constructs underpinning teachers' identity construction



## 2.7. Communities of Practice (CoP)

The notion that identity is formed, shaped, or transformed as teachers participate in a teacher community is supported by the theoretical framework of Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1999). A CoP is a group of people who share a common enterprise and pursue mutual goals. Wenger bases the concept of CoP on the fact that:

“As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world accordingly. In other words, we learn. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities, *Communities of Practice*” (p. 45).

CoP is argued to incorporate three dimensions: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. ‘Mutual engagement refers to participation in an endeavour or practice whose meanings are negotiated among participants’ (Clarke, 2008: 30). These forms of negotiation do not necessarily imply affinity. In the context of this study, for example, it could be explained in forms of inclusion or exclusion of student teachers as members of the teaching community. ‘Joint enterprise refers to the focus of activity that links members of a CoP’ (*ibid*: 31). This is represented, for example, in the negotiation between pre-service teachers and supervisors about lesson planning, assessment, or lesson development. It does not necessarily mean agreement. Disputes, tension, and disagreement might be unavoidable

A shared repertoire means the creation of ‘resources for negotiating meaning’ (Wenger, 1999: 82-83). He also illustrates how ‘routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence’ are representations of a shared repertoire. In the context of pre-service teachers, there are forms already established or adopted in the institution with regard to timetables, breaks, staff meetings, events or classroom arrangements, for example, which give meaning to teaching.

Wenger (1999) builds up a new theoretical construct that conceives identity from the perspective of the person and the social experience of an individual within a community. This integrating position sees identity in the interplay between ‘the social, the cultural, and the historical with a human face’ (Wenger, 1999: 145). He also questions the mistaken dichotomy viewing the person as separate from the social, and rather argues for an explanation of identity through the lens of a reciprocal connection between the personal and the social. When a new person enters a community, s/he experiences an act of belonging to a CoP, which entails forms of participation, non-participation, and interaction. Interacting with each other and being acknowledged by others is argued to engage negotiated ‘ways of being a person’ (*ibid*, 164).

Practice is then a substantial domain for understanding the nature of who a person is. Here it is far more important what ‘we think or say about ourselves’ or ‘what others think or say about us’ (Wenger, 1999: 151). Identity results from combining several layers of experience which come together to build up a constant process of ‘negotiating the self’ (*ibid*). They also frame the kind of perspectives the individual constructs about the world and helps her/him make some choices about her/his contribution to the communities s/he belongs to.

Wenger (1999) introduces engagement, alignment, and imagination as forms of belonging to a CoP. These three constructs will be explored in details in the next sections of this chapter. Although they can be seen as essential and unavoidable in the discussion of identity construction, they have also been understood as a consequence rather than a cause of identity, and Wenger also framed core principles and characteristics of a person’s relationship with one or several CoPs.

In summary, the theoretical framework of CoP informs this study at different levels, starting with the idea that that identity involves forms of participation, negotiation, and interaction within a community. A second level considers that practice has a direct connection with creating images of the person, as well as how others acknowledge her/him. A third level sees identity as evolving from notions of the person, and that this is greatly determined by the act of belonging to a teacher community.

## **2.8. Belonging to a Teacher Community**

The act of belonging to a teacher community is argued in this study to play a foundational role in the process of constructing professional identity. Needless to say, we may belong to several professional communities. The acts of participating and interacting with other teachers, administrative staff, and local educational authorities for

example, signify the nature of belonging to a teacher community. However, this study specifically looks at the period of time when student teachers assume the role of full time teachers under the supervision of a university supervisor and a school based-mentor. This time is named the practicum. The impact of working together with supervisors, senior colleagues, and parents, for example, can shed light on the way new teachers construct the meaning of teacher and teaching.

A teacher community offers a realistic experience of what teaching is about. Classroom practice, theories of teaching and learning, and the tension of working in a team constitute a unique opportunity to explore the nature of becoming a primary language teacher and consequently of identity construction. To what extent does a teaching community shape professional identity?

A teacher community has to be understood beyond the assumption that working together is a conceptually appealing notion. It involves more complex factors that include, for example, teachers' stories about choosing teaching, their previous experiences as learners, institutional tensions, their interactions with broader communities, or their professional expectations for the future. Various research studies have addressed these subjects, mainly in the last decade (Malderez *et al.*, 2007; Clarke, 2008; Taylor and Otinnsky, 2008; Farrell, 2009).

### ***2.8.1. Choosing teaching***

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 is an early act of professional affiliation, as it signifies the beginning of a professional and personal development journey. Clarke (2008: 76) states:

“Choosing teaching potentially involves all three modes of belonging: it may involve alignment with the purposes of teaching; it usually involves engagement with the practices of teaching; and, almost by definition, it involves an imaginative casting of self into an envisioned future role as a teacher”.

Clarke 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 (UAE). Families were also found to favour teaching by implicit or explicit encouragement, as well as the influence of relatives who are or were teachers.

The influence of past teachers is also manifested in Clarke’s results. This finding correlates with a long tradition in the literature of teacher education that has acknowledged the apprenticeship of observation (Lorti, 1975). It is widely accepted that student teachers enter into teacher education after a long history of experience in the classroom as learners (Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Borg, 2004; Malderez *et al.*, 2007). Borg (2004: 274) states that:

“The apprenticeship of observation describes the phenomenon whereby student teachers arrive for their training courses having spent thousands of hours as school children observing professionals in action”.

Malderez *et al.*, (2007) investigated how present and past teachers influence the perceptions of prospective teachers about how to teach. They conducted longitudinal research throughout England, and the findings indicate that past and present teachers played an important role in the participants’ decisions to choose teaching. Subjects were also able to differentiate between good and bad teachers. While good teachers inspired

them to offer similar experiences to pupils, bad teachers made them aware of the need to teach pupils better than they were taught. These findings substantiate the claim that a prospective teacher's previous experiences yield images of the kinds of teachers it is desired to emulate or surpass. Although experience as learners may provide restricted images of teachers - the front stage behaviour - the backstage actions remain hidden (Lortie, 1975). While the former may include issues such as teachers' personality, social and communicative abilities, content knowledge, or responsibility; the latter could be more related to, for example, teaching and learning theories, ideologies, or task and assessment decision making.

The apprenticeship of observation is argued to provide role models which are resistant to change even after formal training (John, 1996; Richards & Pennington, 1998). Findings also indicate family influence on prospective teachers' wish to pursue a teaching career. Sexton (2007) examined the pre-conceptions and beliefs about teaching that prospective teachers brought with them before entering a teacher education programme. His study involved 354 Australian and New Zealander student teachers and the findings suggest that participants were able to identify good and bad examples of teachers. Those images were believed to inform the kind of teachers they would like to become. However, if teachers teach the way they were taught this would suggest that teacher education has no power to construct new teaching alternatives. This argument is revisited in chapter six, and suggestions for further research are provided in the conclusion chapter.

Finally, another relevant motivation for choosing teaching is driven by modern languages themselves. The effect of a globalised world, as well as sophisticated systems of communication and information, has captivated the interest of teachers. English has permeated a new culture of interaction and participation that translates into an increasing interest in learning it. In this context, English has taken hold worldwide. This new reality has favoured language teachers with a certain social and pedagogical status 'as opposed to other teachers of other subjects' (Clarke, 2008: 83).

In summary, this discussion has briefly explored how choosing teaching becomes a foundational stage in constructing professional identity. The next section turns to engagement as another representation of the act of belonging to a teacher community.

### ***2.8.2. Engagement***

Engagement is generally defined as an ‘active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning’ (Wenger, 1999: 173). In other words, it is the direct interaction and participation of a newcomer within the structures, conceptions, and norms of a particular community. In the context of this study, engagement is related to forms of negotiation, for example, between a pre-service teacher and his school-based mentor, other members of staff, school administrators, pupils, and parents. This participation is believed to provide experience to the new member, which is then essential in his recognition as a teacher by others. It is important to note here that is not assumed to be a straight forward process. It is something that might rather create tension and conflict, which might also have a negative impact upon professional affiliation. Nevertheless, everyone experiences the fact of being a newcomer in one or several groups during the course of their lives.

There are different ways of engagement with a teacher community. In fact, teachers are permanently participating and interacting: from meeting every day and sharing daily greetings or morning coffee to more structured forms of action and transformation. It is important to note here that engagement evolves as part of the experience of learning to teach and that it is negotiated as part of the complex process of becoming a teacher.



Teachers usually participate in the same meetings, share similar stories, or face the same reality in terms of routines and timetables, for example. These contexts of relationship create forms of mutual engagement. Clarke (2008: 86) reports findings regarding ‘offers of assistance to each other concerning the challenges of teaching’. His research also shows how this professional dialogue reflects upon building an understanding of teaching as a common enterprise. Jenkins (1996, cited in Clarke, 2008: 88) asserts that:

“What is significant is not that people see or understand things in the same ways, or that they see and understand things in ways which differ from other communities, but that their shared symbols allow them to believe in what they do”.

Malderez *et al.*, (2007) give evidence that prospective teachers choose teaching partly with expectations of team working and becoming a part of the school community. However, this attractive factor is not always an easy task to accomplish. Their findings give accounts of functional and dysfunctional relationships with mentors, as well as unwelcoming school environments. They also report experiences of student teachers being shunned in staffrooms. Belonging to a teacher community is not always a straightforward process and the possibility to work cooperatively might become especially traumatic. Farrell (2001: 49-50) defines this period as socialisation. Student teachers face all the demands that are linked with teaching, such as:

“coping with school rules inside and outside the classroom, following the school rules for lesson planning, following or developing curricula, learning the routines of the classroom, and learning how to interact with school authorities and colleagues”.

Farrell’s research case study was conducted in Singapore while working as a supervising university tutor for one student teacher. The researcher traced the process of socialisation and development that took place during the period of the teaching

practicum. The findings indicate communication problems and weak support for the pre-service teacher, as well as tension not only between the trainee and senior teachers but also among members of the staff or with the school board of administrators. This particular reality sheds light on how complex negotiating participation in a teacher community can be. How do pre-service teachers cope with those tensions? Can teaching education programmes do something to mitigate those negative effects? The answers to these questions open up an interesting area of research discussed further in the final chapter of this study. The following section explores alignment as another construct that results from understanding the act of belonging to a teacher community.

### ***2.8.3. Alignment***

The role of teachers is not only spatially located in the communities where they work on a temporary or permanent basis. They also interact with broader professional communities. That sense of professional participation is labelled in the literature as alignment, which results from ‘coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises’ (Wenger, 1999: 174). In the context of this study, teachers could interact with national or overseas teacher communities, network with peers, or attend professional conferences, for example. These are forms of professional alignment. Alignment also plays an important role in the construction of the meaning of teacher.

Clarke (2008: 92) states that ‘alignment transcends the here and now and focuses on coordinating and synergizing a community’s energies with those of other communities’. His research in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) suggests interesting findings with regard to how pre-service teachers establish forms of on-line interaction with other teachers, for example. In those dialogues, they actively discuss topics such as: teaching methodologies, the role of the mother tongue in a context of foreign language learning, or the imposition of materials without considering local factors.

Needless to say, those language teachers necessarily also developed relationships with publishers or materials designers. This professional network of interaction is acknowledged as ‘border practices’ and it is argued to play a foundational role in ‘learning to teach’ (Clarke, 2008: 94). There is no doubt that such border practices play an important role in the process of constructing professional identity. However, teachers may have chosen them by default. Can teacher education programmes consolidate more structured forms of participation and cooperation with members of other communities?

Some research studies have drawn conclusions about forming and sustaining a teacher community (Little, 2002; Bell-Angus, 2008; Mitchel and Mitchel, 2008; Taylor & Otinsky, 2008). Mitchel and Mitchel (2008) presented the research findings of a longitudinal study that started in 1985 in Australia. It has now developed into a learner community that engages over 600 teachers from nearly 200 schools. This project has significantly expanded into publishing, organising conferences, and networking with international communities. This experience illustrates that alignment could be purposefully built modes of cooperative action.

Taylor and Otinsky (2008) have also explored modes of professional alignment. They explained how two university teachers worked collaboratively with pre-service teachers and a group of sixth graders to develop an enquiry about issues of social justice in New Jersey. They examined a model of a three-week intensive project aiming to prepare student teachers before teaching. The findings suggest a positive impact of this model, which generated active engagement and led to important decisions being made about teaching, learning, the curriculum, and learners.

Similar findings were achieved in research by Bell-Angus *et al.*, (2008), whose experience starting in 1991 in Toronto has now evolved as a sustained and influential community of scholars who have led important processes of teacher growth and development. They have engaged primary, secondary and post-secondary school

teachers, as well as students in a community that supports each other's learning. This brief exploration illustrates some of the forms in which teachers can conduct a more synchronised participation within broader professional communities. This issue will again be addressed in terms of suggestions for further research in the last chapter of this study. Finally, in this part imagination is considered another construct that helps in exploring the nature of belonging to a teacher community.

#### ***2.8.4. Imagination***

The process of becoming a teacher is claimed to be 'in part a journey of imaginative development. Students come to imagine teaching and themselves as teachers in new ways' (Fettes, 2005: 3). Imagination, as an act of belonging to a teacher community, is generally defined as the capacity to see teaching from different perspectives. A classroom, for example, may represent different things. For a teacher it could be either a place to do a teaching job or an opportunity to enrich the lives of future citizens with knowledge and better values. For a student it may represent either a boring place where s/he is forced to attend lessons daily, or an exciting place where fascination and friendship become a motivation to participate. For parents, school administrators or educational authorities, the classroom certainly has different meanings.

That capacity to see teaching from alternative perspectives may be a way to explain imagination: 'creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience' (Wenger, 1999: 173). Imagination then comprises an ability to move 'beyond the immediate world of experience' (Clarke, 2008: 98). Through imagination we re-construct the images of ourselves and envision new representations of our internal and external images of the world. It does not mean that new sources of inspiration necessarily entail fantasy or an entire discourse of the unreachable. Imagination is simply an innate human condition that encourages people to re-invent their past, re-build their present, and project their future.

Clarke (2008: 98) asserts that imagination could be represented in forms of self-consciousness and reflection which are argued to provide ‘a platform for further growth and development’. Teachers’ imagination leads to envisioning new scenarios for teaching and learning, classroom practices, or innovation, for example. This capacity to participate actively and creatively helps to construct a different notion and meaning of teacher, as well as to expand the concept of the role of a teacher community in shaping professional identities, but even more importantly how the teacher also shapes and transforms the identity of the community s/he belongs to.

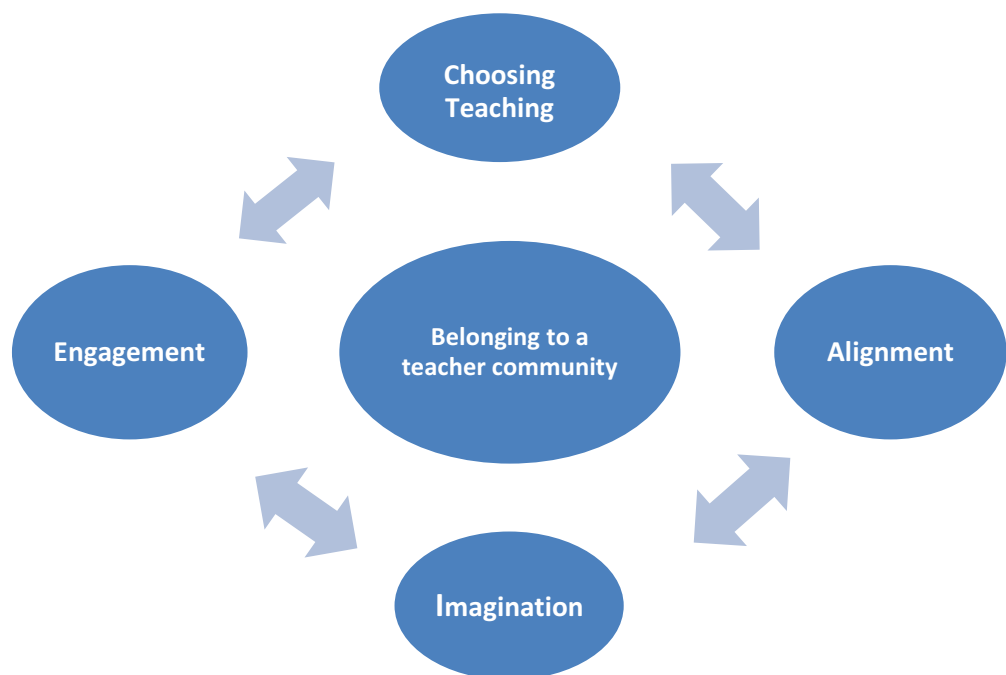
Some research studies have reported interesting findings about trainees’ proactive participation in a teacher community. Roberts & Graham (2008: 1401) investigated some of the strategies used by 32 English trainees ‘to establish a personal teaching identity’. Their findings suggest three distinctive strategies used in order to exercise their own autonomy: fitting in, following a teacher’s advice selectively; and taking the initiative. These results contradict the general belief that student teachers’ self-initiative is not fully exercised and that their teaching is mainly driven by the initiatives of their supervisors. Robert and Graham’s findings show evidence instead of their capacity for self-direction and innovation. These are representations of how imagination is exercised by pre-service teachers. Is imagination an innate human characteristic that is naturally transferred into the classroom? Can teacher training promote or engage prospective teacher candidates with forms of imaginative teaching? Some of these questions are briefly explored below.

Fettes (2005: 4) argued that ‘attending to imagination may both aid the process of personal reflection and help students come to a deeper understanding of pedagogy and curriculum’. He introduced a module based on the concept of imagination as part of a one-year professional certification programme at Simon Fraser University in Canada. A group of teacher instructors designed a course for a cohort of 32 students. The course aims included: reflective capacity, critical-mindedness, other-directedness, as well as

pedagogical sensitivity. The project aimed to tackle a previously identified problem that students entering the programme came ‘with a fairly narrow set of ideas about teaching’. The findings reported that, although students found the approach challenging, the imaginative development of teacher candidates may mediate the imaginative development of children. Although the results were not conclusive, this experience opens another direction for research that may have significant implications for the context of teacher education and professional development in the future. The conclusion may be drawn once again that teaching education can foster new ways of constructing internal images of the self, as well as providing alternatives for the recognition of teachers. This general framework for interpreting identity is supported in the theoretical tenets of Wenger (1999).

In summary, the nature of belonging to a teacher community incorporates four general dimensions: choosing teaching, engagement, alignment, and imagination. These four general constructs are illustrated in figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2.4. The four components of the nature of belonging to a teacher community



## 2.9. The Concept of Teachers' Knowledge

What teachers know is considered according to the theoretical framework provided by Grosman, (1995: 20). He states that the psychology of teachers has been 'examined in terms of its domains, its forms or structures, and its relation to classroom practice'. Various research and theoretical stances then consider each of these issues separately, although it can be strongly argued that they are interwoven in practice.

Grossman introduced a typology for understanding teachers' knowledge, which includes knowledge of content, general pedagogy, curriculum, integration of knowledge domains and the creation of new knowledge, as well as knowledge of self. These theoretical preferences implicitly introduce the idea of the complex and varied nature of teachers' systems of knowledge. This suggests that teachers' knowledge is not static and that they develop new understandings of teaching and themselves in a very dynamic way.

Grossman (1995: 22) highlighted that 'while teachers can acquire knowledge from a wide variety of sources, they also create new knowledge within the crucible of the classroom'. Such new knowledge is believed to be represented as either paradigmatic or narrative ways of knowing. The former emphasises 'generalizable laws and principles applicable across a wide variety of contexts' – within the natural sciences, for example – while the latter is 'more contextualised and situation specific' (Bruner, 1986, cited in Grosman, 1995). These two ontological stances have significance for methods of assessing teachers' knowledge with regard to classroom practice. While some researchers claim that teachers need scientific principles that could be applicable across different contexts, others reject this idea and argue that knowledge is personal and embedded within specific local contexts.

Grossman's theoretical framework informs this study in a fundamental way. Teachers' knowledge spreads over several interwoven domains which are complex and dynamic in nature. While we can examine content and pedagogical knowledge, or knowledge of the self, for example, the scientific principles that inform their classroom practices are perspectives which must also be considered. This study does not expect to resolve this theoretical debate, preferring to exercise caution by focussing on the convergence between teachers' beliefs and classroom practice. This study now turns on this relationship.

## **2.10. Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs**

Although the notion of teachers' beliefs has been explored in the literature of teacher education in the last three decades, there is no clear explanation of what this term entails (see, for example, Clark and Peterson, 1986). Thompson (1992: 130) proposed the study of teachers' conceptions as an alternative field of research that covers 'a more general mental structure, encompassing beliefs, meaning, concepts, propositions, rules, mental images, preferences, and the like'. Consequently, it is hard to separate knowledge from beliefs. In spite of an increasing research interest in the last decade in the field of teachers' beliefs (Johnson, 1994; Cabaroglu and Roberts, 2000; Peacock, 2001; Santagata, 2005; Blay and Ireson, 2009) a consensual definition is still elusive. Pajares (1992: 316) noted that the term 'belief' is complex in nature and meaning, and he defined it as 'an individual's judgement of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgement that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do'. Pajares also provided a list of 'fundamental assumptions' to study teachers' beliefs (see Borg, 2006: 26, for a summary).

Over the last decade, the study of teachers' beliefs has explored several areas: learning, learners, teaching, decision making, and subject matter, among others. Under the label of teacher cognition these terms are now generally defined as 'what teachers



know, believe and think' (Borg, 2006: 2), which have been studied using a multiplicity of terms. Although the term 'beliefs' prevails in the literature of teacher education (Pajares, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Peacock, 2001; Santagata, 2005; Gonzalez, 2008), notions such as pre-service teachers' knowledge (Viera, 2006), pedagogic thinking (Borg, 2005), pedagogical beliefs (Allen, 2002), or perceptions (Fajet *et al*, 2005; Da Silva, 2005; Ryan & Healy, 2009) create more than a sense of terminological confusion since, while some terms appear to overlap, it is problematic to differentiate them precisely.

Knowledge and beliefs are considered to be intertwined, even though some scholars locate the former as more factual while the latter are regarded as ideological and attitudinal. Nevertheless, 'In the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined' (Verloop *et al.*, 2001: 446). The concept of teachers' beliefs appears recurrently in the literature of teaching and learning (see, for example, Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Peacock, 2001; Garton, 2008). This study adopts the label of teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs as an inclusive term. This implies a connection between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, which is an area that has been relatively under-researched (see, for example, Da Silva, 2005; Garton, 2008; Gonzalez, 2008; Blay and Ireson, 2009; Phipps and Borg, 2009; Li & Walsh, 2011). On the other hand, this term allows the dimension of what student teachers know, believe and do in the classroom to be represented. This is explored next.

### ***2.10.1. Beliefs and classroom practice***

This study explores whether or not pre-service teachers' beliefs are manifested in their teaching practice with young learners. What can be learnt about pre-service teachers' beliefs by looking at their classroom practice? What does classroom activities tell us about pre-service teachers' beliefs? Several issues can be mentioned. Firstly, it is

generally accepted that classroom interaction has a key influence on second language acquisition (van Lier, 1996; Ellis, 2000; Walsh, 2006), even if it is, the relationship between interactional variable and beliefs remains unclear. Nevertheless teachers' pedagogical beliefs are intimately related to classroom interaction. Understanding teachers' beliefs therefore necessarily entails looking at the interactional processes that take place in the language classroom.

Second, if interaction is central to classroom dynamics, the way a teacher maintains the flow of conversation, creates or restricts opportunities for language learning, provides feedback or plans the achievement of learning goals entails making decisions which will be partly based upon pedagogical beliefs. The foreign language classroom is, without doubt, a context in which interaction regulates most of its functions. As the main goal is to learn the target language, classroom tasks and strategies generally privilege second language use. The study of the features which characterise its complex structure and organisation open the door to conceptualising the connection between beliefs and classroom practice.

Finally, the language classroom is a natural scenario for understanding the nature of 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.

In summary, there are at least three reasons for exploring the relationship between pedagogical beliefs and classroom practice. Firstly, pedagogical beliefs could be mirrored in classroom interaction; secondly, as patterns of interaction rule most actions taken in the language classroom, they are at least partly constructed on the basis of beliefs; thirdly, the language classroom is a natural scenario explaining pedagogical

beliefs.

It is generally accepted that prospective teachers come to teacher education programmes with already well-grounded beliefs about teaching and learning which are resistant to change (Pajares, 1992). However, Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000: 392) tested this assumption with twenty students at the University of Reading, UK, and the findings revealed that ‘only one participant’s beliefs seemed to remain unchangeable’. This study even introduced the concept of belief reversal, in which teachers seemed to adopt a new belief that contradicted a former one.

A similar interest was expressed by Peacock (2001), whose 3-year longitudinal study engaged 146 trainee teachers at the City University of Hong Kong. The study aimed to investigate if mistaken ideas about language learning that student teachers brought with them when entering a training programme would change as a result of studying teaching methodology. The findings showed non-significant changes in their pre-existing beliefs, but despite an apparent confirmation of beliefs as inflexible and resistant to change, Peacock highlighted the need to work on those mistaken conceptions. But if teachers’ beliefs are inflexible, how do these beliefs correspond to classroom practices?

While teachers’ beliefs have received a lot of attention in recent years, the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice has scarcely been explored. Few studies could be found which have considered this field of research, and only one has specifically examined pre-service teachers’ beliefs (Da Silva, 2005). Four further studies shed some light on this area even though their participants were in-service teachers (Garton, 2008; Gonzalez, 2008; Blay and Ireson, 2009; Phipps and Borg, 2009; Li and Walsh, 2011).

Da Silva (2005) investigated how pre-service language teachers' perceptions about teaching the four skills related to their pedagogical practice. Her research engaged three student teachers at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil. This study relates closely to the present research as it collected data from the teaching practicum – a 144-hour course in the last semester of the teaching preparation programme. By using a multi-method approach, data were collected via observation reports, lesson plans, video-recorded lessons, and recall sessions. It is important to note here that Da Silva used the concept of perceptions rather than, for example, beliefs or cognition, although the definition used includes a broad view of various interchangeable terms common to recent theoretical confusion, as mentioned previously.

The findings suggested two characteristics of pre-service teachers' knowledge: theoretical and experiential. While the theoretical knowledge resulted from their teacher preparation programme, the experiential knowledge arose from direct and previous participation and observation experienced throughout their lives as learners. Da Silva (2005: 14 - 15) draws important conclusions indicating that:

“When teachers perceive that their experiential knowledge is supported by theory, they acquire the theoretical knowledge as part of their professional knowledge without strong conflicts or dilemmas”

But when their

“experiential knowledge is contradicted by theory, teachers tend to reject the ‘new’ knowledge and maintain old practices no matter how logical or sound it could be and strong conflicts and dilemmas may arise”

This study seems to confirm the implicit consensus that beliefs are inflexible and resistant to change. According to these findings, it seems that experiential knowledge

informs teachers' practice more than theoretical knowledge. The question that arises here is what teacher education can do in order to create alternatives for better teaching and learning (Peacock, 2001). The present author's experience as language teacher, teacher educator, and supervisor suggests that teacher education can effectively contribute to transforming, for example, students' misconceptions about teaching and learning. Reflective practice, communities of practice or action for professional development and growth may help in such an endeavour. The chance to re-shape teachers' experiential knowledge into critical theoretical knowledge is believed to raise their awareness and encourage change and transformation. Research in the field of in-service teachers' beliefs and their correspondence with classroom practice enlarge this point.

The levels of coherence found between what teachers believe and do in the classroom vary widely. While some research findings indicate that there is a close link, other studies imply a rather different reality. For example, Garton (2008) indicated a consistent degree of correspondence between beliefs and classroom practices in two Italian teachers. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, and the study strengthens the widely accepted view that experiential knowledge informs professional practices more than theoretical knowledge (Johnson, 1994; Peacock, 2001; Pajares, 2002).

Gonzalez (2008) examined the connection between teachers' beliefs about communicative competence and classroom practice. Two language teachers working in extension language courses at the National University in Colombia were the research participants, and the findings suggest that, in spite of their lack of clarity about communicative competence, there was a coherent connection between their stated beliefs and what they planned to achieve in the language classroom. Unfortunately, the study did not examine if the sources of those beliefs were theoretical or experiential. Nevertheless, if there are misconceptions about communicative competence, teachers may mistakenly emphasise particular learning goals and tasks in the classroom. Teacher

education has the social obligation of transforming such a reality. The debate around whether beliefs are inflexible or not and what the role of education is in changing them, challenges many previous research findings about teachers' beliefs. Gonzalez' study is significant as it was the first to approach this research area in Colombia.

Phipps and Borg (2009) observed and interviewed three teachers over a period of 18 months in Turkey. The study aimed to examine the way they taught grammar and the beliefs that underpinned their classroom actions. The researchers highlight the fact that research in this area has adopted various negative terms such as 'incongruence, mismatch, inconsistency, and discrepancy' (*ibid*: 380), but they suggest instead the term 'tensions'. This is defined as 'divergences among different forces or elements in the teacher's understanding of the school context, the subject matter, or the students' (Freeman, 1993; cited in Phipps and Borg, 2009: 380). The findings indicate that the teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar did not always align with their classroom practices, and that tensions at the level of presenting, practicing, or doing oral work were identified. 'There were, therefore, several cases where teachers' professed beliefs about language learning were in strong contrast with practices observed in their lessons' (*ibid*, 387). Moreover, the researchers highlight the issue that core beliefs seem more consistently to inform teachers' classroom practices. They also felt it important to look at teachers' beliefs beyond merely understanding their levels of correspondence with classroom practice. Phipps and Borg (2009: 388) rather propose the need to 'explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind such tensions'. This perspective opens new possibilities for future research in the field of teacher cognition.

It is widely claimed that what teachers do in the classroom is significantly informed by their beliefs and conceptions about teaching and learning (Pajares, 2002). This connection can be explored from varied perspectives. For example, Blay and Ireson (2009) approached it from the connection between pedagogical beliefs and activity choice and structure in nursery classrooms in London. Four in-service nursery teachers in two different schools participated, and the findings suggest that their

pedagogical beliefs informed the kind of activities they implemented in the classroom. However, the relationship between their stated beliefs and classroom practices did not always match. While some stated beliefs highlighted children's active decisions and participation, for example, the enacted performance of the activities showed a high level of adult control. There were other cases where the process of children's self-determination was better achieved. Overall however, this study illustrates that teachers' beliefs and classroom practices are not always in accord. However beyond questions of the existence of tensions between stated and enacted beliefs, a significant step forward in teacher education research should be the exploration of the reasons for such tensions (Phipps and Borg, 2009).

Li and Walsh (2011) explored the relationship between beliefs and classroom interaction in a novice and an experienced secondary school teacher in China. By using interviews and classroom observation data, the researchers assessed whether or not the participant teachers' stated beliefs about language teaching and learning were in accord with what they did in the classroom. The findings suggested that beliefs and classroom actions were not always convergent.

In summary, examining teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs fit the purpose of exploring the nature of becoming a teacher in this study. While plenty of evidence suggests that teachers' beliefs inform their classroom practice, the relationship between stated and enacted beliefs has been less conclusive. Few studies have explored this new field of research, which is believed likely to produce new insights, theoretical constructs, and research exploration. The final theoretical construct that underpins the exploration of teacher identity concerns the setting of professional goals for the future.

## 2.11. Teacher Development

Teacher development is generally defined as ‘the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically (Glatthorn, 1995: 41). However, research in the subject is characterised by theoretical and methodological challenges. In fact, teachers’ growth can be seen through several lenses. They can grow in their subject or pedagogical knowledge, skills, classroom management, lesson organisation, or task implementation, among many others. In spite of the complexity of the sources of professional growth, all are specifically connected to what teachers do; in other words, to the technical dimensions of teaching, for example, lesson planning, classroom management or material design. But Glatthorn (1995) also posits some more increasingly complex types of teachers’ professional growth: leadership, contributions to colleagues or communities, or decision making, for example.

Glatthorn further differentiates between career and staff development. While the former is marked by several stages in teachers’ career cycle, the latter is marked by organised programmes that foster professional growth. He also emphasises that personal and contextual factors influence teacher development. While cognitive, career, and motivational variables are among the personal factors, the community, the school, the teaching team, and the classroom are among the contextual ones.

Glatthorn’s theoretical framework informs this study in two ways. Firstly, teacher development is a complex construct that involves several dimensions, for example, career, knowledge, motivation, and skills. Secondly, although the interest of this study can scarcely disentangle this complex spectrum of possibilities, personal factors are explored in terms of career and motivational development. These two general perspectives suit the purpose of exploring the impact of practice on pre-service teachers’ professional goals.



## 2.12. Professional Goals

Teachers' professional goals for the future are also likely to be implicated when teachers construct the meaning of being a teacher. This notion is generally covered in the literature on teacher education as teacher development. It can adopt a variety of perspectives concerning knowledge, skills, judgement, or professional contributions to the teaching community (Little, 1992; cited in Glatthorn, 1995). However, the present study explores this theme at the level of career and motivational development. A teacher's sense of professional affiliation or disaffiliation is argued to be driven by teaching experiences, relationships with pupils and other members of staff, and the sense of social and professional commitment (Lasky, 2005).

Studies attempting to answer the question of what keeps teachers on the teaching profession (Nieto, 2003; Yost, 2006) identify issues connected with job satisfaction, supportive environments or successful student learning. There are surely many sources of teachers' arguments for sustaining their professional identities, but there are also trends well documented in the literature that account for teachers' early retirement or disenchantment with the teaching profession.

Clandinin, *et al.* (2009) reported increasing numbers of teachers leaving their jobs in Canada each year, where nearly 46% of early career teachers left teaching after 4 years of practice. Although the explanation of job dissatisfaction was not conclusive, teachers' narratives reveal that they were 'no longer able to 'live by' their stories of the shifting professional knowledge landscapes' (*ibid*: 146). Other studies found explanations for leaving related to issues connected to low salaries, limited opportunities for professional development and decision making, class size or stuffy institutional atmospheres (Inman & Marlow, 2004). The impact of practice and experience on a teacher's sense of commitment, efficacy, or ascription to the teaching profession seems to have a direct connection to these factors.

The context where teachers work is argued to play an important role in the process of constructing professional identities. Nias (1996) and Beijaard (1995) argued that experiences at school strongly determined the nature of teachers' motivation, attitudes, and engagement. They also found that teachers' seemed to reflect a sense of positive and stable identity when they constructed a good relationship with pupils and the organisation of the institution they worked for; and the lack of either of those facets was claimed to cause career instability and a negative impact on their motivation.

Most prospective teachers choose teaching driven by dreams, ideals, or expectations. Whether or not these are fulfilled has been explored in the literature on teacher education (Wideen *et al.*, 1998; Moss *et al.*, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Entering the teaching profession challenges beginning teachers' professional motivation and affiliation at different levels: classroom, institutional demands, curriculum, professional knowledge, further qualification, or policies, for example. These issues may have a profound impact on the way teachers construct their professional identities.

Lasky (2005: 901) introduced the notion of professional vulnerability, which seems to explain some of the tensions that teachers experience in the course of their careers, defining it as 'a multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience that individuals can feel in an array of contexts'. Lasky explored the way teachers cope with the demands of new reforms and educational policies. She surveyed and interviewed four in-service teachers in Ontario, Canada, and the findings indicate that teachers' sense of agency, sense of purpose and professional identity were significantly influenced by macro socio-political and economic factors. An issue such as budget reduction or economic recession, for example, can have a major impact on teachers' identity. Not being able to achieve learning goals or build rapport with students may also strongly affect their sense of career affiliation and lead to professional vulnerability.

Brown (2005) conducted research investigating the experience of two American mathematics teachers at an early stage of their professional careers that had entered teaching in their forties. Interview data indicated that the research participants experienced isolation, frustration, a sense of not doing the right thing, and a lack of mentoring or guidance. Problems regarding the curriculum, work overload, lack of respect for teachers, and resistance to innovation were also found. Although these tensions might be common in teachers' daily experience, this study highlights them as important factors that teacher education programmes should not ignore, and the situations described might not be too different from what pre-service teachers experience during the time of their practicum. Can teacher education programmes undertake action in order to prepare them to face this reality?

While research into in-service teachers' professional development has been highly productive, studies of what happens with pre-service teachers during their practicum have been scarce. Farrell (2001: 49) conducted a case study with a trainee foreign language teacher in Singapore, introducing the term socialisation, which 'means the process of becoming a member of a specific group, the teaching profession'. What student teachers experience during the practicum has a great impact on their sense of professional expectations for the future. During this time, they face the direct demands of an institution in terms of, for example, schedules, classroom management, lesson planning, staff meetings, or teaching observation and assessment.

Farrell's 2001 study was methodologically similar to the present exploration of teacher identity construction, and the findings indicated consistent communication problems between cooperating teachers and pre-service teacher, as well as 'a weak support structure for trainee teachers at the school during this socialisation process' (*ibid*: 49). The results also address other issues regarding the lack of school-based mentors support and guidance. This seems to be due to lack of training in mentoring roles. The importance of the teaching practicum for teachers' professional sense of

commitment and agency emerges as an issue of unquestionable connection to teacher retention and effectiveness. Teacher education programmes would be advised to invest effort here in order to create a better atmosphere of support involving supervisors, mentors, and teacher educators as a strategy that might contribute towards preparing beginning teachers for professional development and growth.

There is abundant evidence of teachers' early retirement in spite of the rising worldwide demand for qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Kelly, 2004; Clandinin, *et al.* 2009). Those who decide to stay in the profession are motivated, for example, by factors such as parental or administrative support, skills and knowledge, or professional ownership (Bobeck, 2002). Yost (2006) explored difficulties that ten beginning teachers encountered in their first year of practice, and found that teaching success partly depended on the acknowledgment of their teaching potential and skills, as well as their capacity to create positive learning environments.

In summary, this exploration of the nature of teachers' professional goals for the future suggests that pre-service teachers' expectations of growth are significantly informed by several contextual factors. While prospective teachers come to the professions with plenty of dreams, aspirations, and ideals, the requirements of a demanding profession cause varied levels of frustration and disenchantment. Research has revealed how a significant percentage of beginning teachers attempt to leave the profession in the first three years of practice. However, some studies also show that teaching education can take direct action in order to improve retention in the teaching profession. The integration of trainers, trainees, and cooperating teachers is recommended. The next section explores how teacher identity has been approached in Colombia.

### **2.13. The Research Area in Colombia**

This section examines the contribution of Colombian scholars and researchers in the field of teacher identity construction. This exploration introduces a general overview of studies investigating the three fundamental constructs that underpin this study: participating in a teacher community, systems of knowledge and beliefs, and professional development. This overview is mainly based on a review of material published in the most influential Colombian journals in the last decade.

Research in the area of teacher identity has been relatively scarce in Colombia. Colombian scholars have made outstanding progress in areas related, for example, to language teaching and learning, skills development, autonomy and bilingualism. However, the interest in this study is to focus on the Colombian contribution to framing an understanding of teacher identity, starting with studies that have included in their titles the terms teacher identity, knowledge, beliefs, teacher communities, communities of practice or professional development.

Two references were found that matched the field of identity. The first included a theoretical contribution, while the second reported findings into bilingual education for minority indigenous groups. Serna (2005) approached pre-service teacher identity as a matter of intellectual status, developing a sense of belonging in a community of professionals, and listening to their voices through reflection and research. Although no data supported the author's arguments, this was an important scholarly attempt to introduce the notion of teacher identity into the debate about teacher education in Colombia.

Escobar and Gomez (2009) explored the concepts and structure of bilingual education with minority indigenous groups in Colombia. The authors showed awareness

of the need for Colombia to be recognized as a multicultural country, and their research focused on the analysis of sociopolitical issues. Despite the fact that the meaning of identity spread over several fields, the authors attempted to make connections between the context of bilingual education for minority groups and English language teaching in Colombia. There was no explicit reference, however, to studies exploring the nature of belonging to a teacher community.

Teachers' system of knowledge and beliefs are referenced in four articles published by three local scholars and one overseas researcher. Piñeros and Quintero (2006) built up theoretical connections from the concept of the changes that resulted from experiential and academic knowledge in undergraduate student teachers' monographs. Gonzalez (2008) examined the connection between teachers' beliefs about communicative competence and classroom practice. The findings suggested that, in spite of a lack of understanding of communicative competence, the participating teachers' classroom practice indicated a high level of congruence. This was the first reference in the Colombian research context to establish a direct connection with one of the research questions in this study.

Schuldz (2001) conducted a cross-cultural study aiming to compare American and Colombian students' and teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback in foreign language learning. The findings indicated a significant level of agreement in the two contexts concerning the benefits of these strategies. This article was published by an overseas researcher in an international language journal.

So far this general review of the research area in Colombia shows that research in the area has been scarce. Nevertheless, publications in the field of professional development reflect a more active approach.

Gonzalez *et al.* (2002) investigated who was in charge of providing teacher training in Medellin. Although universities were mainly acknowledged to be in charge of teacher education, various restrictive factors such as tuition fees appeared to inhibit the participation of a larger number of teachers. The need for new models of teacher education interpreting local reality was echoed by Gonzalez (2007), who showed awareness of the need to focus more on locally produced knowledge and collaborative work between policy makers and national scholars as a more appropriate way to encourage the growth and development of teachers. She also criticised some of the decisions made by the Ministry of Education within the framework of 'Colombia Bilingual' concerning the adoption of a particular British model for teacher education. Vergara *et al.*, (2009) presented a model of teacher development which was implemented with 16 in-service teachers in Cali. This model conceived research training as a crucial path for professional development. This general overview of current trends in the study of teacher identity provides an image of how Colombian scholars have explored the subject so far.

## **Summary**

This chapter has approached the three main theoretical constructs that underpin the study's exploration of the process of becoming a teacher. Firstly, the act of belonging to a teacher community is argued to be a foundational act of professional identity construction. This process is generally represented in terms of choosing teaching, engagement, alignment, and imagination. Secondly, teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs are also argued to be of paramount importance for understanding how they construct the meaning of becoming a teacher and teaching. The nature of teachers' professional goals for the future has been briefly highlighted. Finally, there is an overview of the research area in Colombia. The following chapter on methodology illustrates how these theoretical constructs are represented at the levels of approach, research methods, and data collection and analysis.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter two gave an overview of how the concept of identity, as well as introduced the three theoretical constructs that underpin this study: a teacher community, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, and professional goals for the future. This chapter describes the methodological basis upon which this study was built. Firstly, the rationale for the use of a qualitative approach is offered (3.1) and issues of validity and reliability are discussed (3.2). Secondly, this chapter defines case studies as the umbrella term suitable for the purpose of exploring teacher identity (3.3.). Thirdly, the rationale for the use of a multi-method approach is described (3.4). This includes the theoretical foundations of the use of three methods of data collection: interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs. Fourthly, an explanation is given of content analysis, which was the analytical approach used in this research (3.5). Finally, issues of validity of the categorisation and coding approach are discussed (3.6). The decision was made to discuss methodology and research design in two separate chapters, in order to maintain a clear distinction between the general theoretical constructs that underpin the methods adopted in this study, and how those principles were designed, developed and represented in this empirical study.

### **3.1. A qualitative Approach**

Different views of science lead to various modes of examining and interpreting social reality. The perspectives used 'profoundly affect how one goes about uncovering knowledge of social behaviour' (Cohen *et al*, 2007: 7). Although the general purpose of science is unified in nature –unveiling the truth and creating new knowledge - discrepancies seem to be rooted in 'what knowledge is and how it is obtained' (Kvale &



Brinkmann, 2009: 47). If knowledge is conceived as hard, objective and tangible, this will suit a positivist approach, while a view of it as personal, subjective and unique, may entail an anti-positivist one. How the researcher aligns in turn determine the research approach and methods to be used. Positivists favour quantitative data gathered from surveys or experiments while anti-positivists tend to privilege data, for example, from interviews or focus groups - qualitative data analysis. These two different positions have considered quantitative approaches as objective and reliable, in opposition to qualitative approaches that have been considered as subjective and less reliable.

A recent trend attempts to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative approaches (Onwegbuzie & Leech, 2005a; Bryman, 2008; Dornyei, 2009). Here it is argued that the distinction is counterproductive and detrimental to the evolution and advance of science in general. This longstanding debate has been echoed in research methodology modules and courses taught in universities and research training centres. A possible way to mitigate the effects of this divisive paradigm is to introduce a mixed methodological framework concerning qualitative and quantitative analysis. This might contribute to overcome the philosophical dichotomy that diminishes the value of some research findings, especially in the social sciences (Onwegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

This study aims to explore how student teachers construct professional identities, a process which starts when they choose teaching as a professional alternative. As a result of a period of teacher education, pre-service teachers construct personal and professional identities, which are shaped, transformed, or resisted as part of the experience of learning to teach. By the final stage of the programme and as a part of their teaching practicum, they negotiate forms of participation as members of a teacher community. The opportunity to work with colleagues, school administrators, and the school community in general also shapes teachers' sense of professional identity. Consequently it evolves according to a complex process over time, involving aspects of experience, cognition and development.

Teachers' lives and work represent a complex reality that is in practice hard to isolate through, for example, one experiment or a survey. It is argued in this study that exploring the way teachers construct professional identities can only be uncovered by means of professional conversations, observation, or through the use of methods of personal reflection. In answering the present research questions, it would be practically impossible to restrict the data, for example, to a questionnaire response. Student teachers' participation and interaction within teaching communities, their beliefs and classroom practices, and their professional agendas for the future could be better explored through a multi-method approach, which is explained in more detail latter on in this chapter.

The purpose, however, is not to examine each construct independently but to see how the combination of the three factors can contribute to exploring the nature of becoming a language teacher. The present author adopted the definition of teacher identity as the image that a teacher constructs of herself/himself and the way others acknowledge her/him (see chapter two). To explore such images, a discourse based approach is needed, which helps to trace the research participants' feelings, perceptions, and participation as members of a teacher community as well as, for example, the nature of classroom practices, subject and pedagogical knowledge or beliefs. The next section explores issues of validity and reliability in such a qualitative approach.

### **3.2. Validity and Reliability**

The importance of any research finding basically depends on how valid and reliable it is. However, Cohen *et al.* (2007: 134) claim that 'threats to validity and reliability can never be erased completely'. Although early notions of validity and reliability focussed on 'a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure' (*ibid*), some more recent interpretations concentrate on facts such as 'honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent

of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher' (Winter; 2000 cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 133).

Maxwell (1992) argues for five kinds of validity in qualitative research: descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, generalizability and evaluative validity. This study adopts three of these dimensions which are relevant to a comprehension of how teachers construct professional identities.

- Descriptive validity: The factual accuracy of the account, that it is not made up, selective or distorted.

Descriptive validity was an issue of great importance in this study. The voices of pre-service teachers were heard through oral and written narratives which were carefully recorded, transcribed, translated and analysed. Assurances were made to reduce any possible alteration or misinterpretation of the data gathered. Both semi-structured interviews and the sessions of stimulated recall (SR) were literally transcribed, followed by a process of confirmation that was undertaken by a professional bilingual secretary who double-checked the Spanish transcriptions. Once they were ready, the drafts were shared with each research participant who had the chance to clarify or rectify any misleading transcription. The researcher and the secretary went through the whole body of the data again with the intention of ascertaining descriptive validity as fully as possible. The drafts were edited several times until agreement was reached that each transcript matched the context and meaning of what was narrated by the research participant. The data collected from on-line blogs were also incorporated in this step.

- Interpretive validity: The ability of the research to capture the meanings, interpretations, terms, and intentions about situations and events, i.e. the data, as expressed by the participants/subjects themselves, in their terms.

Interpretive validity was also strongly emphasized. The process of data analysis was a subject of permanent discussion with the research supervisor and members of the ‘Enletawa’ research group<sup>15</sup> at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC). Some valuable comments and feedback resulted from participation in conferences and workshops in the UK and Colombia, where early findings were shared, and this contributed enormously to assuring interpretive validity. That sense of the socially-constructed understanding of phenomena strengthened to a considerable extent the process of data collection and analysis.

- Theoretical validity: The theoretical constructions that the researcher brings to the research, including those of the researched theory. Theoretical validity is the extent to which the research explains observed phenomena.

Theoretical validity was assured by tracing relevant and recent theoretical constructs concerning the way teacher identity has been approached in the last decades. This study has enriched the possibilities for new and more critical perspectives in this field in the future. The research findings, conceptualisations, and interpretations of the reality approached in the context of pre-service teacher professional identity construction has been extensively discussed, refined, and shared with colleagues and scholars.

The concept of reliability assumes different meanings in qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Premises such as precision and accuracy, similar results in similar contexts or ‘dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents’ are of paramount importance in quantitative research (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 146). Qualitative designs replace these notions with terms such as credibility, applicability, consistency or trustworthiness, for example (*ibid*). The debate here does not restrict the need for attenuating, yielding or validating findings in qualitative research, but rather reorients the discussion towards the analysis

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<sup>15</sup> ENLETAWA (English Language Teachers’ Awareness) is a research group at UPTC in Colombia. They are also the editors of ENLETAWA Journal.

of issues such as ‘the status position of the researcher, the choice of informants/respondents or the methods of data collection and analysis’ (Lecompte and Preissle, 1993: 334).

Transferability concerns whether or not the study could be undertaken in any other context, with a similar or different populations. This means that the ‘theory generated may be useful in understanding other similar situations’ (Cohen, *et al.*, 2007: 135). The images of professional identity that are approached in this study are exploratory rather than conclusive. To gain a closer understanding of how identities are formed, sustained or transformed, further interpretations within groups that share similar circumstances will be required.

Credibility arose as another notion of reliability. This study deals with human beings who are engaged in processes of social and cognitive growth. These are two important premises in understanding the nature of identity construction. A sense of trustworthiness has to be built through the interaction between the researcher and the participants during the interviewing process. Some traces of interaction as they are revealed and discussed during the stimulated recall (SR) session are also a source of credibility. Pre-service teacher online blogs and their stories about teaching and learning have to be considered trustworthy. The next section examines case studies which were also part of the methodological framework of this study.

### **3.3. Case Study**

The case study is claimed to be the most widely used qualitative research method in education (Borg, 2003; Gall *et al.*, 2003). Duff (2008) cites the significant role played by case studies in the growth of applied linguistics in general and second language acquisition in particular. The research literature offers broad definitions with regard to the focus, purpose and typologies of case studies. Common across the literature, however, is the notion of a case study as a method, a strategy, an approach, or an outcome of research. Moreover, most definitions quote their singular nature, the

importance of context, the access to several sources of information, and refer to the case study as observation, as well as inherent qualities of in-depth analysis. Gall *et al.*, (2003: 437) describe a case study as ‘the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon’. Yin (2009: 18) has substantially contributed to strengthening understanding of the concept, and methodology. He introduces two important issues:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident.

2. The case study inquiry

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points; and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion; and as another result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical prepositions to guide the collection and analysis.

Yin (2003b: 5) suggests three types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory.

“An exploratory case study (whether based on a single or multiple cases) aims at defining the questions and hypothesis of a subsequent (not necessarily a case) study or at determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures. A descriptive case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. An explanatory case study presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships – explaining how events happened”.

A case study provides, then, a holistic perspective to describing phenomenon. Through a case study, the researcher can explore findings that could be used as a pilot to other studies, to test theories or hypotheses, or in examining narrative accounts. It is important to note that a case ‘may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of social life’ (Theodorson & Theodorson, 1969; cited in Punch, 1998: 153). Although the scope of a case study has no limits in terms of numbers or the size of the population or the entity to be involved in the process – the citizens of a whole country could make a case - there is usually an implicit consensus that a few individuals cooperate as research participants. This trend may have arisen according to empirical assumptions and the present author has no evidence to substantiate such claims.

Just as there has been an increasing acceptance of qualitative research in education in the last two decades, studies in the field of applied linguistics, second language acquisition, classroom talk, or language testing and assessment, for example, have echoed the use of case study methodology. In such fields, findings from case studies have been prolific and influential. They share a history of research achievement in the de-construction and re-construction of former and new understandings of learning and teaching.

The interest of this study conforms to the typology of an exploratory case study. The expected outcomes could be used for further research in the investigation of teacher identity construction. Several factors informed this decision. Firstly, the exploration of teacher identity focuses on the beliefs and behaviours of six student teachers. Secondly,

this study is context and subject bounded, which means that the findings could only be explained within the context of these research participants and there is no intention to over-generalise. Finally, this study is interpretative, qualitative research. The next section examines the multi-method approach used.

### **3.4. The Multi-method Approach**

The use of two or more methods of data collection is defined here as a multi-method approach. This assumption can be explained by the belief that in drawing upon various methods the research findings can demonstrate ‘concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research’ (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007). This is widely recognised as triangulation. This term emerged, according to Bromley (1986), as a metaphor from the field of navigation, assuming that if different sources of information point to the same finding, the level of confidence in the conclusions drawn by the researcher is thought to increase. Although the notion of triangulation thus points to a certain positivist orientation, the use of three methods in this study was supported by the need to gain a multivariate perspective on the reality investigated. Put simply, if investigating, for example, how teachers construct professional, this may require the exploration of teachers’ actions, voices and reflections. Consequently, this can only be achieved by collecting varied sets of data.

Cohen *et al.* (2007: 141) define triangulation ‘as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour’. Although triangulation has been generally assumed to mean the use of various methods for data collection, different research strategies may be adopted – concerning space, time, methodological, theoretical or investigator triangulation – (*ibid*) which might strengthen the possibility of an enriched perspective on the observations and interpretations resulting from the study.



In this study the use of a multi-method approach is proposed on the assumption that it facilitates broader exploratory insights into teacher professional identities. By gathering data from a range of different events, which are also spatially and chronologically connected, it could provide a more convincing understanding, whereas important aspects might be missed if only one method was used. The process of becoming a teacher, as addressed in the previous chapter, emerges from a complex process of participation, interaction, experience, education, and development. Those multi-varied facets of the nature of teaching are hard to reconcile using a single method of data collection. On the other hand, the gathering of data from different sources could produce more comprehensive knowledge necessary to assist theory (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005a). Although the present investigation of the process of constructing identity is exploratory, the findings could yield a more reliable and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon investigated if a multi-method approach is used. Furthermore, to answer the research questions and achieve the aims of this study, the use of three methods might contribute to strengthening the findings of this research.

To answer the research questions, the study gathered data from the three different sources of interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs, and content analysis was chosen as the main analytical approach. 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 (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005a). The three methods used were expected to yield varied sets of data concerning the three main domains of the research: their experience as members of a teacher community, their beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as their sense of affiliation with the teaching profession. These methods were also chosen applying the principle of fitness for purpose. Each method offered distinctive and unique resources for exploring the participants' experience, beliefs, and reflections, as well as having direct relevance to what they did in the language classroom while teaching young learners. However, making useful connections between the three different sets of data was not as smooth a process as it may seem.

Some critical issues created tension in the research from the use a multi-method approach. For example, finding a way to cross-reference the different sets of data and integrate the findings was problematic. A second source of difficulty was the sheer volume of data. Transcription, translation and categorisation represented highly demanding and time consuming processes. This effect was mitigated to some extent by the use of technological devices that helped the researcher to accomplish these tasks. The next section examines each of the methods used for data collection.

### ***3.4.1. Interviews***

Qualitative interviewing is without doubt ‘a versatile approach to doing research’ (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 3). This research method has served extensively as a tool and principle for constructing knowledge in the fields of sociology, education, anthropology, social work, and history, among many others (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Although the ‘interview has existed, and changed over time, both as a methodological term and as a practice’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002: 33), the interest of the present study focuses on the value of interviewing in second language education. However, the debates that have arisen over decades from the positivist interpretation ‘which portrays research as rule governed and scientific knowledge as quantitative and has served to rule out qualitative interviewing as legitimate research method’ still prevail (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 48).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 2) introduced an interesting interpretation of the term ‘interview’, defining it as ‘an inter-view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest’. Such a conversation has, in their opinion, a structure and a purpose that goes beyond the spontaneous act of human daily interaction. Interviewing becomes a professional conversation where knowledge is co-constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Mann (2011) has considered the use of qualitative interviews in applied linguistics. His argument substantially addresses the notion of the interview as an active meaning-making process in which content is fundamentally co-constructed by two parties – the interviewer and interviewee. Any type of interview whether structured or semi-structured is in Mann’s words, a socially interactive encounter where ‘ideas, facts, views, details, and stories are collaboratively produced by interviewee and interviewer’ (*Ibid*: 8). Mann therefore claimed that a discourse-based method is a more suitable perspective for reflecting the interactional patterns expressed in the interview process.

Mann’s theoretical stance undoubtedly represents a necessary re-conceptualisation of the interview as a research method, and this study attempts to incorporate some of these arguments in the analysis of the data gathered. Nevertheless, as the current study is not particularly interested in the turn-by-turn negotiation of meaning, the analysis focused more on the ‘what’ rather than the ‘how’ of the interview. Although it is acknowledged that interviews involve a process of co-construction, this study to some extent considered the interactional patterns of both participants. Nevertheless, there are still interpretive limitations regarding the relative full exploration of both sides of the interaction. They are mainly explained in terms of word count in this study.

Interviews have been widely used in second language research, although developments in computer-assisted interviewing and internet-based surveys have challenged the traditional practice (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). They have traditionally come in many different forms, but three broad categories are structured, unstructured and semi-structure interviews. Wallace (1998: 146) differentiates structured interviews as tightly planned, ‘similar to a questionnaire but used orally’. By unstructured interview he means a ‘quite free-wheeling’ approach that should not lose ‘sight of the research purpose’. And by semi-structured interview he signifies ‘a kind of compromise between the two extremes’: a prepared interview schedule where ‘most of the questions will probably be open questions’. Although ‘there is no single blueprint for planning

research and its design is governed by the notion of fitness for purpose', interviewing is certainly 'a versatile approach to doing research' (Cohen, *et al.* 2007: 78).

#### **3.4.1.1. Validity and reliability in interviews**

Interviews, like any other qualitative research method, may face criticism in terms of validity and reliability. Overall, this is manifested in at least four ways:

- Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) argued that because interviews are the result of human interaction, some kind of influence of the interviewer over the interviewee is inevitable. This study accepts the characterization of an interview as a process that results from the interaction and negotiation of two people (Kvale, 1996). If so, the interviewer is not neutral.
- Emotional and personality factors may affect the data. For example, while some participants were reserved and shy, others were more open-minded and cooperative. This factor could have been mitigated as a result of the experience gained in the pilot study.
- Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) claimed that an interview might also be stress provoking. In this study there was no pre-defined formula and some decisions had to be taken strategically as the interview progressed. Such negative effects could have been mitigated by the ability of the researcher to lead the dialogue and to be ready to re-focus it or encourage participation and rapport with the interviewee. More importantly, although this study used semi-structured interviews, a general agenda was prepared in advance and some experience of interviewing had also been gained by the researcher.
- 'The research interview is not a conversation between equal partners, because the researcher defines and controls the situation' (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:

3). This was not seen as a real threat in this study, because the research participants were familiar with professional dialogues, which were already permanently scheduled as part of their training in FLP. They also participated in conferences, forums, and symposia where they were encouraged to discuss, ask questions, and manifest their points of view about any field with regard to language teaching and learning.

Overall, this section has introduced a rationale for the use of interviews as one of the chosen methods for the exploration of professional identity. The second method of stimulated recall is explored next.

#### ***3.4.2. Stimulated recall (SR)***

Stimulated recall has been used in research as part ‘of a range of introspective methods that represent a means of eliciting data about thought processes’ (Gass & Mackey, 2000: 1). The Oxford English Dictionary accounts for introspection as ‘the examination or observation of one’s mental processes’. The history of introspection includes applications in the fields of philosophy, psychology, and linguistics. Two basic assumptions underline the use of introspection: the premises that (1) ‘it is possible to observe internal processes in much the same way as one can observe external real-world events’; and (2) That ‘humans have access to their internal thought processes at some level and can verbalise those processes’ (*ibid*).

SR has long been used in second language acquisition in order to examine learners’ knowledge of a second language. Scholars in this field claim that the only observable data that allows the examination of what a learner knows are the utterances that s/he produces when using the second language. One source of criticism here is rooted in the argument that this process provides only a restricted view of learners’ knowledge (Corder, 1973). One important issue that arises as a result of this debate is

that knowledge is not directly observable, and that the researcher has access only to oral or written verbalizations of thought processes – oral reporting. Nevertheless, there are various different methods to elicit this type of data, one of which is stimulated recall. This includes ‘asking learners to introspect about their learning’ (Gass & Mackey, 2000: 2).

Verbal reporting is considered to be a specific type of introspection. Cohen (1998; cited in Gass & Mackey, 2000: 12-13) categorised three different types of verbal report in second language research:

- With self-report data, one can gain information about general approaches to something. For example, “I am a systematic learner when it comes to learning a second language”. This sort of statement might be found in a typical L2 learning questionnaire. Such statements are removed from the event in question and are of less concern here than other types of verbal reporting.
- Self-observation data can be introspective (within a short period after the event) or retrospective, where a learner reports what she or he did.
- Self-revelation is often described as thinking-aloud. A participant provides an ongoing report of his or her thought processes while performing some task.

Process tracing is also a term used to describe verbal reporting. Shavelson *et al.* (1986; cited in Gass & Mackey, 2000: 13) categorised three kinds of process tracing: verbal reporting (while performing a task); retrospective protocols (reporting a task that was performed previously), and a prompted interview (for example, watching a video-recorded lesson or listening to an audio file of a previous activity). The latter is generally acknowledged as SR. The purpose of verbal reporting is to gather data by asking research participants to verbalise ‘what is going through their minds as they are solving a problem or performing a task’ (*ibid*).

### **3.4.2.1. Validity and reliability in SR**

One limitation on the methodology of introspection is that subjects tend to make sense of their behaviour in terms of justifications rather than on the sources of such conduct. This assumption has been supported by some experiments carried out to test the function of brain hemispheres in constructing narratives (Gazzaniga, 1998). The conclusion was drawn that human beings tend to create explanations for phenomena, even when those explanations might not be guaranteed. However, this was not considered as a threat in this study, as: (1) the SR session was scheduled a short time after the lesson which was video-recorded, which can be regarded as a factor that increased the data's reliability (Bloom, 1954; cited in Gass & Mackey, 2000: 18). (2) The conversations evolved from the observation of the events that were recorded, which allowed both the interviewer and interviewee to rewind or re-check events if needed.

SR is also criticised in terms of issues such as who chooses the length and the fragments to be watched or listened to. This is certainly a factor that deserves further consideration, and the experience gained in the pilot study led the present author to take notes of relevant events that were observed during the recording (Liimatainen *et al.*, 2001; cited in Lyle, 2003: 863). Those observations were sometimes subsequently used to boost dialogue and interaction.

Another source of critique has prompted new debate about the use of videotapes to stimulate retrospective accounts. It is argued, for example, that the videotape introduces another view which was not available when the episode actually occurred. This second opportunity is believed to contribute to the participants elaborating their explanations, as they have had some time to reflect on the passage (Yinger, 1986; cited in Lyle, 2003: 864). Although this was an issue that can be ignored nor entirely solved by scheduling the SR session soon after the lesson has finished, this may have contributed to reducing the threat to reliability. More importantly, the interest of this

study is to explore how student teachers' systems of beliefs were represented in the classroom. Therefore, their opinions, reflections, and comments are fundamental aspects in uncovering 'the self', which is argued in this study to be part of the meaning of professional identities. However, the possible limitations of SR must be acknowledged and should be a matter of judgement in this type of research.

### ***3.4.3. On-line blogs***

Blogs have been increasingly used in educational research in the last decade (Clyde, 2002; Lamshed *et al.*, 2002; Oravec, 2003; Dickey, 2004; Hernandez-Ramos, 2004). The term blog appears as a reduced form of the word 'weblog', which was coined by Barger in 1997. Although, the origin of blogs can be traced back to the early stages of the modern technological irruption; the use of free, commercial blogging software seems to have begun in July 1999 (Blood, 2000). A blog is basically a webpage hyperlink that connects a web-surfer to websites of her/his interest. In simple terms, a blog is essentially an online journal or a personal diary. A blogger posts written or audio-visual material on a regular basis and may receive comments or feedback from visitors. Blogs offer extensive archival space and public access to their content.

Blogs have rapidly evolved from the use of text towards, for example, pictures, graphics and/or audio-video clips. There are some key features which characterise blog usage. This is a webpage that is regularly updated with new posts which appear in reverse chronological order, with the latest entry is available at the top of the page. A wide range of interactive possibilities have resulted from technological development. A reader can leave a comment or opinion about the posts or notify the blogger that a comment has been posted on the reader's blog. Any post is automatically archived and accessible to be searched. Blogs can be conceived of as a versatile virtual network of knowledge sharing, argumentation, reflection or communication.



Diue (2004) highlights some recurrent uses of blogs in education. For example, individual learners or a class can post school work or discuss assignments. Teachers seem to use them to post assignments to students, present their research and develop ideas as well as interact with other professional communities. However, despite the increasing use of blogs in research in recent years, there is not much published material about this method (but see, Williams & Jacobs, 2004). The rise of popularity in the use of information technology among those involved with schools has had a great impact on the range of approaches to blogging. New forms of, for example, e-mail, electronic discussion forums, blogs, and blackboard or e-journals have created alternative modes of interaction and communication.

While journals in education used to be restricted to very small audiences, or to instructors and supervisors in most cases, computer-assisted communication can play an essential role in creating effective modes of cooperation and professional dialogue. Hernandez-Ramos (2004) conducted a research study based on the use of blogs and online discussion forums in a course of teacher preparation. The findings reported increased student communication and collaboration and better comprehension of technological integration, as well as encouragement for reflective practice.

#### ***3.4.3.1. Validity and reliability in on-line blogs***

The main sources of critique of blogs arise from questions of writing consistency and frankness. Needless to say, writing regular entries demands a process of editing and re-writing which may be a hard task to achieve. Bloggers may end up writing to please the researchers or supervisors and not as a result of a process of professional engagement and reflection (Hernández-Ramos, 2004). Nevertheless, this was not considered a threat in this study, since keeping a learning journal had been adopted in the Foreign Language Programme (FLP) as part of the teaching training programme, and the students had been writing learning diaries and journals regularly during the four previous years. This concern could be transformed into strength if teaching education

programmes included, for example, journal training in the curriculum. This might encourage more critical and analytical thinking.

Although students use technology in a variety of modes and with several different purposes, writing publicly on the web with free access to any blog visitor may discourage participation and commitment to posting regular entries (Divitine, 2005). This issue is also connected with the fact that, although students use the web for interactional purposes, blogs ‘are a relatively new phenomenon, and their uses in education are also still being explored and developed’ (Hernández-Ramos, 2004: 2). This is certainly a threat, which could have been mitigated by: (1) the experience gained in the pilot study; (2) the fact that the blogs were part of the course requirements; and (3) that the blogs were password protected and access was restricted to the university tutor, the researcher, and the other research participants. The next section describes the analytical approach used in this study.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

There are numerous analytical approaches to qualitative data. Content analysis is a method for the analysis of written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988). This method has been generally defined as ‘the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication’ (Berelson, 1952: 18). Cavanagh (1997) expanded this concept by suggesting that content analysis classifies messages, words, phrases and the like which split the same meaning into categories. Although it emerged initially as a quantitative approach (Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004), content analysis has been increasingly used in qualitative data analysis in nursing and education over the last decade (see for example, Latter *et al.*, 2000; Soderberg and Lundman, 2001; Borg, 2006).

Despite its criticisms, content analysis is a method for analysing data that can be used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. Furthermore, it may be used in either

an inductive or deductive way. While inductive content analysis is recommended when there is not enough existing knowledge about the phenomenon to be investigated, deductive techniques are used when there is prior knowledge and the objective of the study is to test hypotheses. The next step concerns the researcher's orientation towards questions of manifest or latent content. Analysing what the text says – the visible, obvious components - favours manifest content. In contrast, the interpretation of the underlying meaning of the text – for example, silence, sighs, laughter, posture, etc - privileges latent content (Kondracki *et al.*, 2002). Questions of both manifest and latent content deal with the levels and depth of interpretation, and researchers could integrate these in the analysis of data.

One fundamental issue when using content analysis is deciding upon the appropriate unit of analysis. Although there are different interpretations in the literature about what constitutes a unit of analysis, it is generally accepted in terms of the context of interpretation - a whole interview, for example (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). On the other hand, the concept of a meaning unit or coded unit closely relates to specific application of content analysis used. This is the selected interpretative fragment of the unit of analysis that refers to the same central meaning – a word, phrase, statement, or paragraph, for example. The literature also offers various concepts with regard to the selection of the unit of meaning, which derives directly from decisions about shortening the text (reduction, distillation or condensation) while still conserving the essence of a message.

The label of a meaning unit is known in content analysis literature as a code, which is generally accepted as a tool that allows the data to be interpreted. A code fundamentally relates to creating categories. Defining category is a process of grouping content. The literature highlights the fact that no item of data should fit into more than one category. This can then include subcategories which are organised around themes. Having briefly described the nature of content analysis and its concept and

methodology, the next section examines general issues of validity with regard to the categorisation and coding approach.

### **3.6. Validity of the Categorisation and Coding Approach**

Once the data are collected, the next step is to identify the key concepts across texts. They are then labelled with codes, which consist of groups of similar themes. These themes form categories. The process of coding and categorisation was used as an analytical strategy for the data gathered from the interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs in the present study.

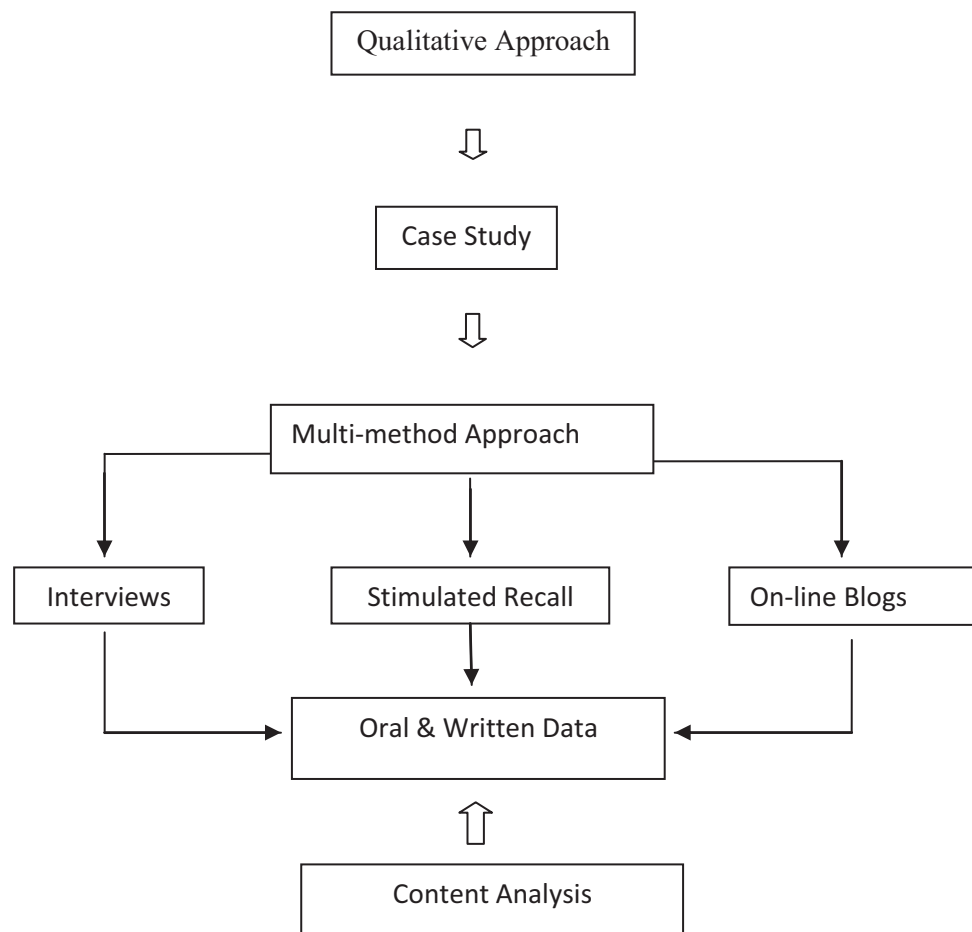
Criticisms of the coding and categorisation approach include the following:

- The codes and categories are the result of removing parts of the text (Bryman, 2008) so that what remains seems to resemble a salient theoretical theme. This may result in the highlighted part losing the meaning of the general text, as well as the context where the data occurred. However, in this study no part of the text was removed. The use of NVIVO 8 software allows the identification of the method, the participant, the source, the date of creation, and the creator, as well as the dates of modifications. As a result, the source file was not subject to modification. Moreover, this software files the categories and the original text as two separate documents.
- The coding and categorisation approach is also criticised on the grounds that the data are fragmented. This may cause loss of narrative flow and interpretive misunderstandings. This potential threat could have been mitigated in this study because: (1) the questions for interviews and stimulated recall did not prompt

long responses; and (2) the entries posted on on-line blogs were also limited and precise.

- Criticism may also arise from the use of categories that already exist in the literature. This may lead interpretation of the data simply to fit preconceived notions. However, this leads to a process of the re-elaboration of key themes, categories, and new phenomena that resulted from the process of data collection and analysis.

Figure 3.1 Methodological structures for exploring professional identities



## **Summary**

This methodology chapter has presented the rationale for choosing a qualitative research approach, as well as for using an exploratory case study. The overall foundations of semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall and online blogs, as methods for data collection have been theoretically examined according to the principle of fitness for purpose, as well as in terms of validity and reliability. Content analysis, as the analytical approach used, was also described. The next chapter on research design illustrates how the constructs introduced here were designed, developed and represented

## **Chapter 4. Research Design**

### **Chapter Overview**

The previous chapter introduced the methodological framework that underpins this study. This was explained in terms of a qualitative approach. Issues of validity and reliability were also discussed. The three methods of data collection used in the study of interviews, stimulated recall (SR), and on-line blogs were introduced along with the analytical approach of content analysis. This chapter describes how these methodological principles were designed, developed, and represented in the context of this research. This includes discussion of the research aims (4.1), questions (4.2), and context (4.3). The chapter also explains the process of data collection (4.4) and how the three methods of data collection were fit for the purpose of exploring the construction of professional identities among student teachers. The techniques of data gathering, coding, categorisation, and analysis are also illustrated (4.5). This chapter also discussed ethical issues (4.6) and reflexivity arising from the research (4.7). The experience gained in conducting a pilot study was also reported (4.8).

### **4.1. Aims**

The overall aims of this exploratory research study are:

- To gain a closer understanding of how the identity of teachers is constructed while doing the final year practicum, and how this identity is shaped through their professional practice.

- To describe the connection between pre-service teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices.
- To estimate the impact of teaching practice on student-teachers' professional goals for the future.

### ***Research questions (RQ)***

RQ1: How does the act of belonging to a teacher community, while doing the final year practicum, form, sustain or transform teacher identities?

RQ2: In what ways are the systems of knowledge and beliefs of pre-service teachers manifested in their teaching practices with young learners?

RQ3: What is the impact of the practicum on pre-service teachers' goals for the future?

## **4.3. Research Context**

### ***4.3.1. Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC).***

This study was implemented at UPTC. It is an institute of higher education that is under the supervision of the National Ministry of Education. UPTC<sup>16</sup> offers undergraduate programmes in areas such as education, social and natural sciences, engineering,

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<sup>16</sup> UPTC was officially recognized in 1953, although its origins go back to 1827 when the first Universidad de Boyacá was founded. Education has been since the beginning one of its main professional interests. UPTC offers undergraduate programmes in education, social and natural sciences, engineering, nursing, economics, law, and medical studies, among others. Master and PhD programmes are currently offered also.



nursing, administration and economics, law, and medical studies, among others. Some postgraduate Master and doctoral programmes have also been offered in the last decade.

UPTC is organized around 11 faculties and 53 undergraduate programmes. The Faculty of Sciences of Education is one of the oldest and was created in 1934. It has trained undergraduate and postgraduate teachers in different subjects for over 75 years, and currently offers ten teaching programmes in mathematics, physics, languages, nursery education, statistics, information technology and psycho-pedagogy. The School of Modern Languages also belongs to the Faculty of Sciences of Education and has long contributed to the Colombian educational system, placing generations of educators who have served primary or secondary schools as well as universities inside and outside the country. This faculty was officially created in 1933 and, in its early days, offered professional training in Spanish, Latin, Greek and Foreign Languages. The curriculum was modified around the departments of Spanish, Literature, English and French in 1970. Since then the School of Modern Languages has awarded teaching degrees in Spanish-English, Spanish-French or English-French.

#### ***4.3.2. Foreign language programme (FLP)***

FLP was officially created in 1995 as a bachelor's degree in foreign language teaching with majors in English and French. It was designed in response to a new demand that emerged when the National Ministry of Education ordered that at least one foreign language had to be included in the curriculum of the primary school system. UPTC aims to provide education for prospective teachers who would be suitably prepared to teach languages to young learners in nursery and primary school. The first cohort of teacher candidates enrolled in 1997. Although part of its motivation concerned the fulfilment of the new policy issued by the Ministry of Education, there is no doubt that UPTC was also committed to helping ease the social and political crisis that Colombia has faced for a considerable time. Education has a responsibility 'to prepare a new generation of

citizens able to know and exercise their own rights and to respect the rights of others; to be educated in freedom and democracy and to recognise the value of other cultures through the study of foreign languages and their culture' (FLP supporting document for academic recognition, 2008: 10)

FLP has trained over 250 primary school teachers in the last 10 years. Most of these have easily found employment in state and private schools due to demand that increases every year. These first generations of practitioners have responded positively with innovation, creativity and professional commitment to the construction of their part of the history of teaching and the pedagogy of teaching languages to young learners in Colombia. The teacher candidates follow a ten-semester-based programme that includes pedagogic knowledge, foreign language competence, and research foundations plus progressive teaching experience which ends with 200 hours of teaching practice.

Pedagogic knowledge is considered as a foundational field to prepare prospective language teachers. FLP has scheduled 10 modules that are planned to give the teacher candidate a progressive teaching contact and experience. Each student begins by 'adopting' a child with whom they have to explore their teaching skills (first semester), then they move on to teaching observation (from second to fourth semesters), pre-teaching experience (semesters five to nine) and the teaching practicum (semester ten). They also attend a module on the didactics of the mother tongue, workshops on literacy, sociolinguistics, and epistemology, and three modules of music.

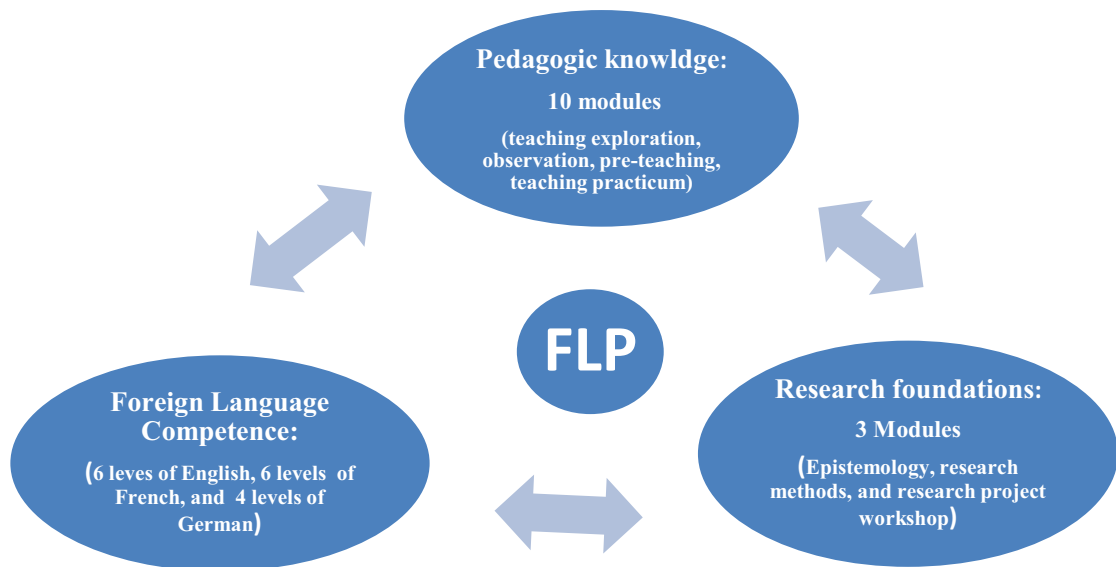
Foreign language competence is scheduled in FLP around the study of two compulsory languages – English and French – plus an optional one – German. The curriculum is designed on the basis of strengthening the prospective teacher's communicative competence as a tool for effective teaching. Students follow a compulsory course route that includes six levels of English and French plus three additional advanced workshop modules in the last three semesters. They also attend two

more modules in English and French children's literature, a module in translation and four modules of German as an optional choice. The linguistic component of FLP is scheduled 'on the basis of a competitive world that requires well-grounded professionals able to respond to the demands of the new century' (FLP supporting document for academic recognition, 2008: 10).

The research foundation modules complement the curriculum of FLP. This component is seen as responding to the new demands of education in the new millennium. Research activity is stressed in each of the modules in the training programme, and three specific modules are scheduled in the second, fourth and eighth semesters: epistemology, research methodology, and a research degree project workshop. The training route ends with an exploratory research study that each candidate has to submit as a requirement in order to obtain her/his degree in language teaching.

Eighteen qualified and experienced teachers are the members of academic staff delivering the programme. Two of them hold doctoral degrees in teaching French as a foreign language, eleven hold Master's degrees in applied linguistics to the teaching of English as a foreign language in areas such as literature, didactics or composition; the remaining five majored in disciplines related to foreign language teaching or Spanish as a mother tongue. Some members of staff are also involved as part of the research team or lecturers in the Master's programme in foreign language teaching that is currently offered at UPTC. Some of FLP teachers are recognised researchers who have played an influential role in teacher training over the last two decades in Colombia. Figure 4.1. below summarises the three fundamental components designed for the teacher preparation at FLP.

Figure 4.1. The three components of the teacher preparation model at FLP



#### ***4.3.3. The research participants***

The group of participants selected for the present study were six participants: three female and three male final year students in the foreign language programme at UPTC. They were prospective primary school teachers in their final training stage. 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 (see appendix A). 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 6 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 by each (see appendix B).

Each research participant’s profile was organised around their learning background, brief family history, achievements and professional expectations (see appendix C). Their identities were protected using pseudonyms selected from a list of common English first names and Spanish surnames. The personal information was gathered from the entry interview and their on-line blog (entry 1). Data were also gathered from the entry questionnaire used as part of the pilot study (see appendix H). It was compiled by the researcher with the intention of providing a detailed biographical sketch to be used as a reference. Table 4.1 below shows the basic personal details of each research participant.

Table 4.1 Research participants’ basic details.

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age</b>
<b>Sarah Milanes</b>	23
<b>Julie Petro</b>	23
<b>Christine Benedetti</b>	24
<b>Andrew Lopez</b>	24
<b>Nicholas Montenegro</b>	24
<b>Jacob Borja</b>	34

#### ***4.3.4. The researcher***

The researcher’s link to the institutional setting is briefly clarified here. The present author is a full-time university tutor and member of FLP staff. The research participants were his former students at early stages of their time at the UPTC. During the three year leave, the researcher had no personal or academic contact with any of the research participants, and returned to FLP as a visiting researcher. They were officially informed that he had no direct or indirect relationship with assessment or course evaluation, and it

was strongly emphasised that their wish to take part as research participants was absolutely voluntary. No feedback was provided about their lesson plans or lesson implementation, for example. The researcher's role was strictly limited to video-recording two lessons and to carrying out the interviews according to plan, sitting at the back of the room in classes and merely operating the video-recorder only, and being acutely aware of the importance of not causing any kind of interference.

The researcher's relationship as their former teacher with the research participants was an issue to be considered. The possible effects of this on the research results were to some extent mitigated by his lack of any involvement in teaching or academic decisions that might affect their progression. Having been away for nearly three years also contributed to lessening possible bias effects. The use of a multi-method approach for data collection was also expected to contribute to the reliability of the research findings.

The group of supervisors were six full time teachers belonging to the school of modern languages – three of English and three of French. As the group of student teachers had to teach English and French, one supervisor in each language was assigned. They were divided into three teams, each team supervising five students. Regular supervising meetings were arranged twice per week, usually on Mondays, to present the lesson plans for the following week and on Wednesdays to discuss feedback. The supervisory team also planned a monthly meeting with all supervisees where they discussed general issues or specific topics concerning the teaching practicum. The supervisors scheduled regular classroom visits to observe the student teachers' practice. Students normally knew in advance neither the date nor the time of these visits. They generally observed one-hour lessons followed by sessions to provide feedback. The supervisory team was complemented by a school-based mentor. Unfortunately, as they were not language teachers, the supervising duties were assumed by university tutors. Nevertheless, the school-based mentors were regularly present during the lessons and

they also provided feedback with regard to, for example, classroom and topic management, use of resources or lesson implementation and development.

The supervisor team were the present researcher's former colleagues and they were individually informed about the research purpose. Any commentary to them about the research participants' teaching strengths or weaknesses was avoided. The researcher had no direct contact with lesson feedback, which was generally provided some time after the lesson in private meetings, either at the school or in the supervisor's office.

#### ***4.3.5. The pupils***

The group of student-teachers - six in total - participating in this study taught English and French to young learners in public urban schools in the region of Boyacá, Colombia. Pupils were attending nursery, and years 2, 3 and 4. They generally came from families of low social status. Children were grouped based on an average mixed-class size of 40 pupils, except at nursery whose class size averaged 12. Pupils generally displayed a high level of language learning engagement and will to participate in the planned activities. The observation of video-recorded lessons revealed a pattern of well-behaved children who followed the directions given by the teacher. The videos also included scenes of children talking with the teacher and showing affection and respect.

Children exhibited enthusiasm for learning and collaboration. They brought notebooks, pens, and colour pencils to the lesson. They were particularly keen to go up to the white board in front of the class and fulfil different learning activities. They generally raised their hands to signify their wish to participate in classroom activities whenever the teacher asked them to do so. The participating teachers normally addressed each child by her/his first name and the pupils very often called them 'teacher'. The classroom environment displayed broadly rapport between student-

teachers and pupils. Laughter, jokes, and a sense of harmony were among the characteristics of the lessons observed, although there were a few cases where teachers exercised their authority by raising their tone of voice or demanding proper behaviour. The researcher noted that some of the kids hugged or even kissed their teachers before or after the lesson. Because of the scope of this study, data about the pupils were not gathered.

#### **4.4. Data Collection**

The data were collected over a four-month period, during the final year of the participants' five-year primary language teaching Bachelor of Education degree in Colombia. The three methods used, two were in direct interaction with the researcher (interviews and stimulated recall), and one took place in a more personally-oriented process of reflection (on-line blogs). The data consisted of oral and written narratives which were gathered through a series of professional dialogues during the teaching practicum, as well as video-recordings of on-going lessons.

As part of the research design, the study comprised two phases. Firstly, a pilot study was conducted in 2009, three months before the main study. It included conducting a short questionnaire, testing the interview model, and video-recording a lesson followed by a stimulated recall session. This process lasted for three weeks. Secondly, the main study consisted of two stages. The first stage of induction included choosing the research participants, introducing the research aims, signing consent forms, and interviewing the research participants (entry interview). This lasted for two weeks. The second stage of implementation comprised: video-recording two on-going lessons for each research participant followed by a session of stimulated recall, exit interviews, and collecting data from on-line blogs. This lasted ten weeks. The present author conducted all the acts involved in both stages as summarised in table 4.2. Then, each of the data collection methods, as well as the rationale for using them, is examined in the next section.



Table 4.2. The research design phases

Phase No.	Phase Name	Weeks	Activities	Method
1	<b>Pilot Study</b>	3	Applying a short questionnaire, evaluating a model of semi-structured interview, and on-line blog and video-recording a lesson followed by a SR session.	Interviews SR On-line Blogs
2	<b>Induction</b>	2	Choosing the research participants, introducing aims, signing consent forms, interviewing 6 student teachers.	Entry interviews
3	<b>Implementation</b>	10	Video-recording 2 on-going lessons per each participant followed by SR, collecting data from on-line blogs, interviewing.	SR On-line blogs Exit interviews

#### ***4.4.1. The rationale for using interviews***

Interviews were chosen as the best tool for exploring the process of constructing professional identities, for several reasons. Firstly, understanding the nature of becoming a primary language teacher is essentially a two-sided dynamic that entails negotiation and interaction. To investigate this, interviews were deemed the most suitable tool. Thirdly, as professional identities entail an understanding of the internal and external images that teachers form of themselves, the exploration is essentially driven by discourse. In the context of this study, interviewees had a lot to tell about, for example, their personal histories, backgrounds, and cognitive understanding of teaching and learning. Finally, by interviewing the research participants twice during the process before and after the intervention, this method allowed the researcher to monitor the participants' perceptions, beliefs, motivations, attitudes, and expectations about the nature of becoming a teacher (see appendix D for interview schedule).

Interviews also provided an opportunity for the researcher to interact directly on two occasions with each of the research participants. These face-to-face encounters facilitated clarification follow up questions, re-direction of the conversation, if the interview was out of focus. The researcher could also observe non-verbal communication, eye contact, or frankness, which was used to further the conversation. Spanish was used as the language of the interaction, since this was believed to promote the flow of the conversation and to represent spontaneous tool for the expression of meaning.

The entry interview was structured around general issues and lasted one hour (see appendix E). Topics included family history, aspirations, and learning experiences, for example. This interview also explored professional dimensions of student-teachers' experience such as choosing teaching as a professional alternative, expectations of and motivations to pursue a teaching career, among other questions. This interview followed a conventional question-answer pattern of interaction and the macro-model questions were refined as a result of experience gained in the pilot study. A digital audio-recording was used as a tool. The dialogues were transcribed verbatim by a bilingual secretary and the researcher and produced a total of 46,954 words. The NAVE Player software package was used as a transcribing tool. NVIVO 8, a highly sophisticated software package for qualitative analysis, was used as a tool for the categorisation and coding of excerpts (see appendix F for a general synopsis of NVIVO 8 software).

The exit interview was scheduled at the end of the four-month research project. It lasted around thirty minutes per research participant. This meeting transcended the question-answer model and became more of a professional dialogue. There were interesting outcomes, which were professionally addressed, discussed or reflected upon. Topics included the school environment, short and long term professional goals, motivation and beliefs about teaching and learning (see appendix G). A digital audio-recording device was used as a tool. These dialogues were also transcribed verbatim by a bilingual secretary and the researcher and produced a total of 11,973 words. The

conversations were transcribed using NAVE Player and NVIVO 8 enabled the process of categorisation and coding.

The transcription of interviews was a very complex and time consuming activity, and it took the present author two months to transcribe 9 hours of audio-recording files from the entry and exit interviews. Each file was listened to at least three times to make an overall sense of the narrative context, the themes, and the way the conversation evolved. After that, transcription started. A bilingual secretary helped in this stage. Once the researcher completed the literal transcription of a file, it was sent via e-mail to the appropriate research participant with an MS-word file attached. Although they generally agreed on the transcript, there were a few cases where slight changes were suggested. If so, they were revised and the corrections included. The next stage comprised the process of coding and categorisation, which generated the themes used for analysis. The categories were translated into English.

#### ***4.4.2. The rationale for using SR***

SR has been used with outstanding and varied research results and has re-emerged as an important method in education (Lindgen & Sullivan, 2003; Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Mackey, *et al.*, 2007). Various factors were taken into consideration in this study in choosing SR as a suitable method for exploring the correspondence between student teachers' beliefs and classroom practice. Firstly, it is argued in this study that professional identities are constructed from teachers' internal images – their knowledge and beliefs. If so, such images are only manifested in discourse. Secondly, SR bridges the connection between what teachers 'know, believe, and do' (Borg, 2006: 2). While the other two methods – interviews and on-line blogs – gathered data about beliefs, perceptions, or knowledge; SR collected data on what they did, as well as interpretations of what was going on in the lessons. Thirdly, in spite of the criticism of using video recordings as a strategy in SR, this was a tool that provided evidence of

what the student teachers were doing. Without it, important episodes in lessons would have been missed. Finally, this method provided extra value in terms of the analysis, since the researcher could use both the video and the audio-recorded SR session retrospectively as many times as needed.

Video-recordings of on-going lessons were used as part of a task-based interview and as a strategy to generate talk between the researcher and the research participants. Each student-teacher was video-recorded twice while teaching English to children. Each session lasted 60 minutes. 12-hours of video recordings were gathered as a result of this process. The voices of the research participants were heard as they recalled passages in the lessons. These passages of the lesson were transcribed in detail as the data were gathered in English (see appendix I for transcription conventions). A British speaker checked the transcripts. The researcher asked them to recall what came to their mind in that particular moment of the lesson. Participants were minimally trained with very simple instructions, which were deemed sufficient in the early stages of this procedure.

The dialogues between the researcher and the student-teachers were carried out in Spanish. The use of the mother tongue facilitated the flow and spontaneity of conversation and enabled all kinds of feelings and thoughts about professional practice to be heard. The comments were audio-recorded and transcribed, analysed and translated into English. A voluntary written consent form allowing recording, translating and publishing was signed by each research participant. The participating teacher was allowed to choose the fragments to be discussed or, as the video ran, she/he could stop it to make comments. The research participants were allowed to initiate recall themselves, which was intended to reduce the possible interference of the researcher in selection. However, if a participant did not initiate a dialogue, a semi-structured interview-based model was used as a strategy.

Once the video-recording of the lesson had stopped the researcher asked: ‘Any comment? What’s your sense of what was going on at this particular moment in the lesson?’ As the dialogue progressed, questions included: ‘Did you have any particular objectives in mind in this passage of the lesson? What were you noticing about the students? If there was a long gap without any comment by the student-teacher, the researcher asked questions such as: ‘What were you trying to accomplish here? Or what were your thoughts or feelings at this point?’

The SR was scheduled shortly after the lesson finished. Each recall meeting lasted around forty-five minutes. Audio recording files of over thirteen hours in total length resulted from this process. Each file was listened to at least three times, aiming to make an overall sense of the topics covered, as well as how the dialogue evolved. The dialogues were transcribed verbatim and produced a total of 54,765 words. A Colombian bilingual secretary helped again at this stage. A British bilingual translator checked the excerpts translated also. The transcripts were read twice aiming to avoid any possible misinterpretation. Each full text was forwarded as a Word file to the appropriate research participant. They replied to the e-mail and in a few cases suggested valuable comments or suggested slight modifications. NAVE Player and NVIVO 8 provided the technological support for effective and advanced data transcription, processing, and coding. The data were coded and categorised as explained in the previous two chapters, and the themes used for analytical purposes were translated into English.

#### ***4.4.3. The rationale for using on-line blogs***

The current use of blogs, which are believed to promote reflexion and learning as a research method, may suggest ‘that blogs and academic discourse are natural allies’ (Williams & Jacobs, 2004: 239). Blogs can provide, for example, a forum for academic discussion, and professional development. Several factors informed the decision to

choose on-line blogs as part of the multi-method approach in exploring the construction of professional identities. Firstly, while the other two methods gathered the data from direct face-to-face encounters between the researcher and participants, on-line blogs took advantage of a personal self-driven strategy. Secondly, blogging or journaling already involve processes of retrospection and introspection, with the former fostering a second critical view of the teaching events, and the latter enabling inner thoughts to be revealed. Such internal images of feelings, reflections, and emotions that may have resulted from the teaching experience could not easily have been identified through any other method. This also allowed their voices to be heard in a more private and personal mode. Thirdly, the data gathered provided narratives of student teachers' internal images, as well how they perceived the act of belonging to a teaching community.

The blogs in this study are online diaries that the student-teachers wrote on a regular basis about their teaching experiences during the practicum. They established connections between knowledge and practical experience and are believed to engage the blogger in a process of reflection and professional development (Yost *et al.* 2000). The blogs were planned as a key instrument for data collection in the attempt to gain insights into the affective factors that might not be visible in the data yielded by interviews and SR. On-line blogs can express in-depth insights about those aspects of teaching experiences that the other two methods might not reveal. From the process of regularly-posted entries, the data gathered allowed lived stories to be interpreted, including for example, those concerning language teaching, classroom experience, or interactions with members of teacher communities. The blog entries were written in Spanish in order to facilitate linguistic confidence. Excerpts chosen for this study were translated into English by the researcher and later proofread by a British translator.

A preliminary training session about blog organisation was scheduled, because the pilot study revealed despite the students' familiarity with modern information technology systems, blogs were not a common resource used by the research participants. Since blogs are especially conducive to journal writing, but this was not a

regular practice of pre-service teachers. Blog training included some general prompts about design and organisation which encouraged them to post their entries, especially in the initial stages. Table 4.3 summarises the main stages followed in this study.

Table 4.3. Resign design schedule

Week	Date	Description	Method	Data gathered
1	22 – 26 February	Induction Week: Project introduction and research participant selection		
2	1 – 5 March	Induction week: data set 1. 6 individual semi-structured interviews (60' per research participant).	Interviewing: (entry interview)	6 hours of audio recordings
3- 6	8 March – 10 April	Teaching Period: data sets 2 & 3. 4 weeks 60' videoed lesson + 45' SR per research participant	SR,  On-line Blogs	6 hours of video-recorded lessons + 4.5 hours of audio-recordings  4 weekly entries
7	12 – 16 April	Research progression: Adjustment and evaluation		
8 - 11	19 April – 15 May	Teaching Period: data sets 4 & 5. 4 weeks 60' videoed lesson + 45' SR per research participant.	SR,  On-line Blogs	6 hours of video-recorded lessons + 4.5 hours of audio-recordings  4 weekly entries
12	17 – 21 May	Closing period: data set 6 6 individual semi-structured interviews (30' per research participant)	Interviewing: (exit interview)	3 hours of audio-recordings

Student-teachers were asked to post a weekly blog entry. The first two entries were agreed to include information on each pre-service teacher's profile and background. Then a more general approach evolved and the topic of each entry was

oriented towards describing the most rewarding and/or frustrating teaching experiences in the week, how they impacted on him/her and what was learnt. The intention was to go beyond the bare description of incidents, and the research participants were allowed to post any content that in their opinion could contribute to strengthening their commitment as teachers. Although the blogs allowed any web visitor access, there was no feedback left and in only 4 blogs did the supervisor leave feedback concerning blog design rather than the posted entries. Quotations were taken from the blog content and were coded and categorised using NVIVO 8.

#### **4.5. Data Analysis**

The data gathered were analysed following the methodological procedures of content analysis. This approach has developed fundamental theoretical foundations and applications in quantitative research (Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004), qualitative content analysis has also been applied to a variety of data in nursing research and education in the last decade (see for example, Latter *et al.*, 2000; Soderberg & Lundman, 2001; Borg, 2006). Content analysis as a research method is used to analyse written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988).

The process of data analysis focused on themes that were manifested in the data, being fundamentally concerned with what the text said and described - its visible and obvious components (Kondracki *et al.*, 2002). The units of analysis were represented by fully transcribed interviews (six entry and six exit interviews), twelve fully transcribed stimulated recall sessions, and eight on-line blog entries. The resulting texts were read several times to gain a sense of them as a whole unit. The transcripts were returned to the research participants for data authentication prior to analysis, and any changes suggested were incorporated. A meaning unit, which is the structural text of analysis, was generally condensed to a maximum five-line excerpt. Condensation of text refers to a process of shortening the unit of analysis but preserving the core meaning. Each



excerpt was described and interpreted. 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 from theoretical framework underpinning this study. These categories were derived from the methodological purpose of theory testing, in this case deductive content analysis. This is explained in more detail in the section below – the categorisation and coding system. Each theme was coded as a tree node using NVIVO 8, which is a computer assisted tool for qualitative analysis. Each category was divided into subcategories – single nodes. The coded categories were translated into English. This selective approach avoided the translation of passages which were not relevant to the topic under investigation, and also contributed to saving a lot of time.

Translation of the data from Spanish was very complex, due to general concerns about the accurate representation of meaning in terms of what was expressed in Spanish and what resulted from translation into English. How to maintain the core meanings and ideas of the research participants was a central issue. To minimise the possible effects of misleading interpretations of data, two methods were used. Firstly, translations were checked by a bilingual secretary and the researcher as well as by two members of the ENLETAWA research group. Their feedback was taken into consideration and modifications were incorporated when deemed appropriate. Secondly, a professional bilingual translator checked the transcripts and provided feedback. In cases where doubts arose, the researcher and the bilingual secretary made decisions about the final translation. Nevertheless, the accurate representation of meaning cannot be fully guaranteed. The effect of bias could be reduced by the fact that this study look for themes rather than precise meaning of single words. This might not affect the core meaning of a chosen fragment.

Each excerpt is displayed in the next chapter on data analysis, including the name of the research participant and the method used. For example, *Sarah, M, EI*. The letter E stands for entry and I for interview. This means that the extract was taken from the entry interview. Other labels include: ExI (exit interview), SR1 (stimulated recall 1), and Bg E3 (blog entry 3), preceded by the name of the participant. Another label represents the transcript of a passage taken from the video recorded lesson and appearing in the data as in, for example, *Nicholas, M. Video-recorded lesson 1. 00:18':27"*. This includes the name of the participant, the source – video recorded lesson 1 – as well as the recording time – 00 hours: 18 minutes: 27 seconds.

#### **4.6. The Categorisation and Coding System**

The categorisation and coding system used was guided by the theoretical framework underpinning this study: communities of practice, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, and professional goals for the future. The research is theoretically and methodologically focussed on three research questions: how the act of belonging to a teacher community forms, sustains, or transforms teacher identity; the ways the systems of knowledge and beliefs of student teachers are manifested in their teaching practices with young learners; and the impact of the practicum on pre-service teachers' goals for the future. Themes relating to each were analysed separately using data acquired from the three types of data collection used. Data were transcribed verbatim and transcriptions were read several times and uploaded to NVIVO 8, which provides coding tools.

The process of categorisation and coding essentially entailed the testing of theory in which the three areas explained above provided a general framework for categorisation purposes. The theoretical framework of CoP guided the coding system for the first research question concerning how a teacher community shapes professional identity, which was framed under the four categories of engagement, alignment, imagination (Wenger, 1999) and choosing teaching (Clarke, 2008).

All of the data from interviews and on-line blogs were then pre-coded using NVIVO 8 with regard to the concepts within and characteristics of each category. Each set of codes was read several times and grouped into tree nodes, which are the categorisation tools used in NVIVO. A tree node is a code for a general category, which is then divided into subcategories named single nodes. These were coded according to the main theme identified in each extract. This method was validated through discussions with the research supervisor, presentations in data sessions, and group discussion as well as feedback from a group of colleagues in Colombia who read the excerpts and the categorisations.

The following example illustrates the categorisation process undertaken. A tree node was coded 'choosing teaching'. Data from interviews and on-line blogs from the six research participants were read several times and twenty two excerpts were selected. These excerpts were then subcategorised into single nodes, which were coded as the role of family (7), financial reasons (2), ICFES test score (1), the role of past teachers (6), university location (1), and the role of foreign languages (5). The figure shown in parenthesis represents the number of entries fitting into each single node. The three highest scores were then marked as being representative of the category; here, the role of family, past teachers, and foreign languages. The same process was applied to the three other categories of engagement, alignment and imagination.

The second area examined in the research was the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice as conceptualised in the theoretical framework of Grossman (1995). Although Grossman introduced four general domains for the study of teachers' knowledge, most research has concentrated on 'content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of self' (Grossman, 1995: 20). Data taken from each of the research participants in interviews, on-line blogs, and SR were read several times and excerpts fitting the three domains mentioned above were coded as tree nodes. Twenty-five samples were identified and coded: content knowledge (13), general pedagogical

knowledge (3), and knowledge of self (9). The two most frequently coded were knowledge of content and self. Data for these two tree nodes were read several times and grouped into single nodes which were labelled according to the themes within them. The same process of single node revision, feedback, and agreement was followed as described above.

The third area of the research concerned the research participants' professional goals for the future, as identified in the theoretical framework of teacher development (Glatthorn, 1995). Two related domains were career and staff development. Data for these two categories were coded resulting fifteen excerpts, most of which (13) fitted the career development theme which was then chosen to illustrate the research participants' professional goals. The excerpts coded were then narrowed down into a sample for each research participant to be included in the final report. The ethical issues taken into consideration in this study are described in the next section.

#### **4.7. Ethical Considerations**

The present researcher has abided by the rules and principles that have been coded as standard regulations which have to be accepted and followed, and which were conceived with the intention of preserving scholarly ethics and integrity, and consequently protecting research participants from, for example, dishonesty or invasion of privacy. Three types of ethical consideration were successfully taken into account in this study. Firstly, approval was obtained from the School of Modern Languages and the Faculty of Sciences of Education at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia – UPTC. The Dean of the Faculty and Head of the School were informed of the aims, the methodology, and the expected outcomes of the study. This approval was also supported by a formal letter sent by the research supervisor – a member of staff in the School of Education, Communication and Social Sciences at Newcastle University. This process was formally addressed before starting the process of data collection.

Secondly, the participants' consent to the study was explained, discussed, and obtained in writing (see appendix B). They were also informed about their right to remain or remove themselves from the process at any stage. Consequently, they participated without any pressure or promise of any reward in return. Thirdly, what the group of pre-service teachers believed, or did was treated as personal, contextual, subjective and exploratory rather than conclusive.

#### **4.8. Reflexivity**

It is worth noting here that all of the research participants including the subject sample, the supervising team, and the school-based mentors, as well as the researcher, are geographically, institutionally, and even discursively specific. The purpose of this research study is to explore how pre-service teachers construct professional identities. Although the field of interest is predominantly educative in nature, this might necessarily entail criticism of the teacher education programme or the institution where it is currently offered. In exploring the process of identity construction, which is claimed to be significantly shaped as a result of the teacher education programme, there is no intention either to evaluate pedagogical or educational merits or the quality of the programme. Nevertheless, the study inevitably identifies issues in terms of, for example, curriculum design or teaching supervision for which alternatives are suggested for consideration in the discussion and conclusion chapters.

The interest of this study is to allow the voices of student teachers to be heard. This might appear to be rather ambitious, since full understanding and exploration of the complexity of thoughts, beliefs and participation framing the professional identity would be beyond the scope of this research. To some extent the study cannot avoid imposing the researcher's own motivation and agenda on the subjects, given the inescapably asymmetric nature of power and professional decision making in this context. This might suggest the need to exercise caution interpreting the truth claims made in this study.

#### **4.9. Conducting the Pilot Study**

A pilot study was planned 3 months before the main study began. This process involved some actions conducted with the group of prospective research participants and with a group of four volunteering pre-service teachers from a similar research context in a Colombian public university. The main interest was to test the research methods, as well as to gather similar data. To do this, various actions were scheduled aiming to gain insight towards the implementation of the real study.

The prospective research participants were contacted via e-mail in September 2009. A colleague of the present author cooperated greatly in this achievement. She was teaching a module named 'Practicum I', a subject scheduled for semester 9. A message inviting them to express whether or not they will wish to participate in the research study was sent to twenty two students. Sixteen of them replied to the e-mail and manifested their wish to participate in the study. The aim was to gain familiarity with the population of prospective research participants.

Sixteen prospective research participants were surveyed in September 2009. They were contacted via e-mail and a file containing a five-item questionnaire was sent which was answered on line and returned the same day. Question subjects included their learning backgrounds and motivations for becoming language teachers (see appendix H). Twelve of these sixteen students eventually registered on the teaching practicum course, and they became prospective research participants. The remaining four did not take the course due to academic or personal reasons. Six candidates were chosen as research participants as explained in section 4.3 (Research context, *the research participants*). The questionnaire data collected were used as part of the research participants' profile (see appendix C).

A group of four volunteer student-teachers were also contacted with the intention of evaluating a model for a semi-structured interview. They were chosen thanks to the cooperation of a former colleague working as a supervising university tutor in a private Colombian university. Students agreed to participate in a 45 minute interview which was scheduled using Skype and recorded as an audio file using Pamela – an audio-recording software package designed to be used with Skype. The data were listened to several times and the researcher gained some important insights. These included, for example, that

- The questions should be addressed in a clearer way without overlapping several questions at once.
- The interviewee needed to understand the question fully in order to avoid misunderstanding. It is probably better to ask the question precisely and then as the answer progresses some linked questions can be added.
- One question at a time seemed to be the best questioning technique to be implemented.
- Some of the comments made by the researcher also had to be revised, since they seemed to either interrupt or create a degree of confusion in the interviewee's response.
- An interview based on a question-answer model required a certain level of experience on the part of the interviewer. It was undoubtedly more difficult than the researcher expected and involved far more than simply asking questions.

The pilot study was also oriented towards evaluating the process of blog keeping. To do this, the same four volunteering student teachers cooperated at this

stage. The cooperation of the university tutor supervisor was also vital. The students posted a daily blog entry for a period of one week. During this time, the supervisor provided feedback about teaching, lesson planning, or supervision meetings. At the end of this period, the researcher posted a short questionnaire that included three open questions aiming to learn from the participants' experience of writing daily blog entries. This was sent via e-mail as a Word file. The questions were:

- Do you find the idea of keeping an on-line blog intriguing or attractive? And why?
- What for you are the positive/negative aspects of blog keeping? (Wallace, 1998).
- Do you have any ideas about how to make the process of keeping an on-line blog more effective?

The findings included issues of time constraints which were mentioned repeatedly by the research participants. Looking retrospectively at their teaching at the end of the teaching day was often a tiring and time-consuming activity. Some entries lacked authenticity and/or organisation and turned into a rather anecdotal description of irrelevant issues during the lesson. Bailey *et al.*, (1996: 2240) claimed that “simply writing diary entries does not yield the maximum potential benefit of the process. In order to really learn from the record, the diarist should reread the journal entries and try to find the patterns therein”. The experienced gained through this piloting helped the present author to make the decision to solicit weekly entries instead.

The applicability of stimulated recall as a method of data collection in this study was also explored. A lesson in Spanish taught by a Colombian teacher in Newcastle was video-recorded followed by a 30 minute post-interview. Some important issues that were raised included:



- To write down details about some important events that are normally distinguishable during the lesson and that can lead the discussion in the SR session.
- To lead the discussion towards the purpose of the study, as the teacher also attempts to describe rather than make comments about what is happening during the lesson.
- To prepare questions to make sure that the data gathered fit the purpose of the study.

## **Summary**

This chapter has summarised the aims, research questions, and context of this study, as well as the stages and procedures of the collection of data used to understand the process of constructing professional identities. Data were gathered via the use of a multi-method approach involving semi-structured interviews, SR, and on-line blogs. This study adopted the qualitative approach of the content analysis of data and applied the relevant general ethical considerations. The experience gained from conducting a pilot study was also reported. The next chapter presents the research findings.

## **Chapter 5. Findings**

### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter four explained the process of data collection and analysis in this study. This chapter presents an analysis of the data which aims to investigate how a teacher community forms, sustains, and transforms teachers' identities; in what ways the participating teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs correlated with their classroom practice; and how a group of pre-service teachers set their professional goals for the future. The data are analysed by categorisation into themes which are cross-referenced from the three methods of data collection: interviews, stimulated recall, and on-line blogs. The findings show that becoming a primary language teacher evolves as a trajectory of negotiated participation in the teacher community (5.1). The findings also indicate that student teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs are manifested in varying levels of congruence and incongruence with classroom practice (5.2). Furthermore, school life seems to have an impact on their professional expectations in the form of alignment or resistance to the teaching profession (5.3). The names given are fictional in order to protect the anonymity of participants.

### **5.1. Belonging to a Teacher Community**

Teacher identity construction is argued in this study to be significantly determined by the acknowledgement and experience of a new teacher in the teacher community. This trajectory of participation is characterised as a complex process of acceptance, tension or resistance. Although it is clear that the research participants in this group were in a transitional period between being students of teaching and becoming teachers, the teaching practicum seems to have impacted significantly on their sense of identity. However, belonging to a teacher community begins for pre-service teachers with the decision to choose teaching as their professional alternative. This early act of belonging

is the beginning of a long journey of constructing, sustaining and transforming a professional identity.

### ***5.1.1. Choosing teaching***

Choosing teaching ‘is a particularly significant statement of belonging’ (Clarke, 2008: 76). Although student teachers’ senses of identity evolve later as complex constructs involving the interplay of several factors – teacher education, experience, professional development, and participation, among others - the data show that this early act of belonging to the teacher community illuminates the way they conceived themselves as student teachers. This analysis begins with the interpretation of some of the reasons that underpinned the research participants’ decisions to choose teaching as their profession. Their narratives reflected three themes: the role of family, the role of previous teachers and the importance of foreign languages. Why did 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 are explored below.

#### ***5.1.1.1. The role of family***

Families appeared to mould student teachers’ professional choices in different ways. Encouragement, discouragement or family members who were or had been a teacher are identified in the data as some of the most recurrent links between family and decisions to become language teachers. The extracts below explore student teachers’ representations of identity construction.

Andrew Lopez (AL) wished to study languages, although it was not his first choice. The researcher (R) learnt that he started to study industrial design, something

that had attracted his attention long before. He soon realized 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 FLP provided him with the opportunity to study three languages (see appendix C). His family played a significant role in his decision.

In excerpt 1 (a) below, Andrew explained in the entry interview (EI) the reasons he had for choosing teaching. 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 (*My mum loves pedagogy. She always said to me that it was a good career*). 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. The data then illustrates here that Andrew’s choice was not only directed towards teaching but to teaching young learners specifically. The decision to become a primary 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 (a)<sup>17</sup>:**

- 11: R: Your mum is a teacher (*pause*). Is she not?  
12: AL: Yes, she is  
13: R: In what subject?  
14: AL: She is a psychologist. She teaches psychology.  
15: R: The fact that your mum is a teacher (*pause*),  
did it influence, to some extent, your decision  
to become a teacher?

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<sup>17</sup> Data were gathered and Spanish, transcribed, and translated into English by a bilingual secretary and the researcher.

18: AL: My mum loves pedagogy (*pause*).  
She always said to me that it was a good career.  
She warned me that teaching children was not an easy job,  
but I do not regret having made the decision.

(*Andrew, L. EI*).

In excerpt 1 (b) below from his exit interview (ExI), Andrew provided additional explanations of the reasons for choosing teaching. It was strongly determined by financial reasons (*my parents could afford neither tuition fees nor accommodation in Bogota*). Because his family was unable to support him (*it was much more expensive*), 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 appeared to be saying 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 field. Here, the data suggest a divergence between what Andrew’s family oriented and the way he sustains this professional orientation.

**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: AL: my decision to study languages was also 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, L. ExI).*

By advising student teachers to make the best decision, families also play a role in discouraging other professional aspirations. Although the narratives of the group of research participants did not include any reference to a member of a family mentioning teaching directly, they made it explicit that family opinions greatly influenced their decisions. The way pre-service teachers aligned themselves to their relatives' comments and how they had an impact on their construction of identity is illustrated in excerpt 2 below.

In excerpt 2, Julie Petro (JP) explains in the entry interview why she chose language teaching. Her early dream to become a vet vanished after her brother challenged her feelings and capabilities (*Do you reckon you are able to put your hand inside the body of a cow or treat an injured dog?*). He made her aware that veterinary medicine was not only a question of 'loving animals', but that it was rather a question of dealing with medical treatment. He did not bear in mind that her wish to become a vet came long before in her childhood (*since I was a little girl I wished to become a vet*). Julie's brother's opinion had the power to end half a life time of professional ambition '*when I was about to finish my secondary school*'. She looked then for a second option (*I changed my mind and went for languages instead*). Although her brother did not mention language teaching as a profession, Julie realised that veterinary medicine was probably not her best choice and '*went for languages instead*'. The data clearly show here that Julie's decision was closely linked to an explicit discouragement of previous professional aspirations.

**Excerpt 2:**

- 131: R: OK. You finished secondary school and you had to make a decision about higher education. How did that go?
- 132: JL: I love animals, and since I was a little girl, I wished to become a vet.
- 133: R: Right. Being a little girl, what age exactly?
- 134: JP: Very young. I mean in primary school, in second or third year. All that time I said that I wanted to become a vet
- 135: R: Why did it attract your attention?
- 136: JP: Because I love animals. I love them very much very much but I had the wrong idea about it.
- My brother made me aware that being a vet involves far more than loving animals.
- 137: R: What happened then?
- 138: JP: When I was about to finish secondary school he said to me:  
'Do you reckon you would be able to put your hand inside the body of a cow or treat an injured dog?'  
So I changed my mind and went for languages instead
- 139: R: So it was then your brother who advised that=  
140: JL: =yeah. So I wondered what to study. I liked English.  
So I came to find out about the language programme.  
I was not very sure about becoming a teacher=

- 141: R: so you liked languages but not to become a teacher.  
142: JP: Exactly.

*(Julie, P. E1).*

The role of family in the decision to choose teaching was also represented in student teachers' narratives in the form of a family member who was or had been a teacher. The data show that the decision to become a language teacher may be influenced by some early contacts with the teaching profession.

Nicholas Montenegro got some teaching training orientation as part of his secondary school curriculum. This included subjects such as didactics, psychology and pedagogy. Although he had some former interest in studying law, he was determined to further his studies in language teaching when he finished secondary school. He thought that, thanks to his previous training in the field of pedagogy, it gave him some advantage at UPTC.

In excerpt 3 below, Nicholas commented in his teaching blog entry 1 (BgE1) on how his aunt '*inspired*' him to become a language teacher. Apart from being a language teacher herself, she also demonstrated that it was a financially rewarding profession which even offered her the extra value of meeting people all over the world (*She has good friends in Canada, Mexico and England and also earns some good money*). Those professional motivations were embedded in his resolution to further his studies as a language teacher. She not only offered evidence of a secure professional status but a sense of the methodology of language teaching (*She was more interested that her pupils used the foreign language*). Nicholas' aunt acted as a figurative model to follow. She also provided him with pedagogical constructs and principles of target language teaching and learning (*She chose topics such as pubs, getting a taxi, visiting museums or rock singers*). How those early images of teaching correlated with the student



teachers' classroom practices is a question considered later on, in the analysis of the ways student teachers' beliefs are manifested in their interactions with young learners. For now, in summary, the data clearly show here that the examples of family members implied a respectable profession.

**Excerpt 3<sup>18</sup>:**

My aunt is a language teacher and she inspired me. She has good friends in Canada, Mexico and England and also earns good money. She was also different from my former language teachers. She was keener that her pupils used the foreign language. She chose topics such as pubs, getting a taxi, visiting museums or rock singers. She was really funny.

*(Nicholas, M. BgE1).*

The findings about the role played by family members in choosing teaching as a profession suggest that relatives had a direct influence on the student teachers' decisions about becoming language teachers in three ways: encouragement, discouragement, and providing role models. The next section examines the role played by past teachers in the decision to choose teaching.

**5.1.1.2. The role of past teachers**

The stories reported by the student teachers revealed the influence of their former teachers on 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

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<sup>18</sup> Data were gathered in Spanish and translated into English by the researcher. A British translator proofread the transcripts.

example Johnson, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001). 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. The researcher chose two sample extracts to illustrate this. Some models inspired student teachers because of their teaching style, professional commitment or relationship with pupils. Such good models played an influential role at the time the decision to become teacher was made. Excerpts 4 and 5 illustrate this finding.

Christine Benedetti (CB) made the decision to become a language teacher because she thought it a great profession. Her first contact with the English language was in her year three at school. Her teacher taught her basic things such as numbers and children's songs and she had loved English since then. She was aware that languages would give her a better chance of travelling abroad and to realizing more of her personal and professional potential (see appendix 3).

In excerpt 4 (a) below, Christine explained in the entry interview how her teaching enthusiasm began long before, in her '*second year*'. 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 (*My second year teacher was an extraordinary and tender person*). Feelings of tenderness and affection resulted in an enduring image of this primary school teacher and established a model to follow (*I would like to be like her*). Christine was also aware of opinions that indicate possible counterproductive effects of treating '*kids with lot of affection*'. However, as result of her teaching training she stated that, in her opinion, '*that is not true*'. Christine directly explained that her decision to choose teaching was rooted in the impact that her primary school teacher had on her (*So I decided to choose teaching because of her*). She not only included the emotional dimension of teaching but added another dimension that may clarify what she meant by an '*extraordinary*' teacher (*I loved the way she taught*). 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.

**Excerpt 4 (a):**

- 38: R: OK, primary school. Any special memory from that time?
- 39: CB: 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: CB: 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, B. EI).*

In excerpt 4 (b), Christine reflected on teaching models that were not inspiring. From data in the exit interview, she highlighted important considerations about the role of teachers. Their responsibilities and professional engagement became a matter of scrutiny for her (*I had a teacher who missed half of his teaching sessions*). She also called attention to the people who should be in charge of the school's academic

administration, and wondered what the role of supervision was (*I asked myself if there was no supervision*). Christine also exercised her right to stake a claim for quality in education (*When he came, he just gave us any old silly activity*). From the data it is apparent that being a teacher requires both pedagogical knowledge and professional development (*He only had a degree and since he had a job already he did not care about planning a good lesson*). 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, in short, her teachers provided her with models to imitate and surpass.

**Excerpt 4 (b):**

- 357: R: OK. Let's talk about the university.  
How do you judge the quality of teaching at UPTC?
- 358: CB: Uhm:: 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  
an 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, B. ExI).*

Andrew Lopez (AL) also showed how teachers had inspired him to choose language teaching. In excerpt 5 (a) from the data in the entry interview, he was aware that his motivation towards foreign languages arose because of one of his former

teachers (*I had a very good German teacher. To be fair, he motivated me a lot to learn the language*). Andrew not only showed a great sense of motivation but also located the origin of his interest in English specifically in that time (*That was the time when I fell in love with English*). His portrait of the teacher revealed features of subject knowledge and target language proficiency as additional reasons for his alignment with foreign languages (*He spoke all the time in English and it captivated me*). Scrutiny of his teacher's linguistic ability allowed Andrew to compare this new learning situation to what he had experienced before. His former teachers did not use the target language (*they taught most of the lesson in Spanish*). Here the data indicate that Andrew has explored the meaning of communicative competence as an issue of necessarily connected with the nature of becoming a language teacher. The acknowledgement of all his teachers' professional merits signalled a model that deserved to be replicated (*I would like to be like him*).

**Excerpt 5 (a):**

- 49: R: OK. Andrew. You finished your primary school  
and moved into secondary school. What school was that?
- 50: AL: It is called 'La Esperanza' in Tunja.  
A very small but nice school.
- 51: R: What do you remember from 'La Esperanza'?
- 52: AL: Uhm::: a lot of things (*pause*) but I specially remember a  
wonderful teacher. I had a very good German teacher.
- 53: R: Why was he so special?
- 54: AL: because to be fair, he motivated me a lot  
to continue learning the language.  
That was the time when I fell in love with English.  
He spoke all the time in English and it captivated me.

It was something that my former teachers did not do.  
They taught most lessons in Spanish (*pause*)  
I would like to be like him.

(*Andrew, L. EI*).

In excerpt 5 (b), Andrew provided some more insights into the influence of teachers as models. From data in the exit interview, he highlighted one of the characteristics of teachers that influenced his decision to choose teaching: target language proficiency. He also acknowledged teachers who took ‘*their job very seriously*’ and stated clear learning goals: ‘*to talk entirely in French*’. Although the comparison between demanding and flexible teaching processes maybe contentious, Andrew clearly favoured ‘*demanding*’ teachers. He also raised some concern about how his former teachers of English ‘*were more relaxed*’. His awareness, for example, about the lack of curriculum organization (*we repeated some topics*) or learning achievements (*The level was not very advanced*) were part of his evaluation of the teacher’s role. Their impact on his own learning was also part of his assessment. The use of the target language as a foundational teaching principle was re-affirmed. According to him, the use of the mother tongue in a foreign language classroom had a negative effect on his learning process (*there was a lot of Spanish*). The data suggest here that previous teachers provided clear examples to either follow or surpass. Andrew seemed to construct clear representations of past teachers as role models.

**Excerpt 5 (b):**

- 148: R: Right, higher education.  
What is the image you have of your university teachers?
- 149: AL: Uf::: my French teachers have been sensational,  
but my teachers of English disappointed me a little.
- 150: R: Why?
- 151: AL: Because in French they were very demanding. From the  
beginning they pushed us to talk in French in semester

five they took their job very seriously and talked to us entirely in French. My teachers of English were more relaxed, we repeated some topics and a lot of Spanish was used. The level was not very advanced

*(Andrew, L. ExI).*

The role of past teachers as inspiring models has been illustrated in this section. While affection and tenderness, foreign language proficiency, classroom involvement and learning opportunities were directly understood as essential characteristics to be followed, another teaching model was rejected on the basis of the teacher's lack of professional commitment. 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 third driving force for choosing teaching was the importance of foreign languages themselves.

### **5.1.1.3. Foreign languages**

The act of choosing teaching was also motivated by attitudes towards foreign languages. The data showed that foreign languages and the curriculum of the FLP played important roles in such decisions. Both factors were, in themselves, remarkably strong academic influences on the participants' explanations of why they wanted to become primary language teachers. Excerpts 6 and 7 below illustrate how foreign languages influenced their professional choice.

Learning English was an early discovery for Jacob Borja (JB). His first contact with English was in nursery school and, although it was at a very basic level, his early

experience was soon transformed into an on-going fascination. His learning engagement started him on a journey that included several language courses and two previous attempts to get a teaching degree. His motivation also included self-directed learning determination. At the time of this study he was a mature student teacher whose determination to become a teacher has been a real example of persistence (see appendix C).

From the data in his on-line blog entry 1 – excerpt 6 (a) below - Jacob explained his engagement with learning English which later evolved into a passion for teaching. Although his goal was to travel to the USA because of his aunt's promise '*to take*' him '*to America*' if he '*learnt some English*', the power of the foreign language captured his attention and became a learning resolution (*I was determined to learn it*). His commitment was rewarded by classmates who asked him for learning assistance (*My classmates asked me to help them*). His passion for learning was, perhaps, transformed into an ongoing process of self-involvement and practical discovery (*I helped them to improve their pronunciation and checked their homework*). According to him, his interest in teaching could be traced back to that time (*I think this was the time I became a teacher*). The data here clearly show his early experiential alignment with language teaching. Jacob positioned himself as a teacher even before being formally enrolled in an undergraduate teacher education programme. Is this act in itself an early ascription of identity? What does this reality tell us about the process of identity construction? Although the answer cannot be conclusive, this finding suggests that Jacob is developing an sense of identification with teaching: an early start in the trajectory of learning to teach possibly.



**Excerpt 6 (a):**

My auntie lives in the USA. Once she came to visit us and promised to take me to America if I learnt some English. I was determined to learn it. She never came back though (*laughter*). My classmates asked me to help them. I helped them to improve their pronunciation and checked their homework. I think this was the time I became a teacher.

(*Jacob, B. Bg, E1*).

In excerpt 6 (b), Jacob illustrated how his enduring interest in learning English translated into a well-grounded teaching decision. From data in the entry interview, he commented on ‘*being fully aware*’ of his professional choice to ‘*become a primary school language teacher*’. He also confirmed that his decision was supported by ‘*previous experience in teaching kids*’. His teaching motivation then increased as he learnt more about ‘*didactics and pedagogy*’. His foreign language skills also expanded into learning ‘*French*’. Jacob’s professional choice seemed to be the result of a determination to learn foreign languages, reinforced by experience in teaching practice.

**Excerpt 6 (b):**

505: R: Were you aware that the language programme prepared primary school language teachers?

506: JB: Sure I was. I took my time to make sense of the curriculum. I even checked it with a magnifying glass (*laughs*) so as not to make the same mistakes I made since I graduated from secondary school.

507: R: So it was a conscious choice?

508: JB: Absolutely. I enrolled as a student of FLP after realising that I wanted to become a primary school language teacher. I had had some previous experience of teaching kids so I felt myself motivated by didactics and pedagogy. I struggled a little with French but it was all right at the end of the day.

(*Jacob, B. EI*).

The next question concerns how a teacher community forms, sustains or transforms teacher's identities, which is tackled later in this chapter in terms of the impact of practice on pre-service teachers' professional goals for the future. Another connection between the importance of foreign languages and choosing teaching relates to the curriculum of FLP at UPTC.

Sarah Milanes (SM) started to learn English in primary school. She then furthered her studies in secondary school, where considerable emphasis was put on foreign languages. Her school had an agreement with the British Council, and the pupils had English teachers who taught them the language and culture. She made the decision to study language teaching at UPTC, and was fully informed about the emphasis of the programme on teaching languages to children (see appendix C).

From data in her on-line blog entry 1 – Excerpt 7 (a) - Sarah expressed the nature of her choice (*I love French and English*). It is clearly manifest here that she was attracted by languages first and 'additionally' because she was 'fully conscious' that the course was a training programme for teaching children. It is, perhaps, important to note that, for Sarah, her wish to learn English and French were the main original source of her motivation. Her well-grounded interest in language learning, which started in primary school, may have enhanced her motivation as with her alignment with teaching.

**Excerpt 7 (a):**

The FLP attracted my attention. I love French and English. Additionally, I was fully aware that its focus was on teaching languages to children. I wished to learn both subjects

(Sarah, M. BgE1).

In excerpt 7 (b) below, Sarah reflected on her role as a language teacher. From data in the exit interview (ExI), she started by showing a great sense of satisfaction with teaching (*I am very happy with these kids*). Although she was fully aware that teaching involves ‘*happy and sad moments*’, she placed a great emphasis on the children’s pleasure in learning the target language (*But the most important thing is that they are happy in the English lesson*). She also positioned herself as a teacher who encouraged them ‘*to learn languages*’. She then described how she acknowledged her pupils’ progress (*I congratulate them and say give me five*). The data here clearly suggest that Sarah’s learning interest in foreign languages, which was part of her explanation for choosing teaching, had been positively sustained after five-years of teacher education and being engaged in real school life. It is important to note here that this opinion was noted in her exit interview at the end of her teaching practicum.

**Excerpt 7 (b):**

283: R: Sarah, your own assessment of this period of teaching experience?

284: SM: Oh:: I am very happy with these kids.  
I know there are happy and sad moments  
because nothing is perfect  
but the most important thing is that  
they are happy in English lessons.  
I am always encouraging them to learn languages.

When they do things well I congratulate them  
and say give me five (*pause*). It is cool.

(*Sarah, M. ExI*).

These findings show that family, past teachers, and foreign languages directly influenced the decisions of the group of student teachers to choose teaching. The next category of analysis of the nature of belonging to a teacher community is engagement.

### ***5.1.2. Engagement***

Engagement 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, for example (Creese, 2005). As a consequence, each member of a community negotiates 'ways of being a person in that context' (Wenger, 1999: 149). Engagement is then related to those active and mutual processes of negotiation.

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, course planning, assessment or professional development, for example, 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' practice 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. In the context of this study, engagement is represented as community membership and professional commitment.

### **5.1.2.1. Community membership**

The sense of community membership among pre-service teachers' in this study evolved as they interacted with other teachers. Their experience included significant events of professional inclusion or exclusion, for example where senior teachers recognised them as teachers or resisted giving them that status. This connection is explored in excerpt 8. However, student teachers' direct relationships with school-based mentor (SBM) or supervising university tutors (SUT) – as in excerpt 9 - also provide important insights to explain the way a teacher community forms, sustains or transforms professional identity.

Julie Petro commented in her on-line blog entry 2 – excerpt 8 (a) below - that the SBMs introduced her to pupils as their new language teacher. The social act of being recognised as an authentic teacher made a positive impression on her (*I liked it*). By being acknowledged as a teacher rather than a student teacher, Julie adopted a professional status, and this helped to shape her sense of professional affiliation (*nobody used the word pre-service*). She went on to describe how the SBM explained to pupils the process that '*becoming a teacher*' required. This particular experience of professional inclusion may contribute to the formation of a sense of professional identity, but Julie's professional interaction also demanded that she participated with other staff members.

**Excerpt 8 (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, P. BgE2).*

In excerpt 8 (b) below, Julie mentioned an incident where the student teachers at her school were not invited to an institutional meeting. From the data in the exit interview, she 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 (*we have the right to interact with our kids' parents*). Julie wanted that the voices of her pre-service teacher colleagues should be heard (*we are also teachers*). 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 8 (b):**

10: R: OK, Julie and the opposite. What disappointed you?

11: JP: 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, P. ExI).*

Sarah Milanes reflected on the effects of being observed by her teaching supervisors. In Excerpt 9 (a) from data in her on-line blog entry 2, she revealed how insecure she felt by being observed by her two supervisors (*I was nervous*). She then went on to express her feelings of being exposed to judgment (*There were four eyes looking at what I was doing*). Sarah 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, whose teaching effectiveness and achievement was under scrutiny and evaluation. This is an important finding that is expanded on later in the discussion chapter where the condition of being a pre-service teacher induces a sense of fragmented identity.

**Excerpt 9 (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, M. BgE2).*

In excerpt 9 (b) from the data in Sarah's stimulated recall 2 – SR2 - she regretted her school-based mentor's absence (SBM). She reported a lack of teaching achievement which seemed to be explained by the fact of being 'alone' in the classroom (*My experience here was not as good as I would have wished*). Her status as a pre-service teacher induced pupils to take 'advantage of it'. Sarah experienced anger and uncertainty about how to rectify the situation (*I was trying to figure out how to stop the*

games). She also portrayed a sense of professional frustration (*I was totally invisible to them*). The data here clearly suggest that Sarah needed support from more experienced colleagues – her SBM in this case. It is interesting to note that there is a degree of ambivalence in Sarah’s narrative of affiliation with her SBM. While in excerpt 9 (a) she is concerned because of her supervisors’ judgement and evaluation, Sarah’s perception then changed and she now 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.

**Excerpt 9 (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: SM: 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, M. SR2 ).

The exploration of pre-service teachers’ sense of professional membership showed varied types of engagement. While Julie experienced professional inclusion and recognition, there was also a manifestation of exclusion. Sarah also reported a dual sense of mutual engagement in being judged and assessed by her teaching supervisors, and explaining her poor classroom performance during her SBM’s



absence. This finding may help to explain how identity as a teacher is the result of an interplay between meaning making, participation, experience, and cognition, as has been argued in this study. Consequently, gaining the status of teacher community membership is not always an easy or straightforward task. However engagement is also represented in the data as the development of an understanding of teaching as a joint enterprise.

#### **5.1.2.2. Professional commitment**

Developing a sense of professional commitment can be explained as an active process of participation in a teacher community. Student teachers portray themselves as young and dynamic prospective professionals whose transformative experiences of teaching are part of their professional commitment.

In excerpt 10 below from data in her on-line blog entry 3, Christine Benedetti commented on a classroom experience when her SBM asked her to teach a rhyme to a group of year fives. *'I do not like teaching rhymes'* represent a declaration of pedagogical self-determination. It also includes an ability to contextualise her classroom practice at a time when children are influenced by modern systems of technology and information (*I rather went for a fashionable song*), which allow them to be informed and updated about the latest trends in music for example. Christine was fully aware of the pedagogical purpose of using songs in the classroom (*They enjoyed it and learnt vocabulary and grammar in a different way*). By making such a pedagogical decision, she highlighted the success of task achievement (*They enjoyed it*). The data suggest here that the student teacher made an informed decision to make an important pedagogical innovation. She was a teacher able to contribute to creating more effective ways to interpret pupils' needs and the forms of their learning.

**Excerpt 10:**

I do not like teaching rhymes. I opted instead went for a fashionable song. They enjoyed it and learnt vocabulary and grammar in a different way.

*(Christine, B. BgE3).*

Jacob Borja also claimed that textbooks should be used imaginatively. From data in his exit interview – excerpt 11 below - he commented on his pedagogical awareness and highlighted his professional commitment in terms of ‘*always*’ exploring new classroom practices. He manifested a clear understanding of his teaching role and aligned himself with specific target language achievements (*I like them to express their own opinions, likes and preferences more spontaneously*). Jacob signalled an interesting sense of professional engagement and reflection: an ability to develop an understanding that belonging to a teacher community requires negotiated forms of recognition.

**Excerpt 11:**

267: R: To what extent have you professionally changed,  
I mean before and after the teaching practicum?

268: JB: A lot. I have changed in many ways.  
I have changed my perceptions about lessons=

269: R: Can you expand on this?

270: JB: Sure. I mean, for example, my teaching methodology.  
I do not want to follow the textbook as if  
it was a straightjacket.

I do not like that they speak mechanically  
like the textbook shows.

I prefer them to express their own opinions  
likes and preferences more spontaneously.

*(Jacob, B. ExI).*

The nature of their engagement in a teacher community has revealed interesting examples of the processes involved in student teachers becoming primary language teachers. While classroom realities revealed a certain tension between professional recognition and integration with teaching supervisors, for example, there were also important cases where the understanding developed of teaching as a joint enterprise. By being able to engage pupils' learning through transformative classroom practices, the accounts of some of the research participants suggest a foundational domain of identity construction: learning to become a language teacher and to exercise forms of negotiated participation. The next category is represented in terms of alignment.

### ***5.1.3. Alignment***

While engagement represents a mode of participation within a community which is spatially and temporally located – in a school for example- alignment implies participation within wider contexts and practices – a worldwide on-line community of primary language teachers, for example. In fact, although belonging to a teacher community is mainly determined by our local participation in work, translating into specific situated environments where we interact physically with other people, it does not necessarily mean that our actions, energies and interactional abilities have to be subordinated to those contexts. In the context of this study for example, the participating student teachers did establish personal and professional connections beyond the immediate context of interaction. Clarke (2008: 92) states that

“Alignment entails looking beyond the boundaries of a particular community of practice and considering its relations to other related communities and its place within wider communities”

If engagement concerns teachers’ actions within physically located communities and environments such as a school or a language classroom, alignment surpasses this in adopting positions in more macro contexts of participation. By assuming that teaching engages wider experiences of social and professional activity, teachers are believed to transcend their participation in a teacher community towards broader enterprises.

A sense of 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.

In excerpt 12 from data in his exit interview, Nicholas Montenegro (NM) commented on his experience in the USA. He highlighted how his trip abroad resulted in language improvement and better professional prospects (*I not only have teaching opportunities here but abroad*). 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 (*After living in the USA for a while and improving my English*). This issue is explored in some depth in the section below on teachers’ beliefs and their correspondence with teaching practices. The data clearly suggest here that Nicholas had developed a sense of intercultural awareness which contributed to facilitating his own sense of professional alignment (*I am aware that this is a valuable*

*profession*). The emerging reality of second language proficiency is also referenced in the account given by another research participant.

**Excerpt 12:**

118: R: Right, Nicholas. Are there motivations to become a teacher?

119: NM: 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, M. ExI).*

Andrew Lopez made an important reference to the importance of second language proficiency. From data in his on-line blog 4 – excerpt 13 below - he highlighted the professional importance of his trip to the USA (*My trip to the USA was of paramount importance to me*). It is interesting to note here that Andrew explained that his trip increased his professional awareness of the need to improve his English and how his language improvement strengthened his sense of professional confidence (*I am a more confident teacher now*). The data here clearly show here a convergence between intercultural awareness and language teachers' process of identity construction.

**Excerpt 13:**

My trip to the USA was of paramount importance to me. Before, I thought my English was pretty good. Once there, I realised how far I was from achieving real

proficiency. Although there is still plenty to learn, I know I am a more confident teacher now.

(Andrew, L. BgE4).

In excerpt 14, below, from data in the exit interview, Sarah Milanes commented on her previous intercultural experience abroad (*My trip to Minnesota helped me to improve my English*). The data here show that target language improvement was an important component of her construction of professional identity. This evolved as a trajectory of experience gained during her period of teacher training. She then added some more insight into her intercultural awareness (*I became authentically engaged in an American family*). Her sense of professional affiliation had a clear connection in the data with her experience in America (*it made me proud of being a language teacher*). Expressing her pride at becoming a language teacher, Sarah provided a good source of explanation of professional alignment.

**Excerpt 14:**

455: R: Sarah, your trip to Minnesota. What did it give to you in terms of learning?

456: SM: My trip to Minnesota helped me to improve my English a lot.  
I became authentically engaged in an American family.  
I talked to kids and parents and it made me proud of being a language teacher.

457: R: Any other extra value?

458: SM: Sure. I think the cultural exchange was also worthwhile.

I was aware of cultural differences between Colombia and the USA, which had enormous significance for me as a language teacher.

*(Sara, M. ExI).*

The consideration of alignment has provided insights allowing a more fine-grained understanding of the process of becoming a primary language teacher. The student teachers' narratives revealed important references to transcending local contexts and adopting broader dimensions of professional development and cooperation with other communities. Their evolving understanding of teaching beyond locality, for example, entails the act of becoming a teacher beyond the frontiers of a specific teacher community towards broader and interconnected enterprises. This may be especially significant at a time when information technology is creating new modes of communication for teachers, which allow them to become members of worldwide communities. Another important relevant category here in understanding the nature of belonging to a teacher community is imagination.

#### ***5.1.4. Imagination***

Imagination as an act of belonging to a teacher community is generally defined as the capacity to see reality from different perspectives and with distinct meanings. A classroom, for example, may represent various different things. For a teacher it could be either a place to do a teaching job or an opportunity to enrich the lives of future citizens with knowledge and better values. For a student it may represent a boring place that he/she is forced to attend every day or an exciting place where fascination and friendship become a daily motivation to attend. For parents, school administrators or educational authorities, the classroom may certainly evoke different representations. The capacity to see reality from an in-depth perspective is to some extent a way to

explain imagination. It then comprises an ability to move ‘beyond the immediate world of experience’ (Clarke, 2008: 98). Through imagination we can re-construct the dimensions of a community and the images of ourselves within it, and envision new representations of the world. This does not mean that our new sources of inspiration necessarily entail fantasy or an entire discourse of the unreachable. Imagination is simply an innate human condition that encourages people to re-invent their pasts and re-build their identities from new sources of inspiration.

Learning to teach is an experience of imagination. Teaching involves a capacity to surpass the visible dimensions of reality. Teachers place their daily practice within the borders of what can be experienced and can be imagined. This dual relationship between what exists and what exclusively belongs to mental domains is what makes teaching and learning possible. It ‘is what enables people to see (and hear, and feel) beyond the visible world as it is “given” by experience’ (Fettes, 2005: 3). Fettes also argued that ‘where imagination has died, education cannot live’ (*ibid*). In the context of this study, the group of research participants envision teaching within a field of profound political and cultural effects.

Andrew Lopez reflected on the role of teachers as ‘*a factor of change*’ in excerpt 15. From data in his on-line blog 2, his perception of teaching seemed to challenge here and now conditions and to place the discussion on a more transcendental level (*we have to enable much deeper views of reality in our pupils*). He also supported his claim about the nature of teachers’ permanent engagement with thinking processes (*as we are dealing with thinking skills*). Becoming a teacher was, in Andrew’s opinion, a chance to empower a more critical view of reality. He highlighted how important it is for teachers to understand this professional dimension (*This is definitely the most important part of our job*).



### Excerpt 15:

A teacher is a factor of change in his own right. As we are dealing with thinking skills every day, we have to enable much deeper views of reality in our pupils. This is definitely the most important part of our job.

*(Andrew, L. BgE2).*

Jacob Borja portrayed a clear image of belonging and imagination that connects actions in the past with a refreshing understanding of teaching in the future. In excerpt 16 from data in his exit interview, he revealed an interesting and promising professional commitment going beyond the context of his school. This quotation is reproduced in full below since it illustrates the meaning of imagination.

Jacob clearly signalled a new direction of his professional commitment. He identified a real and authentic problem of the lack of teaching resources (*not much in French. We faced troubles to teach it to children*), and went on to explain that a similar situation was also faced by a group of his classmates (*We had to go to a French bookshop in Bogota*). Jacob then decided to explore a new possibility which arose from his existing interest in radio broadcasting (*I always liked working in radio*). He revealed how the problem was tackled (*They were children's songs in the beginning, something like 50*), and the data here also show that he felt himself really committed to going further with this experience. It seemed, in his opinion, to be an effective, creative and practical way to undertake teaching (*to do more practical things with language teaching*). Jacob also wondered how to '*help teachers and learners a bit more*'. This particular act of belonging is a good illustration of the role of imagination in pre-service teachers' capacity to understand their teacher community, building up connections between images of the past and ideas for the future. The process of becoming a primary language teacher entails, from this content analytical perspective, a professional act of commitment and determination which allows them to be subjects who construct new

possibilities for teaching and learning. This can then allow generations of learners to experience a range of different alternatives.

**Excerpt 16:**

546: R: Right. Do you feel that the teacher programme strengthened or weaken your commitment to become a teacher?

547: JB: It is up to every teacher, but in my case I know I can contribute in several ways=

548: R: How?

549: JB: For example, I always liked working in radio, so I created my own radio programme with the help of some other mates=

550: R: Sounds interesting. Can you expand on this a little more?

551: R: It was a French music broadcast because we realised that when we started our training that there were plenty of English resources: books, poetry, music, literature but not much for French.

We faced difficulties trying to teach it to children. We had to go to a French bookshop in Bogota or to the book fair but materials were very expensive so we got plenty of tunes=

552: R: What kind of tunes?

553: JB: They were children's songs in the beginning around 50 of them, but then rock pop ballads among others=

- 554: R: =Amazing
- 555: JB: So we broadcasted a radio programme where we shared with our audience those tunes that we downloaded from the internet or that a friend of ours brought from France each time was something different ( ) rhymes artists genres it was something really cool
- 556: R: Have done something else with this?
- 557: JB: I am thinking now how i could go further with this idea and do more practical things with language teaching that could help teachers and learners a bit more.

*(Jacob, B. ExI).*

The participating student teachers developed a capacity to see their professional trajectory through the lens of imagination. They positioned themselves as a source of a generational change, for example by incorporating new representations of an innovative use of radio broadcasting to encourage language learning. They provided for themselves a well-grounded picture of imagination as part of the process of becoming a primary language teacher.

In summary, this exploration of the nature of belonging to a teacher community has looked at the four modes of belonging: choosing teaching, engagement, alignment and imagination. Choosing teaching was highly influenced by family, past teachers and the importance of foreign languages. Engagement evolved from their direct and located teaching experience during their teaching practicum period. Alignment concerned their understanding of teaching as an enterprise of wider connections and, finally, imagination signalled a connection between images of the past and the generation of new professional images and constructions. The next exploration looks at pre-service

teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs and their connection to their teaching practice.

## **5.2. Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs**

The previous category of analysis concerned the act of belonging to a teacher community as a foundational trajectory of identity construction. However, the process of becoming a teacher is also manifested in a system of core principles of knowledge and beliefs. Teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs can be argued to be central in the process of becoming a teacher and consequently of identity construction. Although the concept of belief has spread across a wide range of teaching and learning fields, its definition still needs clarification (Pajares, 1992). This study adopts the theoretical construct of teacher cognition that refers 'to the observable dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe and think' (Borg, 2003: 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. This category of analysis is grounded in the theoretical framework suggested by Grosman (1995) and broadly includes knowledge of content and knowledge of self.

### ***5.2.1. Knowledge of content***

Knowledge of a subject matter is a salient domain of what teachers know, think and believe. The connection between teachers' subject knowledge and students' learning, for example, appears 'intuitively important for good teaching' (Grossman, 1995: 20), and important theoretical trends therefore correlate teachers' knowledge and student achievement, lesson planning and ways of teaching. Although there is no doubt that a more in-depth understanding of this relationship is needed, this study considers how beliefs about knowledge of the target language are manifested in the practice of

teaching English to young learners. Knowledge of content was manifested in the data in terms of target language competence and foreign language learning.

#### **5.2.1.1. Target language competence**

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 contributed 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 answer is explored in excerpts 17 – 19 below.

Andrew Lopez commented on the importance that being in contact with the target language culture represents for a foreign language teacher. In excerpt 17 (a) below from data in the on-line blog 2, he believed that direct participation and experience in a real context where the foreign language is used contributed to improving his communicative competence and consequently his teaching skills (*I think that being abroad is essential for any language teacher*). He also went on to explain some of the additional benefits of being immersed in multicultural settings of interaction (*I had the chance to speak not only with natives but with people from different parts of the world*). He finally drew the conclusion that teaching culture is part of the role of the language teacher. The data here clearly suggest that subject matter knowledge was intuitively referred to in the narrative of this research participant as a fundamental cognitive dimension for a language teacher. Was this belief manifested in his language classroom? Excerpt 17 (b) sheds some light on this.

**Excerpt 17 (a):**

I think that being abroad is essential for any language teacher. One thing is to speak English over here and a total different story to speak it over there. I improved it a lot. I had the chance to speak not only with natives but with people from different parts of the world. I think that one has to teach culture also.

*(Andrew, L. BgE2).*

In excerpt 17 (b) from data in the video-recording lesson 1 (see appendix H for transcription conventions), Andrew made a direct connection between his experience in the USA and the need to clarify the question of a student (S1) about the correct pronunciation of the word ‘*amen*’ (06). He does not hesitate with the answer (07). The data here illustrates Andrew’s subject matter knowledge to orient a pupil’s query towards accurate use. This lesson snapshot shows that Andrew not only included as part of his lesson a daily cultural practice of some American religious communities (the Hail Mary prayer), but he improved his teaching skills using informed linguistic competence. Although there is no explicit reference to the cultural aspect, he emphasised that this particular cultural topic was supported by his own previous experience of American cultures.

**Excerpt 17 (b)<sup>19</sup>:**

The teacher (T) stands in front of the classroom. He is writing on the board. He holds a sheet of paper in his hands. When he finishes writing, he instructs his students (Ss) that he is going to read the Hail Mary prayer. Students are writing down the prayer in their notebooks.

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<sup>19</sup> Data were gathered in English. A detailed transcription was used (see appendix I for transcription conventions).

01. T:            ↑holy Mary mother of God
02.                    pray for us sinners
03.                    now and at the hour
04.                    ↑now
- and at the hour of our death (0.4)
05.                    amen(0.9)
06.            S1:                    amen o ↑amen=
- ((do you say amen or i'men))
07.            T:                    =↑amen
- se dice am↓en
- ((you say))

(Andrew, L. Video-recorded lesson 1. 01: 01': 12'').

In excerpt 17 (c) from data in the stimulated recall 1, Andrew provided a clear explanation of the source of his decision to answer one student's question (S1). He implicitly highlighted how some teachers make non-informed decisions about language use (*When I was taught, the teacher said to me Amen (pronounced ei'men)*). Then he expanded on how, by staying in an authentic target language environment, that experience gained gave him the cultural background to make an informed decision about linguistic use (*when I stayed in the States*). Although this study does not focus on the possible effects of teachers' subject knowledge on target language learning, this emerges as an interesting area for further research. Nevertheless, the data here clearly show that teachers' subject matter knowledge informs teachers' cultural background and allows them to make better grounded decisions about the appropriate use of the target language.

**Excerpt 17 (c):**

- 398: R: What comes to your mind in this snapshot of the Lesson?
- 399: AL: I was about to talk of this part.  
When I was taught  
the teacher said to me Amen #pronounced ei'men#  
but when I stayed in the States  
once when I was at the dinner table  
with my stepfamily they prayed together and  
said Amen #pronounced a:'men#  
so I realised that if it comes from Latin  
it should be amen.

*(Andrew, L. SR1).*

In excerpt 18 (a) below from data in the entry interview, Jacob BORJA commented on the importance of using specific didactic strategies in order to help students understand and interact in the target language. He exhibited a clear awareness of the use of available didactic resources with the intention of helping students understand rather than translate, for example (*If I had to stand on my head, draw a picture or do some mime, I will do it*). 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 (*I expect them to produce, to feel confident that they are making progress*). Those images of teaching, pedagogical knowledge and classroom interaction can then be compared with what Jacob did while teaching English to young learners.



**Excerpt 18 (a):**

- 520: R: So how to teach a foreign language then?
- 521: JB: 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, B. EI).*

Jacob's practice offers an interesting case for an exploration of the relationship between stated beliefs and classroom actions. In excerpt 18 (b) from data in the video recording of lesson 1, he used an extended turn 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 L1 - *a picture, tiene un cuadro aca* - (*she has a picture here*). Although English was used meaningfully at the end of his turn (*a picture she has a picture*), 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.

**Excerpt 18 (b):**

The topic of the lesson is 'parts of the house'. The teacher (T) is delivering a two hour lesson to a mixed 4th year group. Students (Ss) are organised in 6 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 cooker 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. esta 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 aca (1.5)  
 ((*she has a picture here*))
15. tiene  
 ((*she has*))
16. ↑a picture (2.0) she has a picture  
 (*Jacob, B. Video-recorded lesson 1. 00: 06': 25''*).

In excerpt 18 (c) from data in the stimulated recall 1, Jacob showed awareness of the need to create more target language exposure (*I have to use more English and progressively less and less Spanish in the lesson*). He also noted the restrictive use of the target language (*Now I am aware that there was too much Spanish and little English*). Jacob introduced an interesting topic of discussion regarding the relationship between lesson plan and the implementation of it (*I planned to use many more commands, to speak more English and to use less and less Spanish*). 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.

**Excerpt 18 (c):**

- 174: R: Let's talk about the use of Spanish and English.  
 Has it gone according to what you planned?
- 175: JB: 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: JB: 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: JB: Yes, you are right.

*(Jacob, B. SR1).*

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. Content knowledge is also represented in beliefs about theories of learning.

#### **5.2.1.2. Foreign language learning**

Student teachers' knowledge of content includes varied representations of their understanding of the way a foreign language must be learnt. Their narratives reported well-grounded beliefs about how a second language is acquired. These can be labelled as theories of learning and broadly relate to contextual language learning and the role of error correction in second language acquisition.

Nicholas Montenegro believed that learning another language involves several dimensions that include vocabulary, grammar and expressions of daily contextual and meaningful use. In excerpt 19 (a) below from data in the exit interview he reflected on fundamental principles of his own understanding of second language learning (*I can take them to my house for example, and show them a real context*). He then expanded on this in describing teaching situations where basic topics could be taught, and manifested his pedagogical disagreement with some teaching paradigms that were cited intuitively (*I cannot see the point in teaching numbers or fruits*). The data here show a clear understanding of the need to put learners into contextual learning situations (*I can build up from the kitchen, for instance, plenty of vocabulary and meaningful language*). The possibility of constructing experiential knowledge from those situations was argued theoretically as an important trend in foreign language teaching with young learners. In what ways was this belief reflected in Nicholas' classroom practice? This connection is explored in excerpt 19 (b).

**Excerpt 19 (a):**

- 247: R: Let's talk a little about UPTC. After 4 years of teacher education, do you feel well prepared to teach languages to children?
- 248: NM: I know that teaching another language includes Vocabulary, grammar, authentic expressions. I can take them to my house, for example, and show them a real context. I can build up from the kitchen for instance, plenty of vocabulary and meaningful language. I cannot see the point in teaching numbers or fruits. I do not agree it.

(Nicholas, M. EI).

Excerpt 19 (b) displays another image of Nicholas' classroom practice. From data in the video recording lesson, he accomplished a pedagogical manoeuvre in order to sort out a contextual learning situation that emerged when one student asked for permission to go to the toilet. The teacher (T) took advantage of this and invested some time so that the learners could become familiarised with '*authentic expressions*', as was stated in terms of his beliefs (see, excerpt 19a). He called for his pupils' attention to listen to an expression that he judged more meaningful (1). He swapped the task sequence for a while and prioritised the contextual value of learning. He emphasised each word in turn. He accompanied his pedagogical move with a physical change of position and displacement towards the back of the room where the toilet keys were. Students followed him and responded accordingly. S1 was then awarded with the keys, which were used as a contextual learning opportunity. The data here clearly show a cohesive relationship between his system of knowledge and beliefs and his classroom practice.

**Excerpt 19 (b):**

The topic of the lesson is 'Parts of the face'. The teacher (T) is kneeling down on the floor and is surrounded by students (Ss) in a kind of semicircle. He is painting some parts of his face at the same time as he introduces the vocabulary.

01. T:           ↑ok listen up (0.1) #T claps his hands#
02. S1:         ma::[y
03. T:           ↑[silencio] (0.4)
- vamos a escuchar como decimos para ir al baño (0.1)
- ((*We are going to listen how to say to go to the toilet*))
- #T stands up and walks towards the back of the room #

04. S1: i:: (0.3)
05. T: ↑ma::y (0.4)
06. Ss: ma::y=
07. T: ↑i:: (0.3)
08. Ss: i::
09. T: go::
10. Ss: go::
11. T: to:: (0.3)
12. Ss: to:: (0.2)
13. T: the:: (0.2) #*he holds a big wooden key ring*#
14. Ss: the::
15. T: ba::th (0.2)
16. Ss: ba::th (0.1)
17. T: ↑room=
18. S1: =yo, yo  
 ((*me, me*))

(Nicholas, M. Video-recorded lesson 1. 00: 05': 30").

In excerpt 19 (c) from data in the stimulated recall 2, Nicholas highlighted the importance of those learning situations which in his opinion are '*crucial*'. He argued that those particular moments contributed to the learning of the '*whole group*'. He was fully conscious that pupils learn a second language through situations where they have to use the target language meaningfully (*they have to say the magic words*). Then he remarked on the importance of those contextual learning situations (*I know it is even more important than the vocabulary I have to teach*). The data here clearly manifest a congruent relationship between Nicholas' belief about the theory of language learning and classroom practice. Another theory of learning manifested in the narratives of the student teachers concerned the role of error correction in second language learning. This

belief is explored in excerpt 20.

**Excerpt 19 (c):**

- 73: R: How important are those situations for foreign language learning?
- 74: NM: I think these moments are crucial for learning, because, it is a great opportunity not only for one student but for the whole group as well. They repeat the vocabulary and then the reward is to get the wooden key rings that is like the Holy Grail. But in order to get it, they have to say the magic words: 'may I go to the bathroom please'? or whatever the situation demands. I know it is even more important than the vocabulary I have to teach.

*(Nicholas, M. SR1).*

Mistakes are an unavoidable part of the process that learners necessarily have to go through. However, if language errors are naturally connected to a particular process of language acquisition, teachers' tolerance of them may vary as a source of understanding and classroom practice. Andrew Lopez exhibited a clear understanding of their significance in the theory of language learning.

In excerpt 20 (a) below, from data in the exit interview, Andrew commented on



tolerating learners' mistakes as an important principle in second language learning. He was fully aware that mistakes are inherent to any process of second language learning (*that is part of the process of learning another language*). He built up a well-supported belief about the need to tolerate mistakes and encourage target language production (*I always encourage them to talk, to write without being afraid of making mistakes*), and clearly understood the need for improvement during the process of exposure to the language (*We are going to improve as the process goes on*). It is notable here that Andrew's previous learning experience was used as a basic principle for promoting rather than inhibiting learning (*it inhibits learning as was the case when we started to learn English*).

**Excerpt 20 (a):**

- 429: AL: It is very interesting to see children using English.  
I mean, they are following me, they repeat the sentences and some day they will be aware that this learning was useful.
- 430: R: They look really excited despite making mistakes=
- 431: AL: =any time they make a mistake  
I say to them, no worries that's all right,  
we are going to improve as the process goes on.  
That is part of the process of learning another language. I always encourage them to talk to write without being afraid of making mistakes because it inhibits learning as was the case when we started to learn English

(*Andrew, L. ExI*).

In excerpt 20 (b) below, from data in the video-recorded lesson 1, the connection between beliefs and teaching practice is evident. He encouraged one student's performance (Cristina) by nodding his head as a token of approval as her conversation was going well (03). As S1 struggled to carry on with her turn in the dialogue (see the pause in turn 05), the teacher allowed her time to sort the situation out without his intervention. In spite of two noticeable mistakes, one made by S1 (*i 10 years old*) (05) and another of pronunciation made by S2 (*i am 11 years (pronounced jis)*) (06), he did not interrupt them to correct their mistakes. Instead he gave positive feedback (*excellent*) (07) and then gave some more specific feedback regarding Grace's failure to use the right form of the verb 'to be'. He did not provide any feedback about S2's pronunciation mistake. However, he highlighted once again that their performance had been fine and invited Cristina not to worry about it. The data here clearly suggest a direct convergence between the teacher's sense of the tolerance of students' mistakes as part of the process of learning a foreign language and what he did in the language classroom.

**Excerpt 20 (b):**

Students are taking part in oral practice in pairs. The teacher (T) chooses each couple who come to the front of the room. They introduce each other. The teacher evaluates each pupil's performance.

- |     |      |  |
|-----|------|--|
| 01. | S1:  | good morning my name is Cristina (0.3)                                     |
| 02. | S2:  | my name is Camila (1.2)  |
| 03. | S1:  | i (0.7) study at (0.5) school B*<br># <i>T nods his head approvingly</i> # |
| 04. | S2:  | i study at school B*   |
| 05. | S1:  | i: (0.8) 10 (0.5) years old=   |
| 06. | S2:  | =i am 11 jis old   |
| 07. | T:   | exce[lente<br><i>((excellent))</i>   |
| 08. | S3 : | [Cristina se comió]  |

- ((you missed))*
09. T : Cristina te comiste  
*((you missed))*
10. am (0.6)
11. pero está bien no te preocupes  
*((but it is alright, do not worry))*

*(Andrew, L. Video-recorded lesson 1. 00: 16': 25'')*

In excerpt 20 (c), from data in the stimulated recall 1, Andrew demonstrated his knowledge of theories of second language learning. He was fully aware that students go through a process in second language learning in which mistakes are inevitable. He also understood that improvement in language is the result of several actions, including the students' capacity to correct their own mistakes. He was aware that part of his role as a teacher was to make students aware of the need to use the language properly (*I try to correct mainly for them to be aware of certain correct forms*), but he focused his classroom actions on promoting rather than inhibiting language use (*they still have plenty of time to improve it*). The data here seem to confirm that Andrew's belief about the role of error correction as a necessary process students go through was congruent with what he did in the language classroom. His classroom actions showed that he allowed opportunities for language use and appeared not to be concerned about the mistakes students made. Belief and practice were closely aligned.

**Excerpt 20 (c):**

- 241: R: Are you satisfied with the pupils' responses, with their examples, and their grammatical constructions?

241: AL: I like it that they are able to construct short and coherent sentences. Things that I understand despite the lack of articles, or small things that they will understand later on.

242: R: Do those missed articles, and stuff like that, bother you or are they normal?

243: AL: No, not at all. If they do not pronounce properly I am not worried.

I try to correct mainly for them to be aware of certain correct forms but if they miss some words I do not mind.

I know they are in the first steps of the process of learning another language and they still have plenty of time to improve it. They can even in the future correct their own mistakes.

*(Andrew, L. ISR).*

The previous category provides important insights into pre-service teachers' knowledge of content. While subject matter knowledge and its pedagogy may have been aligned both congruently and incongruently in the practice of the participating teachers, their theories of second language learning aligned more harmoniously. The next category to be analysed relates to the pre-service teachers' knowledge of self.

#### ***5.2.1.2. Knowledge of self***

Knowledge of self can include teachers' 'self-awareness of their own values, goals, philosophies, styles, personal characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses; for example (Grosman, 1995: 22). Some research has investigated the connection between self and

identity (Britzman, 1986; cited in Grosman, 1995). Pre-service teachers' self-awareness of their own practices and constructing the meaning of teaching, for example, are used in the context of this study as representations of knowledge of self.

#### **5.2.1.2.1. Professional strength**

Professional strengths were expressed by student teachers in terms of perceptions related to creativity in teaching and age. While reference to creativity included direct applications in teaching, dynamism and compassion, the fact that they were young people was also considered a professional advantage. How did these beliefs align to their teaching practices? The excerpts below shed some light on this.

Sara Milanes represents herself as a '*creative, dynamic, communicative and kind*' language teacher. In excerpt 21 (a) from data in the exit interview, she highlights some of her strengths and values as a language teacher. Although she shows some self-awareness about her position as a student teacher who is learning how to teach (*I have learnt how to change my tone of voice*), she underlines kindness and motivation as fundamental principles of being a teacher (*but I try to be kind and motivate the kids all the time*). The ways this belief is manifested in Sarah's classroom practice is indicated in excerpts 21 (b) and (c).

#### **Excerpt 21 (a):**

- 93: R: How are you as a teacher?
- 94: SM: Hoho. I am creative, dynamic, communicative, kind and ehm:: I am improving my own authority for more effective classroom management.

I have learnt how to change my tone of voice, for example, but I try to be kind and motivate the kids all the time.

*(Sarah, M. ExI).*

Data in the video-recorded lesson 1 - excerpt 21 (b) – give evidence of Sarah’s creativity and dynamism while teaching a song to a group of second year language learners. By using an extraordinary performing approach, she made use of all the physical resources available to her in order to help students (Ss) grasp the meaning of the song. The combination of movements, actions, and sounds represents a convincing picture of teaching with creativity and dynamism (see 1, 3, 5, and 7). She then provided feedback to learners (9) and invited them to ‘*sit down*’ followed by a polite ‘*thank you very much*’.

**Excerpt 21 (b):**

The teacher (T) is teaching a song to a mixed second year class. Pupils are organised around 6 tables. She signs and asks students (Ss) to follow her. She makes some funny movements, performing like a monkey.

01. T: little  
*# she bends down #*
02. Ss: little (0.5)
03. T: ↑monkeys  
*# she moves her right hand in circles over her head  
and her left hand over her stomach #*
04. Ss: monkeys (0.6)

05. T: jumping  
# she jumps several times while still moving one hand  
over her head and the other over her stomach #
06. Ss: jumping
07. T: on ↑the be::d (0.4)  
# she continues performing like a monkey #
08. Ss: on the bed (0.3)
09. T: ↑that's great
10. ok (0.8) sit down thank you very much  
(Sarah, M. Video-recorded lesson 1. 00: 25': 02").

In excerpt 21 (c) from data in her stimulated recall 1, Sarah commented on the achievements expected from that particular part of her lesson. She manifested a well-grounded understanding of her teaching goals. She ratified her belief in being dynamic in the classroom as a pedagogical strategy not only to capture the children's attention but to create a learning environment that would challenge the teacher's imagination and creativity (*They like when the teacher performs for them*). She also has a clear pedagogical purpose in using movements and actions while teaching the song (*it was also motivating*). The data here clearly suggest that her stated belief was closely aligned with what she did in the classroom while teaching English to children. Excerpt 22 also explores the connection between knowledge of self and teaching practice in the narrative of another student teacher.

**Excerpt 21 (c):**

- 76: R: How important is it for the teacher, this body language  
and all that physical movement?
- 77: SM: That's definitely the best way. I mean,

if the teacher is a dynamic person, it attracts the attention of kids. They like it when the teacher performs for them.

For instance, with the three little monkeys' song, I show them through movements what monkeys do, and that's very important, I captured their attention and it was also motivating.

78: R: Where do those strategies come from and how do you know they are effective?

79: SM: Right. I have investigated psychology as well as pedagogy. I know that a happy face or a smile are motivational tools.

(Sarah, M. ISR).

Christine Benedetti also showed an understanding of her personal teaching values. In excerpt 22 (a) from data in the exit interview, she exhibited self-awareness of her personal strengths (*I define myself as a very creative and artistic person*). Although she intuitively highlighted those values as personal rather than professional, there is no reason to believe that for her the person acts separately from the professional. She then constructed discourse around themes with professional connotations: understanding and listening to students. She also provided some insight into self-awareness as a pedagogical strength (*I really wish that my students learn what I am teaching to them*). Christine portrayed herself as a teacher who recognised her own personal values and built up from such an understanding a well-grounded sense of professional self-esteem. The manners in which her beliefs corresponded to her teaching practice is explored in excerpt 22 (b) and (c).



**Excerpt 22 (a):**

- 429: R: Right. What do you consider are your strengths as a future language teacher?
- 430: CB: I define myself as a very creative and artistic person.  
Ehm:: I also consider myself as a caring teacher,  
Who understands and listens to students.  
I really wish that my students learn  
what I am teaching to them.

*(Christine B, ExI).*

Excerpt 22 (b), from data in the video-recorded lesson 1, offers evidence of the connection between Christine's stated belief and classroom practice. She cited creativity, art and a good sense of relationships with students as part of her professional values, plus a pedagogical purpose of engaging pupils in their learning. Although excerpt (b) initially conformed to her belief in terms of the well-designed and colourful material that she was using in the lesson, further questions arise as a result of a more detailed view of the process which followed in her teaching. There is no doubt of the signs of art and creativity linked to the materials she was using in the lesson. However, they cannot be exclusively linked to this. Creativity may also involve interactional qualities, for example, or the creation of well-established opportunities for learning. Any of these dimensions also seems to correlate with the image of the lesson shown in excerpt (b). It is important to note here that the teacher (T) was more interested in the form of the answer (*who can answer me in a complete form*) rather than in the use of the target language in which the students (Ss) appeared to be more creative. Notice that the teacher was confused about the pedagogical purpose of question (1) which was answered by students (2) inappropriately, in terms of the teacher's judgement as she seemed to be focusing on form rather than on meaning (*Who can answer me in a complete form?*). She re-formulated the same question (*what is this?*) and students responded interactively (*kitchen kitchen*). However, the teacher missed the chance to

interact creatively with S1 (from turn 5) who decoded the meaning of the flash card (*no, that is a stove*), because she was talking to her classroom assistant. She explicitly signalled that they had not produced the right answer yet and confirmed that they were not properly decoding the picture in the flash card (*no, this is not a kitchen*). Although students responded communicatively to her enquiry (turns 5 & 6), she then turned to control the group (turns 8 & 10) rather than creatively building up processes of language use.

**Excerpt 22 (b):**

The teacher (T) stands at the front of the classroom. The topic of the lesson is ‘My house’. She is using colourful flash cards; she introduces each word and then stick the flash card on the board. One student assists her with sticking the cards on the board. She asks the students (Ss) questions.

01. T: ↑what is this (0.4)
02. Ss: en la cocina la cocina (0.6)  
*((in the kitchen the kitchen))*
03. T: ↑quien me puede responder completo (0.4)  
*((who can answer me in a complete form))*  
what (0.2) is (0.2) ↑this
04. Ss: kitchen kitchen
05. S1: eso es culpa del pro[fesor porque eso parece] una estufa  
*((that is the teacher's fault because it looks like a stove))*
06. [no ( . ) eso no es una cocina] (0.3)  
*((no, that is not a kitchen))*  
*#one student talks to the teacher. He then goes to the*

*board and sticks a flash card on it. She shakes her head as a token of disapproval #*

07. Ss: (xxxxxx)
08. T: shush:: (0.2)
09. escuchen muchachos  
*((guys listen))*
10. Ss: (xxxxx)
11. T: Shush::: (0.2) escuchen  
*((listen))*

*(Christine, B. Video-recorded lesson 1. 00: 28': 29")*

Christine showed self-awareness of what was going on in the lesson at that particular moment in excerpt 22 (c), stimulated recall 1. She started by describing herself as *'too traditionalist'*. Although she tended to establish a slight differentiation (*OK, the only difference is that I am preparing colourful materials*), she was fully conscious of a lack of target language use (*I am using too much Spanish in the lesson*). The lesson lacked significant uses of innovation or creativity (*I need to invent some strategies to promote more communication in English*). Christine raised the issue of experience as part of the process of improvement (*I hope I can improve this, given more experience*). The data here clearly shows that there was some incongruity between Christine's stated belief and her classroom practice. Although it is not claimed here there is a necessary alignment between them, its connection opens up several possibilities in terms of professional development, for example. The next excerpt offers another exploration of the correspondence between beliefs and teaching practice as a route to understanding the nature of becoming a primary language teacher.

**Excerpt 22 (c):**

- 166: R: Do not you feel exhausted?

- 167: CB: Oh, yeah. You are right.
- 168: R: The use of English, Christine, do you feel you are using more Spanish or there is a balance in the use of the foreign language?
- 169: CB: I think I am too traditionalist.
- I think I am doing what my former teachers did, OK? The only difference is that I am preparing colourful materials and stuff like that, but I am using too much Spanish in the lesson. That's a weak point. I need to invent some strategies to promote more communication in English. I realised the communication is very basic. I asked them to write. I am not happy (*pause*). I know I am too traditionalist. I hope I can improve this given more experience.
- 170: R: How can you improve this?
- 171: CB: I need some more experience and time, and hope I will use more English then.

(Christine, B. SR1).

Julie Petro is another relevant example of the connection between beliefs and teaching practice. In excerpt 23 (a), below, from data in the entry interview, she offered her perception of her personal professional strengths. Julie positioned herself as part of a generation of teachers (*I think that I belong to a new generation of teachers, who are up-to-date, with fresh knowledge and highly motivated to do our best*), who are up-to-date, motivated, young, and who have new ideas in opposition to an older generation of traditional teachers (*there are some teachers who are very old, tired traditionalists and who do the same thing over and over*). She then quoted youth as an additional source of

personal and professional value (*My age is also an advantage*). She explicitly aligned herself as a member of a generation of new teachers who are aware of their potential to transform teaching (*One comes with new ideas, new strategies*). Was that belief reflected in what Julie did while teaching English to young learners?

**Excerpt 23 (a):**

465: R: Julie your age. IS it an advantage or a disadvantage?

466: JP: My age is also an advantage because there are some teachers who are very old, tired, traditionalists, and who do the same thing over and over. One comes with new ideas, new strategies.

467: R: Is there any substantial difference between the two generations of teachers?

468: JP: I think so. I think that I belong to a new generation of teachers who are up-to-date with fresh knowledge, and highly motivated to do our best.

*(Julie, P. EI).*

In excerpt 23 (b) from data in the video-recorded lessons 2, Julie came across as having a well-established interactional pedagogical perspective. By moving around the room, she showed a dynamic and active classroom engagement. The use of the target language was also part of a significant pedagogical effort to create learning opportunities. Although there is no further evidence to confirm that her belief about updated knowledge was manifested in this vignette of her class, she showed motivation and some good teaching strategies to help learners achieve the goals of the lesson. The use of a plastic bag full of colourful cards and the interactional exchange that she

created from the task may suggest that she truly attempted to use ‘*new ideas and new strategies*’. This view of her classroom practice converges with Julie’s own explanation of what was happening at that particular time in the progress of the lesson in the next excerpt.

**Excerpt 23 (b):**

The teacher (T) is delivering an English lesson to a mixed second year group. The topic of the lesson is “Colours”. She holds a plastic bag containing several coloured cards. She moves around the classroom and chooses one student who has to take one card out of the bag.

01. S1: red (0.5)
02. T: red ok # *she chooses another student* #  
↑you please (0.3)
03. S2: red
04. T: ↑red ↑again (0.6)  
*# she moves around the room and chooses another student #*
05. SS: (xxxxx)
06. S3: blue (0.9)
07. T: blue ok  
↑what is your name=
08. S3: Jaime
09. T: ok ↑what colour is Jaimes’ card

(Julie, P. Video-recorded lesson 2. 00: 18’:20”).

In excerpt 23 (c) from data in the stimulated recall 2, she commented on the use of English as one of her greatest classroom achievements (*I have made good progress in the use of English with this group*). Julie also highlighted the use of particular pedagogical resources in order to facilitate pupils' comprehension of the target language (*I draw on the board or choose one student and describe what I am talking about*). Although there is not enough evidence here to accept or reject her stated belief that she was part of a new and more motivated generation of teachers, the data seem to suggest a congruent alignment between her stated belief and her teaching practice. Julie certainly displayed a high level of enthusiasm and motivation which may indicate that she belongs to a new generation of teachers, although this would require a deeper exploration in future studies.

**Excerpt 23 (c):**

- 215 : R: You are delivering the lesson now almost entirely in English. Why?
- 216: JP: I made a good progress in the use of English with this group. I try to use more and more English every week. I used only a couple of questions in Spanish today but my goal is to achieve 100% use of English. Sometimes they do not follow me but I draw on the board or choose one student and describe what I am talking about.
- 217: R: Do you think that it is the right way to do it or just that somebody asked you to do so?
- 218: JP: Yeah. Partly because in the university they tell us to talk to children in English but I have also observed

and read in different books the importance of talking to them most of the time in English.

*(Julie, P.2SR).*

Personal professional values have been shown to be represented in the data on pre-service teachers' beliefs. This exploration of knowledge of self offers further important insights into the nature of becoming a primary language teacher. Another relevant category emerges as a result of the exploration of knowledge of self and educational philosophy.

#### **5.2.1.2.2. Constructing the meaning of teaching**

Student teachers' narratives reflected beliefs about the role of primary school teachers. Those beliefs are considered in this study 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.

Nicholas Montenegro manifested some of his conceptions of his role as a teacher, in excerpt 24 (a) below, from data in the on-line blog 3. He 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 (*I become a kind of daddy or mummy at times when they ask me to take them to the toilet*). 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 24 (b) and (c).



**Excerpt 24 (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, M, BgE3).*

In excerpt 24 (b) from data in the video-recorded lesson 1, there is an image of a dynamic classroom with a teacher who was determined to engage learners through a creative process of language learning. He 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 (*Teacher, I have to go to the toilet*). This particular requirement changed the direction and focus of the lesson at that moment.

**Excerpt 24 (b):**

The teacher (T) 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 (Ss) 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]
03. T: re::d
04. Ss: re::d
05. T: red yeah (0.2) i have red (0.3) and i have my (0.5)  
 ↑e::ars
06. Ss: ears ( . )
07. T: ↑e::ars (0.2)  
 # he takes another box of face-paints #
08. S3: e::ars
09. T: and i'm gonna pint (0.2) ↑my=
08. S1: =profe tengo chichi  
 (*teacher, I have to go to  
 he toilet*)

(Nicholas, M. Video-recorded lesson 1. 00:18': 27").

Nicholas showed full awareness about the meaning of becoming a primary language teacher. In excerpt 24 (c) from data in the stimulate recall 1, he paraphrased Quino's illustrative message about the meaning of being a teacher (*a doctor, a solicitor, an explorer, a scientist*). This metaphor allowed him to explain what was going on the lesson and the way he understood the role of primary teachers (*that is truly what a teacher does*). 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.

**Excerpt 24 (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: NM: 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,  
a biologist, and so on.  
And that is truly what a teacher does.

242: R: How important is this for a teacher?

243: NM: 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, M. SRI).*

Christine Benedetti presented the purpose of education as an opportunity to emphasise on personal values in excerpt 25 (a) from data in the entry interview. She stated a clear belief concerning what she considered a fundamental role of teaching (*I have always thought that my fundamental role as a teacher is to place a strong emphasis on personal values*). She constructed a coherent discursive representation of the influence of teachers on pupils' lives (*the way I make their life happy or sad, they are going to grow up with it in mind*). Christine also gave an important representation of

her educational philosophy in terms of pupils' recognition of themselves as '*worthy human beings*'. The connection between this tangible meaning of the philosophy of education and what she did in the language classroom is then explored in excerpts 25 (b) and (c).

**Excerpt 25 (a):**

- 484: R: Let's assume you finish your studies and get a job as a teacher in an institute like this one.  
How can you achieve all those teaching goals?
- 485: CB: I have always thought that my fundamental role as a teacher is to place a strong emphasis on personal values. So in the way I talk to pupils, make them feel, or make their life happy or sad, they are going to grow up with it in mind.  
So, I focus my teaching on making them feel important, and worthy human beings

*(Christine B, EI).*

Christine's belief about teaching as based on personal values is correlated to what she did in her classroom practice – excerpt 25 (b) below. She created a relaxing classroom atmosphere (*students are sitting on the floor*). She used colourful flash cards and allocated turns by throwing a ball. This image of the language classroom represents a dynamic interactional process that is planned to engage learners through active participation. The teacher asked a question to student 1 (01), and he responded interactively (02). Student 2 took an active part in the interaction and attempted to answer the teacher's question using his mother tongue (04). It is important to note here that S2 used '*paya*' which are the first two syllables of the word '*payaso*' (clown) and

which, in fact, corresponded to the image shown by the teacher on the flash card. Although the teacher's interactional context engaged two students' participation, she favoured controlling their behaviour over the learning goals, which represents an important decision to prefer teaching values rather than language content. Christine's extended turn (05) about the need to respect each other's participation (*We must allow him to answer*), also took advantage of the situation to attract the attention of Alexander, who was not sitting down appropriately (*Alexander, sit down properly*). Alexander's behaviour was taken as a model to call the attention of the whole class to behaving properly in the lesson (*Everybody sits up*). She then concluded with a strategy that rewarded their behaviour with a happy face, but if they were not behaving accordingly, the result could be the opposite (*they will be very sad*). Although the data initially show here a congruent alignment between Christine's stated belief and her teaching practice, her explanation of what was going on in the lesson, from the simulated recall, suggests more complex interpretation.

**Excerpt 25 (b):**

The teacher is sitting down on a chair. She is teaching a lesson to a mixed second year class. The topic of the lesson is 'professions'. She holds some flash cards, throws a ball to choose one student who has to answer a question. Students (Ss) are sitting on the floor on a semi-circle around the teacher.

01. T: ↑who is ↑he ( . )
02. S1: one (0.3)
03. T: no::
- 04: S2: paya=
04. T: =vamos a dejarlo a él responder ( . )  
*((We must allow him to answer))*
05. ↑si:lencio

*((keep quiet))*

el está respondiendo respetemos los turnos (0.4)

*((he is answering and We have to respect everyone's turn))*

Alexander siéntate bien (0.9)

*(Alexander sit down properly)*

siéntense bien (0.3) porque en lugar de poner

caritas felices (0.2) se van a poner muy tristes

*((everybody sits down properly because instead of awarding you a happy face, they will be very sad))*

*(Christine, B. Video-recorded lesson 2. 00: 28': 45'')*

From data in the stimulated recall 2 – excerpt 25 (c)- Christine provided a somewhat ambivalent understanding of the connection between beliefs and practices. She allowed her lesson plan to prevail over any other classroom circumstance (*I have my class planned and each activity is also timed*). Although she was aware that the lesson plan could be interrupted at any time (*we do not count that suddenly somebody maybe hit by another student*), and highlighted the fact that it is part of the role of the teacher (*you have to listen to them*), she then concluded that such events might be distracting and disturbing. The apparent pedagogical intention of the lesson to focus on personal values, as stated by Christine in excerpt 25 (a), seems to be contradicted by her explanation of what was going on the lesson (*it is not good when you have to stop activities to sort those situations out*). The data here clearly show an incongruent alignment between beliefs and classroom practice. In spite of switching the direction of the lesson towards emphasising social values with regard to listening to others or respecting everybody's speaking turn, Christine's explanation of what happened at that moment in the lesson went in the opposite direction.

**Excerpt 25 (c):**

- 40: R: What does this snapshot tell you about this particular moment in the lesson? What comes to your memory here?
- 41: CB: The question is that I have my class planned and each activity is also timed. For example, 10 minutes for this, 15 for that, but we do not count that suddenly somebody may be hit by another student or that somebody complains and you have to listen to them. So it alters the activity entirely. As I can see in the video some of them were kneeling or bending down. So you have to ask them to sit up properly but it disturbs your lesson plan. So it is not good when you have to stop the activities to sort those situations out.

*(Christine, B. SR2).*

The connection between student teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs and their classroom practice has been explored in this second category of analysis. Two main themes have been identified in this study: knowledge of content and knowledge of self. While target language competence and theories of language learning offer an interesting dimension for partially understanding the first theme, professional strengths and constructing the meaning of teaching then provide some insights into the second. Together they provided some of the foundations for understanding the process of learning to teach and consequently adopting a new identity as language teachers. The next category explores the way pre-service teachers set their professional goals for the future.

### 5.3. Professional goals

The previous category analysed the connection between student teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs and their teaching practice. This section explores the possible impact of their teaching practice on the participating teachers' future professional goals. In gaining a fine-grained understanding of the process of becoming a primary language teacher, the possible impact of practice should be examined in terms of how it helps form, sustain or transform professional identities. Teacher development is generally defined as 'the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience' (Glatthorn, 1995: 41). This can include several related dimensions concerned with the classroom or community, leadership, expertise, or academic qualifications, among others (see, for example, Little, 1992; Leithwood, 1992; cited in Glatthorn, 1995). Moreover, in the context of this study, it is seen in terms of expectations arising through the professional cycle.

Glatthorn (1995) suggests three groups of factors which influence teacher development: personal variables, the context, and specific interventions that foster it. Due to the fact that the group of student teachers participating in this study were at an early stage of their professional career development, this exploratory research looks at personal factors reflected in the interaction between professional practice and the way they did or did not align themselves with the teaching profession. This section of the analysis is grounded in the theoretical framework of Glatthorn (1995) and explores expectations about career development.

Career development 'denotes the growth experienced as teachers move through the stages of their professional careers' (Glatthorn, 1995: 42). Although the professional status of the group of student teachers participating in this study could be questioned, it is argued that becoming a teacher includes a trajectory of participation in which practice is fundamental. On the other hand, teachers' professional identity formed as a



consequence of a long period of formation that could begin at the early stages of their experience as learners. Therefore, this section considers the ways that these research participants affiliated or disaffiliated with teaching as a career.

Christine Benedetti commented from data in the exit interview – excerpt 26 (a) - that a postgraduate was among her short term priorities (*I would like to start a postgraduate course next semester*). It is perhaps interesting to note here that, for her, furthering her studies was even more important than getting a job (*Then I would like to get a job*). She went on to re-confirm the need for further qualifications (*by reading for a Master programme*). The data here clearly suggest that Christine explicitly included teaching as part of her goals for the future. Even though she suggested an important step forward (*higher education or translation*), she was aware of her need for professional development.

**Excerpt 26 (a):**

- 550: R: By the way, talking about your future plans.  
What are your short term goals?
- 551: CB: I would like to start a postgraduate course next  
semester.  
  
Then I would like to get a job, and then  
  
further my studies by reading for a Master  
programme=
- 552: R: = in what field?
- 553: CB: In higher education or translation.

(Christine, B. ExI).

In excerpt 26 (b) below – from data in the on-line blog entry 3 - Christine provided a possible explanation of her commitment to teaching. She was aware of the need to be informed about ‘*fundamental questions*’ closely related to the field of

teaching (*large group management, didactics of English as a foreign language, and learning styles*). What Christine may have been saying here is that becoming a teacher is a process strongly related to further stages of qualification and development. Christine's affiliation to teaching was manifested here in that her future professional goals were closely congruent with teaching as a profession.

**Excerpt 26 (b):**

I have been committed to informing myself about large group management, the didactics of English as a foreign language, and learning styles. They are fundamental questions for me to be answered.

(*Christine, B. BgE3*).

Julie Petro also showed a sense of professional growth. In excerpt 27 (a) – in data in the exit interview- she commented on two of her short-term professional goals: a trip to America and a postgraduate course. She was aware that she was to finish her teaching practicum period '*soon*'. After that, she plans to go to America with a specific professional purpose (*It will help me a lot to improve my English*). Target language improvement had become her first priority; a subsequent postgraduate course also showing her direct commitment to education (*I would like to read for a postgraduate course in educational administration*). The data here show that Julie's professional goals included at least a two-year plan. The explanation for such a sense of affiliation is explored in excerpt 27 (b).

**Excerpt 27 (a):**

307: R: What are your short term goals?

308: JP: I plan to finish my practicum soon, and then

I would like to go to America as an *Au Pair*.

It will help me a lot to improve my English.

Then I would like to read for a postgraduate course=

309: R: Which one?

310: JP: In educational administration that is currently offered at  
UPTC. This one calls my attention a lot.

(*Julie, P. ExI*).

In excerpt 27 (b) below – from data in the on-line blog entry 4 – Julie provided some more insight into the possible explanation of her professional affiliation with teaching. She acknowledged her pupils’ engagement and learning motivation (*I observed today that they were all truly following me*), and then introduced the important teaching principles of her lesson. The notion of correct ‘*pronunciation*’ for example, was fundamental. This may explain to some extent her priority to go to America and improve her English. Julie’s plan to read for a postgraduate programme in school administration would also represent an important sign of her alignment with the teaching of languages and the way she envisioned later stages of her professional growth.

**Excerpt 27 (b):**

I observed today that they were all truly following me. They seemed to be motivated. They were repeating the tongue twister correctly. Their pronunciation was correct, which was one of the lesson aims.

(*Julie, P. BgE4*).

By contemplating images of ideal working environments, another student teacher projected forward her sense of career development. In excerpt 28 from data in

the exit interview, Sarah Milanes commented on her wish to work in her own institution (*I would like to own my own language institute*). The data here clearly show that teaching had become part of her future professional agenda. She not only described herself as a teacher but specified characteristics of her imagined language institute to teach ‘*critical thinking and multicultural awareness*’. As the researcher (R) asked her to expand a little more on this idea, she went further mentioning a bilingual setting with pupils ‘*learning and using new technologies*’. The data here provide clear evidence about Sarah’s priority to become fully involved in teaching.

**Excerpt 28:**

527: R: Let’s assume you find a job and get into teaching soon.  
How do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years?

528: SM: Right (*pause*). I would like to own my own language institute where I could engage learners through processes of critical thinking multicultural awareness and interaction with members of other cultures.

529: R: But apart from that, what kind of school would you like to work in?

530: SM: In a bilingual school with kids learning and using new technologies. I mean, a dynamic process involving social interaction and physical movement.

(*Sarah, M. ExI*).

Jacob Borja demonstrated a well-grounded motivation in the period before his teaching practicum. In excerpt 29 (a) below – from data in the exit interview – he

manifested a sense of achievement in his previous course (*things went pretty good*). He also expressed a combination of positive attitudes and feelings about his next teaching stage (*I am ready to take my real teaching*). He was aware that his teaching practicum was a time to be a ‘real’ teacher. Commonly-occurring themes also emerged related to language teaching: ‘*working with kids*’, enjoying ‘*teaching*’, loving ‘*teaching English and lesson planning*’. Jacob’s positive attitudes generated great expectations and encouraged him to take this final training stage with great determination.

**Excerpt 29 (a):**

- 569: R: Do you feel well prepared to teach languages?  
570: JB: I think so. I attended  
my language practicum II course last semester  
and things went pretty well  
now I am ready to do some real teaching  
i am very excited and motivated  
i really like working with kids i enjoy teaching  
i love teaching English and lesson planning

(*Jacob, B. EI*).

From the analysis of data from his online blog entry 3 – in excerpt 29 (b) below – Jacob’s level of motivation dropped when he faced non-harmonious teaching environments (*children are very naughty*). He went on to describe a series of examples of pupils’ misbehaviour: fighting, being rude and aggressive, among others. Although there is no explicit reference here to the impact that this behaviour may have had on his own future professional engagement, it is clear from the data that his previous expectations about this teaching opportunity had a negative impact on his motivation, at least in the first month of his practicum (*My motivation has dropped dramatically*).

**Excerpt 29 (b):**

Children are really naughty. They behave badly. They fight with each other, they are rude and aggressive. They throw pens at other children's faces, they spit at each other, and they do not respect student teachers. My motivation has dropped dramatically.

*(Jacob, B. BgE3).*

In excerpt 29 (c) data in the exit interview, Jacob's agenda for the future appears to have been re-scheduled. This was different from what he thought before his teaching practicum (*I was truly convinced that my next step was to read for the M.A in language teaching*). Although he was still really committed to serving in areas related to education (*I am considering educational administration*), his wish for classroom involvement had declined steeply (*I am not motivated to go straight into a classroom*). The data here clearly show the negative effects of classroom experience during the teaching practicum (*I think I can also help as a headmaster or something like that*). Jacob's sense of identity as a teacher has been questioned and he is looking for some other professional alternatives. Jacob's motivation in his entry interview and that reflected in his exit interview were entirely different. Having pursued teaching for quite a long time, he was then suddenly aware that his own future story had to be re-imagined. This change seems to be significantly explained by his struggle to deal with a context where pupils' misbehaviour and lack of learning engagement affected his future professional goals in teaching.

**Excerpt 29 (c):**

65: R: Let's talk about the opposite, something that has reduced your motivation as a teacher.

66: JB: Uhm::; tough question (*pause*). I try

to identify the causes

because I do not feel 100% motivated to go into teaching=

67: R: Are you hesitating now?

68: JB: Kind of (*pause*). For example a year ago I was truly convinced that my next step was to read for an M.A in language teaching at UPTC. Now I have changed my mind and I am considering educational administration. I am not motivated to go straight into a classroom. I think I can also help as a headmaster or something like that.

(*Jacob, B. ExI*).

Nicholas Montenegro suggested a well-grounded affiliation with teaching in excerpt 30 (a) below from data in the entry interview. He first acknowledged that choosing teaching was a good decision. He also highlighted his strong alignment with his professional choice (*I am absolutely sure choosing language teaching was right*). Then he stated that it would also give him '*plenty of opportunities*'. Although he did not specify the kind of opportunities, he indicated that they were '*not only in Colombia*'. This statement clearly confirms that he saw teaching from a wider perspective. By expanding on his trip to America, he reasserted his professional engagement with teaching (*I realised it is a real profession, that teaching is all that I wished for*). This well-grounded sense of identity is compared next with the results of specific experiences.

**Excerpt 30 (a):**

131: R: You are ready to start your teaching practicum,  
and then you will be a qualified teacher.  
Do you think that choosing teaching  
was the right decision?

132: NM: I am absolutely sure choosing  
language teaching was right. I know I have plenty of  
more opportunities not only in Colombia.  
After being in the USA,  
I realised it is a real profession,  
that teaching is all that I wished for.

*(Nicholas, M. EI).*

In excerpt 30 (b) from data in the on-line blog entry 5, Nicholas commented on being observed by his university supervisor. Apart from this being the first lesson she had observed, she was unaware of the research that was underway (*She does not know about the project I am carrying out*). He claimed to have a clear explanation of what he was doing (*I know what I am doing*), but Nicholas' discourse reflected disagreement with his supervisor's perceptions of the lesson (*I was disappointed when she said that the lesson was a total mess*). While her feedback, in his opinion, only touched on superficial aspects of the lesson and ignored the essentials (*all she said was: you did not follow the lesson plan, the lesson was interrupted, that there was too much Spanish*). He also highlighted that her comment clashed with his own understanding of teaching languages to young learners (*But I cannot torture the kids by talking only in English*). The data here clearly suggest that his perceptions of teaching had changed because of his tutor's feedback.



**Excerpt 30 (b):**

This is the first time she observes me. She does not know about the project I am carrying out. I was disappointed when she said that the lesson was a total mess. I know what I am doing. But all she said was: you did not follow the lesson plan, the lesson was interrupted, there was too much Spanish. But I cannot torture the kids by talking only in English.

*(Nicholas, M. BgE5).*

In excerpt 30 (c) from data in the exit interview, Nicholas illustrates how practice had an impact on his sense of career development (*I hesitated about my teaching vocation*). There is clear connection between his teaching feedback and his professional representation (*If your tutor says to you that what you are doing is wrong, your motivation surely drops*). However, Nicholas appeared to fully understand the unavoidable tensions which arise in the teaching profession (*I know that it is what teaching is about*). This quotation raises some interesting questions about understanding identity as a process involving both stable and unstable representations which may vary between being ‘*absolutely sure*’ at times and ‘*not sure now*’ or with conflicting perceptions of ‘*achievement*’ and ‘*frustration*’.

**Excerpt 30 (c):**

80: R: To what extent the teaching practicum has contributed to strengthening your wish to become a language teacher?

81: NM: I hesitated about my teaching vocation.  
I am not sure now. If your tutor says to you

that what you are doing is wrong, your motivation surely drops.

I know that it is what teaching is about.

There is achievement but also frustration

*(Nicholas, M. ExI).*

In summary, a sense of professional affiliation with teaching was expressed by three research participants. Christine, Julie and Sarah described well-grounded expectations about enhancing their academic qualifications and creating particular teaching environments. The sources of their affiliation seem to be significantly explained by positive experiences gained before and during their teaching practicum. The data also suggest that the effects of the three-month teaching experience had different impacts on other student teachers. While Jacob's classroom experience forced him to see his career development in a context beyond the classroom, Nicholas' strong teaching affiliation before his teaching practicum was slightly damaged as a result of his supervisor's feedback.

## **Summary**

This chapter has explored three basic constructs in the process of becoming a primary 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. Choosing teaching, engagement, alignment and imagination become relevant issues of teachers' participation with members of a teacher community. The findings include distinct methods of negotiated interaction and participation with local or broader professional communities which play a significant role in forming, sustaining or transforming student teachers' 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. Finally, the ways practice informed teachers' professional goals for the future led two contrasting findings: alignment with and resistance to the teaching profession. The next chapter discusses the findings in relation to former and current trends in the literature of teacher identity.

## **Chapter 6. Discussion**

### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter five presented the analysis of the data. This was explained in terms of the role of a teacher community in forming or transforming professional identity, the connection between stated and enacted beliefs, and professional expectations for the future. This chapter discusses the findings and their significance in relation to current trends in the literature of teacher education. Having reviewed the literature, designed an appropriate methodological framework, and analysed the data gathered, attention now turns to the interpretation of the results in connection with previous studies in the field. Firstly, the chapter re-examined the research interest (6.1.). Secondly, the role of a teacher community in shaping teacher identity is discussed in terms of traces of professional affiliation (6.2), participating in a teacher community (6.3), modes of commitment (6.4), and beyond participation by default (6.5). Thirdly, findings of teachers' knowledge and beliefs are discussed in terms of beliefs about culture and language (6.6), the emerging self (6.7), and constructing ownership (6.8). Finally, findings about professional expectations are also interpreted (6.9).

### **6.1. Re-examining the Research Interest**

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, develop skills and teaching competence and embark on professional development, which are argued in this study to be fundamental in understanding how student teachers construct the meaning of becoming a teacher. These three factors also represent the conceptual framework that

underpins this study, and although treated separately for analytical reasons, they are interrelated. Thus developing teaching skills, for example, is linked to previous learning experience, experiential and professional knowledge, as well as participation in a teacher community. To substantiate this claim, this study answered three 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.

Four modes of participation in a teaching community were identified in the study: choosing teaching, engagement, alignment, and imagination (Wenger, 1999; Clarke, 2008). Although the findings are interpreted in more detail throughout this chapter, overall they suggest important insights into how student teachers took on a new identity, and subscribed to or resisted the demands of the profession. Such modes of participation reflect, to some extent, the impact of a teacher community in forming, shaping or transforming professional identity.

The data showed how student teachers identified themselves, for example, as belonging to a new generation of teachers, made claims for professional recognition, or reported on successful classroom experiences. One research participant showed excitement after a successful classroom achievement: 'I feel very happy. I reckon I achieved the goal. The kids participated actively in the game's activities and the song. They identified numbers in English as I planned'. The research participants also

commented on making autonomous decisions about learning tasks, course content, or material design. The data also showed how student teachers differentiated between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ models of teaching as well as reflecting on their experience as learners in order to choose which model to follow. These general findings are in line with similar studies (see for example, Malderez *et al.*, 2007; Clarke, 2008; Roberts & Graham, 2008). This discussion of how the first research question was answered suggests that teacher communities played a crucial role in the process of constructing professional identities, as explained later in this chapter.

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. The results suggested that beliefs significantly guided their classroom goals. This confirms previous research findings (see, for example, Da Silva, 2005; Gonzalez, 2008; Blay and Ireson, 2009; Phipps and 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 by establishing a comparison between beliefs as concepts and in action (Li & Walsh, 2011).

The findings provided important insights into how the research participants constructed the meaning of being a teacher. This was reflected, for example, in their capacity to interpret learner needs, in understanding the role of education for the construction of a better society or the need to improve learners’ communicative skills and intercultural awareness. One student teacher, for example, made a claim about the power of education as a factor for transformation: ‘I am truly convinced that there is no better revolutionary movement than teachers wishing to change a social and economic

system. This is only possible through education (pause), in the classroom'. The findings concerning this discursive construction of identity are in accordance with similar findings in the field (e.g. Clarke, 2008).

The third research question concerned the impact of the practicum on pre-service teachers' goals for the future. If the meaning of being a teacher entails interacting and participating in a teaching community, and strengthening teaching competence and subject and pedagogical knowledge, for example, a sense of affiliation or disaffiliation with teaching itself may also shed light on how identity is constructed. The findings generally suggested a well-grounded sense of professional affiliation and motivation. The research participants were keen, for example, to think about travelling abroad, furthering their studies at the level of Master qualifications or running their own bilingual institutions. One student teacher defined her short term professional goals as follows: 'As soon as I finish the practicum I would like to take part in an exchange programme as an Au-Pair, because this would help a lot. My classmates who did this came back with fluent English. Then I would like to read for a postgraduate degree'. Although two participating teachers showed disaffiliation with classroom practice and rather envisaged their role in areas such as school administration or research, the data gave insights into student teachers' identification as teachers. In general these findings are also in line with those of similar studies (e.g. Bobeck, 2002; Lasky, 2005; Yost, 2006).

In summary, this first part of the discussion has examined the research interest of this study with regard to the three questions that motivated it. The next sections interpret the research findings and relate them to previous studies in the area of teacher identity.

## 6.2. Traces of Professional Affiliation

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 teachers and the teaching environment for several years (Lorti, 1975; Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Borg, 2004; 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. But why did the participating teachers in this study go into teaching?

It was found that the student teachers chose teaching according to an implicit or explicit orientation to families and past teachers as well as an interest in learning foreign languages. These findings are in line with previous research (e.g. Clarke, 2008). Whether or not the research participants commented that teaching was their first alternative, they recognized that their families had played a definite role for example by suggesting it as the best option to choose (see chapter five, excerpts 1a, 2 and 3). One participating teacher mentioned that his decision was also determined by financial reasons (excerpt 1b). These results suggest that taking on a new identity was significantly driven by social and economic factors.

It could be claimed that financial reasons are amongst the most common explanations of why a significant number of Colombian students choose teaching as a profession. The increasing demand for places in education has generated two different realities: (1) the concentration of education services in the hands of private investors, and (2) the rise in the cost of education to unaffordable levels for the vast majority of prospective students. Private educational businesses have prioritised professions such as the medical sciences, engineering or law, which have gained social status and



recognition, while teacher education is mainly offered by public institutions. On the other hand, the process of admission for higher education is regulated by a national examination test that each candidate has to sit at the end of secondary school. The process of admission to public education follows a strict score-based policy. This implies that programmes such as the medical sciences, law, engineering or economics capture those achieving the highest scores, while education usually catches those with lower scores.

The data also showed that past teachers played an important role in the participating teachers' decisions to choose teaching. The findings revealed models of enthusiastic, affectionate, and caring teachers (excerpt 4), as well as teachers who were admired and respected because of their teaching commitment and second language skills (excerpt 5). These findings are in line with a long tradition in the literature on teacher education suggesting that students choose teaching after well-grounded experience as learners, interaction with teachers, and familiarity with the meaning of teaching (Bailey *et al.*, 1996; Malderez *et al.*, 2007). 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, rather conceiving 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 reduced. Teacher education programmes and trainers have to assume responsibility in this area. Fettes (2005: 7) 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”.

Affiliation with teaching is not always a straightforward response, and teachers may experience tension with what family or teachers previously induced in them (excerpt 1 b). One research participant here explicitly mentioned that if he had a second chance he would rather go into another field. 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. Inman & Marlow, 2004; Clandinin *et al.*, 2009).

Finally, the findings also indicated that attitudes towards foreign languages played an important role in the research participants' decision to choose teaching. The data showed how one participating teacher identified himself as a teacher in secondary school when he helped his classmates to correct mistakes in pronunciation or to revise their homework. Another research participant traced her interest in teaching back to her first contact with English in primary school. She was also highly motivated to learn French (excerpt 7a). This finding is in accordance with studies such as Clarke (2008). The next section discusses how student teachers experienced their first engagement with a teaching community.

### **6.3. Participating in a Teacher Community**

It is argued in this study that teachers construct their professional identity as part of a process of participation in and interaction with members of a teacher community. This is considered a fundamental factor in understanding how teachers take on a new identity and define themselves as teachers. Although this entails a complex process that might require a longitudinal study in order to gain more in-depth understanding of what happens at different stages of teachers' professional growth, the interest here is to gain an insight into how student teachers coped with their first teaching experience at the time of the practicum. During this time, they played the role of teacher, interacted with other members of staff, talked to parents, and engaged in classroom duties such as

lesson planning, task implementation, and assessment. This period, far from being easy to accomplish, was characterised, for example, by tension in relationships with senior teachers and supervisors. One research participant commented on the role of his university supervisor: ‘He is very strict but that is only a convention. He asks me, for example, to deliver the lesson plan to him at 2:00 o’clock and it has to be on time. So, I arrive at 2:00 o’clock but he comes in at 2:30 (laughs)’.

The findings demonstrated that a sense of community membership evolved as a result of interaction with other teachers. These professional relationships revealed a variety of modes such as inclusion or disclosure. One research participant, for example, reported on a positive impression after being introduced not as a pre-service teacher but as an authentic teacher (excerpt 8a). This act of professional acknowledgment contributed to the formation of a sense of autonomy and professional status with pupils. But the process of participation in a teacher community was not always as smooth a process as it may seem. The school environment is made up of complex micro-contexts that seem to be difficult to negotiate and integrate in terms of, for example, cooperation or team-work. This complexity could be supported by a series of incidents reported by the participating teachers. One student teacher commented on a senior teacher’s style, which contradicted his own understanding of teaching: ‘The kids like my lesson because we do different things. I allow them to talk even though they are sometimes not following me. I want them to feel free in the lesson. But once I finish and they have to attend the lesson with the senior teacher, things are very different. She shouts at them and they have to be quiet’.

While positive acknowledgement caused a sense of inclusion – as reported above – the same research participant mentioned an incident where the student teachers were excluded from a school meeting (excerpt 8b). Similar stories mentioned the effects of being observed and assessed by teaching supervisors (excerpt 9a), lack of guidance and mentoring (excerpt 9c), and tension resulting from how lesson content was implemented (excerpt 11). These findings are in line with previous research (e.g. Farrell,

2001; Malderez *et al.*, 2007). Farrell reported communication problems and lack of cooperation and guidance among pre-service teachers. This could be explained in terms of the lack of preparation of trainers to deal with their role as supervisors more efficiently. Farrell (2001: 59) stated that 'it seems that the school regarded taking on this role as a burden, and the cooperating teachers seemed to see their mentoring roles as a burden too'.

Working in an institutional environment with other members of a teacher community might be a traumatic experience and could have a negative effect on a teacher's sense of engagement with the teaching profession. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the effects of such conflicting relationships, partly due to limitations in the data collected. Furthermore, it is not claimed that any specific form of social organization would avoid similar drawbacks. Nevertheless, what novice teachers experienced during the teaching practicum could contribute to raising awareness of what teacher education programmes could do in order to create more integrated experiences.

It is important to note that, in the cases reported above, great importance was placed on the student teacher's personal experience rather than on pedagogical issues concerning, for example, students' achievements or classroom task development. However, according to Kagan (1992; cited in Farrell, 2001: 56), this 'is a natural progression of development for trainee teachers, whose initial focus on self as teacher may be a very important part of the socialisation process during the practicum'. Tsui (2003: 79) also claimed that typically beginning teachers are concerned with 'maintaining classroom discipline, establishing and appropriate relationship with students, playing the role of a teacher, and having and adequate mastery of knowledge as well as instructional methods'. One important step forward in the attempt to strengthen the sense of what a teaching community means, could be through coordinated actions involving university supervisors, the school-based mentors, the trainee, other members of staff, and the head of the school. It is beyond the scope of this

study to define the kind of actions that could be taken. However, a more welcoming atmosphere for a new member of a teacher community could be encouraged and efforts could be made to maximise the enriching experience of the teaching practicum in terms of, for example, mutuality, cooperative work, and pedagogical achievement.

A second finding with regard to becoming a member of a teacher community suggested forms of professional participation in and interaction with communities which were beyond the immediate context of teaching. The research participants reported how their experience of learning to teach was also connected to broader enterprises. Although those experiences seemed to play an important role in shaping professional identity, they seemed more the result of personal initiatives rather than, for example, arising from the coordinated actions of the teacher education programme. Among the experiences mentioned, two student teachers explained how a trip to America helped them not only to improve their foreign language proficiency (excerpts 12 & 13) but also to strengthen their awareness of teaching as a valuable profession. Both factors contributed to enhancing their teaching confidence, skills, and competence.

There is no doubt that foreign language competence is among the most distinctive characteristics of language teachers (Kamhi-Stein, 2009; Borg, 2006). This could explain why the research participants emphasized intercultural awareness and target language proficiency as issues of great importance. One student teacher highlighted these issues ‘It is one thing to learn the second language in Colombia and another learning it in an English-speaking country. Before I went, I thought I knew English; I was able to use it. But by using the language every day, I realized that I had to improve a lot. I met people from different parts of the world, so I was aware that the target language unified all those different cultures in that context’.

Teachers’ second language proficiency has been a topic of permanent debate in the literature on language teacher education (Cook, 1999; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese *et*

*al.*, 2005). Despite questions about the legitimacy of the social marginalization that has resulted from the stratification of language teachers into for example, native and non-native speakers (Kaplan, 1999; Pasternak and Bailey, 2004), these two labels have had a great impact in how language teachers construct their professional identities. Although ‘nonnative speakers constitute the vast majority of teachers worldwide’ (Varghese *et. al.* 2005: 23), it is widely believed that a native speaker represents the best option for target language teaching. This hegemonic position has created tension and instability in a variety of foreign language contexts, despite the argument that a second language user is a multi-competent speaker (Cook, 1999) and that teacher educators can do a lot to encourage this new image (Pavlenko, 2003).

Target language competence has increasingly been required as part of the skills needed to find a job. This has mainly resulted in student teachers looking for opportunities to go to the USA in order to improve their communicative skills. It is beyond the scope of this study to assess the validity or desirability of this phenomenon; however it has created a sense of a new professional status dividing those who have been abroad and those who have not. Although the gap between native and nonnative speakers still prevails (Pasternak and Bailey, 2004) , it is worth noting that prospective teacher candidates may feel the need to assume an extra professional cost – a trip abroad to improve teaching skills. Of course, there is no point in denying the importance of improving communicative skills among language teachers. Nevertheless, this controversy has two main sources of reinforcement: (1) the lack of governmental plans for teacher professional development, and (2) the fact that the vast majority of pre and in-service teachers have no chance to enjoy a trip abroad.

Finally, although the findings revealed examples of participation beyond the local environment where the participating teachers were serving, these were more a result of their own interest rather than of institutional action. This might suggest that a more deliberate institutional effort to form and sustain modes of participation with groups of scholars beyond the local context is needed. Some important examples of

professional cooperation have successfully reported a great impact in educational contexts (e.g. Bell-Angus *et al.*, 2008; Mitchel and Mitchel, 2008; Taylor and Otinsky, 2008). Unfortunately in the context where this study took place, a model allowing prospective teachers to integrate with other communities was not generally identified. The experience of becoming a member of a teacher community, however, was also manifested in the student teachers' capacity to generate learning and teaching alternatives.

#### **6.4. Modes of Commitment**

This chapter has so far discussed how a teacher community forms or transforms professional identities. This exploration considered the experience of participating in and interacting with members of the teacher community in two general modes: (1) within the institutions where teachers worked on a daily basis, and (2) with broader communities. Both may be considered fundamental in explaining part of the process of becoming a language teacher. However, the act of belonging to a teacher community involves further dimensions. The findings drew important conclusions about how the research participants exercised modes of commitment which have been acknowledged in the literature as imagination. This is generally accepted as the capacity to see reality from different perspectives and with distinct meanings. This discussion is not concerned with a precise definition, but focuses on the connection between forms of teaching innovation, for example.

Anderson (1991; cited in Pavlenko, 2003: 253) coined the term *imagined communities* and stated that imagination 'takes place on a societal and not just on an individual level'. In accordance with this statement, this study found good examples of this phenomenon. Two participating teachers, for example, reflected on issues such as the role of teachers as a factor for change (excerpt 14) and how teachers can help to tackle specific teaching problems (excerpt 15). In the former the student teacher was

determined to promote critical thinking, while the latter the research participant committed himself to tackle the lack of teaching resources. Evidence of trainee self-consciousness and reflection, as well as proactive participation in a teacher community, has been reported in similar studies (e.g. Clarke, 2008; Roberts and Graham, 2008).

It is common in the literature of teacher education that self-initiative and autonomy is not fully exercised by pre-service teachers. As they are under the supervision of school-based mentors and supervisors, it is believed that teaching initiatives are highly dependent on them. Nevertheless, this argument was contradicted by Roberts and Graham (2008) who drew conclusions from data showing that trainees used various strategies in order to exercise self-direction and initiative in teaching. On the other hand, Clarke (2008: 100) reported findings about pre-service teachers' capacity to reflect on school experiences that resulted from working with teachers, peers and students. These findings illustrated how identity was constructed. He stated that:

“We can see evidence of self-consciousness, of learning and development, of change and growth, at many levels: at personal levels of confidence and assertiveness; at professional levels of knowledge, communication skills and teaching strategies as well as in terms of less tangible qualities of understanding, responsibility and reflection”.

Due to limitations in the scope of the data collected, this study lacks sufficient evidence to argue that imagination was a common characteristic shared by the participating teachers. Although the findings illustrated good examples, these may prompt debate and disagreement amongst scholars. Can a teacher education programme, for example, strengthen the trainee's capacity to use imagination?

Fettes (2004) answered the above question in the affirmative. His claim was supported by data from a module scheduled as part of a teaching training programme in Canada. Fettes taught a course on imagination which included various themes aiming to



foster imagination as part of a teacher's conscious pedagogical development. One impact of Fettes' research was to help the present author to raise awareness of this area in the Colombian context where this study took place. It is beyond the scope of the study to assess the Colombian training model, but this exploration has briefly attempted to introduce questions of what a teaching training programme might do in order to transform the context of language teaching and learning. Rather than being a sporadic action in the classroom, imagination, for example, could be recognised as an authentic goal to achieve. This could create better learning and teaching environments, and may also accord with the principle that 'learning to teach – indeed learning in general – has the capacity to make a student feel that their identity has been transformed' (Clarke, 2008: 100). Although, still far beyond many teachers and teacher educators, this possibility might motivate future research, and the next section discusses issues with regard to other modes of proactive participation.

### **6.5. Beyond Participation as Default**

It has been claimed in this study that a teacher community plays a fundamental role in shaping professional identities. To substantiate this claim, the findings suggested that the participating teachers played active roles during the time of the teaching practicum. This confirms previous research findings (e.g. Malderez *et al.*, 2007; Clarke, 2008; Roberts and Graham, 2008). Although the data provided well-grounded evidence of this process, it is difficult to draw conclusions about whether or not this participation was motivated as a result of a process of teaching awareness. Put simply, since teachers' participation is part of a straightforward institutional process, it can be questioned whether or not a teacher education programme, for example, could train teachers to participate more actively.

It is argued in this study that teachers take on a new identity as part of the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2003). From this perspective, learning is conceived as a personal and social process, where separation of personal learning from the context where it happens is impossible. Learning is then argued to evolve as a result

of a long term trajectory which is believed to start in the early years of schooling, as mentioned in the previous sections and in chapter two in this thesis. This trajectory is undoubtedly characterized by tension and conflict (Creese, 2005; Farrell, 2009).

Creese (2005) criticized Wenger's (1999) emphasis on the communal rather than on the conflicting relationships that any form of social participation entails. In the context of this study, conflicts were manifested, for example, in tensions of power between supervisors and student teachers. The meaning of supervisor is still elusive (see Bailey, 2009 for a synopsis), although this includes 'being supportive of the transformation or development of the mentee and of their acceptance into a professional community' (Malderez, 2009). Nevertheless, supervision in-practice might show a different reality. The data showed one participating teacher's feeling of frustration and disappointment as a consequence of the comments made by his supervisor: 'When somebody [the supervisor] said to me that there was not a clear coherence in the sequence of the lesson, that there were important stages missing, she was telling me that I was wrong. That everything had gone wrong. So, this hurt me'. This negative feedback had a great impact on the student teacher's motivation and sense of teaching competence. This indicates an asymmetric relationship between a supervisor who positions herself as the 'knower' and the student teacher who is acknowledged as lacking teaching competence. This finding contradicts one core principle of Wenger's theoretical framework of CoP that sees engagement as a common understanding of a joint enterprise (see chapter two). It is apparent from the limited data presented here that becoming a member of a teacher community is not a linear and straightforward process. This could be due to cultural paradigms which stresses the role of supervisors as 'experts', or the lack of institutional plans for strengthening cooperative work between supervisors and supervisees.

Since cultural barriers may be challenging, teacher education programmes could do a lot more in order to create a cooperative working atmosphere. There was evidence in the data presented in this study which showed the capacity of the participating teachers to create alternative learning atmospheres and to develop self-directed initiatives (excerpts 10, 11 and 22). These findings are in accordance with studies such

as Roberts and Graham (2008), and it could be argued that novice teachers could play a more proactive role not only during the teaching practicum but also as part of their professional development. This argument contradicts previous research findings suggesting that novice teachers' self-initiative is very restricted during the first years of teaching practice (Edwards & Protheroe, 2003; Tsui, 2003; Jones, 2005).

So far, this section has explored various factors characterizing student teachers' participation in a teacher community. These include interaction with pupils and the types of relationship that teachers and students build. If the teacher feels that s/he has built good rapport with students, this would strengthen motivation and professional engagement (excerpt 26b). Similar phenomena have been noted in the literature (e.g. Nieto, 2003; Yost, 2006). But teachers' relationship with pupils may also represent tension which may have a negative impact on their sense of motivation to teaching (excerpts 28b and c). This finding confirms similar results reported in previous studies (e.g. Inman & Marlow, 2004).

One important implication, which may result from this, concerns the possible effect of training prospective teachers in active forms of participation. Active participation requires a critical capacity to suggest, transform, or negotiate the meaning and function of teaching. Therefore moving from a concept of communities *of* practice to communities *in* practice could be an important step forward in preparing teachers more effectively (Gee, 2008).

The meaning of community and practice has been claimed as an elusive term (Scollon, 2001; Rock, 2005), because although 'the term involves communities – collectives of people and practices' (Rock, 2005: 77), this must mean more than mere social categories, relationships, or groups of individuals. Although, participating in a teacher community and gaining professional experience may inspire teaching expertise, which is generally understood as 'a *state* [original emphasis] of superior performance reached as a result of years of experience and practice' (Tsui, 2009: 17), the ways to study teachers' expertise are complex. Tsui (2009: 190) argued that this 'necessarily involves investigations of the ways of knowing, acting, and being'.

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.

In summary, this section has presented a discussion with regard to the role of a teacher community in forming, shaping, or transforming teacher identity. This includes understanding modes of professional affiliation, becoming a member of a teacher community, modes of commitment, and going beyond participation as default. The next section explores the connection between beliefs and classroom practice.

## **6.6. Beliefs about Culture and Language**

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 these terms is still elusive, this study concentrates 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. The findings suggested a well-grounded discursive construction of the two issues. The data included perceptions about the role of culture in foreign language teaching and principles of teaching and learning. The notion that subject matter knowledge was a salient domain of language teachers' professional identity (Borg, 2006) was confirmed.

The argument that learning a foreign language entails learning a culture was represented in the data (excerpt 16a). One student teacher argued that living in the

foreign language community strengthened his teaching skills and communicative competence. The findings also showed how the participating teacher used knowledge of culture to answer a specific question about the appropriate pronunciation of a word. Although this situation may appear to have little significance, the student teacher expanded on it later in the stimulated recall session distinguishing teachers who have been abroad and those who have not. Due to limitations of the data collected in this study, no further in-depth analysis of this issue could be conducted but similar phenomena have been noted in the literature (e.g. Clarke, 2008).

However, while Clarke's findings indicated a well-grounded debate about, for example, the ideological effects of focusing on foreign cultural values or the use of textbooks that include foreign characters, life styles, and cultural stereotypes, findings in this study have a somewhat different significance. This implicitly suggests the importance for a language teacher to spend time abroad, which could be explained on the basis of the historical, cultural and political dependence that the USA has imposed on the majority of Latin-American countries. Education has furthermore adopted a business model strategy that attempts to increase the number of potential clients in the market of academia. Teachers have been targeted and consequently enrolled in Master and PhD programmes. Prospective teachers have also increasingly been participating in exchange programmes, involving such activities as language assistance and au pair work. One student teacher commented on her trip to America: 'I participated in an exchange programme with Amity'.

The role of culture in the foreign language classroom has sparked a scholarly debate in the last two decades (e.g. Lantolf, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Canagarajah, 2003). Although work on cultural learning and teaching has mainly been oriented towards enhancing learners' understanding of other cultures (Lantolf, 1999), sources of disagreement often seem more rooted in what it is deemed cognitively appropriate to acquire rather than on culture itself as a component of language learning and teaching. Put simply, notwithstanding the importance of learning about a second culture is

recognised in the literature, there is no clear consensus about whether or not a second culture could be acquired. Kramsch (1993b; cited in Lantolf, 1999: 29) argued that even migrants who have been living in a foreign country for several years feel that they do not really belong 'to the host culture'. This may seem to undermine the general belief that learning a culture is among the goals of second language learning. Perhaps a more sophisticated and in-depth understanding of the role of culture is needed in the language classroom as part of pre-service teachers' training.

Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 196) examined 'some ways in which culture is reflected in textbooks used for teaching English as a foreign language'. The findings indicated several paradoxes resulting from the use of materials and methods in the language classroom and the authors drew conclusions about a more critical approach for teachers and learners in order to understand the role of culture in second language teaching and learning. Here culture entails far more complex connections regarding not only content but also a series of dynamic processes, including those involved in learning. By the same token, Canagarajah (2003: 3) has increased awareness of linguistic imperialism in English teaching, calling attention to the fact that that 'although teaching English worldwide has become a controversial activity, few ELT professionals have considered the political complexity of their enterprise'. It is clear that divergent beliefs about the role of culture in language teaching and learning should prompt a more critical perspective concerning what it should entail. These issues warrant further research.

The findings have also provided evidence that pre-service teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs were fundamentally oriented towards second language teaching and learning. Important insights have been gained into their understanding of second language pedagogy. This includes the stated belief that the use of appropriate classroom strategies is crucial for second language learning (excerpt 17a). Although this core principle did not entirely match what the student teacher did in the classroom (excerpt 17b), he did exhibit self-awareness of the need to create more learning opportunities. The present data show that beliefs and classroom practice may not always align and

this finding is in accordance with the conclusions of studies such as Garton, (2008); Gonzalez, (2008); Blay and Ireson, (2009); Phipps and Borg, (2009); Li & Walsh (2011).

The findings also showed that beliefs about language learning include that it is a process entailing mastering linguistic components such as grammar, vocabulary, and expressions of contextual and meaningful use (excerpt 18a). This evidence of subject knowledge was then compared to what the student teachers did in the classroom. In excerpt 18b, the data showed how one participating teacher took advantage of a meaningful situation that emerged during the lesson in order to teach language in context. His belief was then confirmed in his explanation about the need to teach meaningful language (excerpt 19c). By the same token, an argument about the role of error correction was also manifested. A student teacher showed a well-grounded understanding of tolerating learners' mistakes as part of the process of learning a foreign language (excerpt 19a). This stated belief was then compared to his classroom practice (excerpt 19b) followed by his explanation of the same event in the SR session (excerpt 19c). The findings showed that stated beliefs and classroom practice in this case were closely aligned.

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 (Peacock, 2001; Pajares, 2002), a source of disagreement arises concerning what teacher education can do in order to overcome misconceptions, for example, about teaching and learning.

If there were misconceptions, for example, about communicative competence (Gonzalez, 2008), teachers might mistakenly emphasise particular learning goals and

tasks in the classroom. Teaching education has the social obligation to transform such a reality. The debate, around how inflexible beliefs are and what the role of education is in changing them, challenges many previous research findings about teachers' beliefs. Phipps and Borg (2009: 338) 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'. This perspective opens new possibilities for future research in the field of teacher cognition. The next section explores notions of the emerging self.

### **6.7. The emerging Self**

The findings in this study indicated a series of discursive strategies implying professional categorisation, self-esteem, and personal values. These were manifest in the use of terms that represented an emerging self, showing the participating teachers' awareness of their responsibilities. They were also used to express distinctiveness, sensitivity, teaching ability, and professional awareness. Hence, this section attempts to explore these discursive constructions and to analyse them in comparison with similar phenomena found in the literature on teachers' education.

The perception of belonging to a new generation of professionals was common in the data. One participating teacher, for example, defined herself as a creative, dynamic, and kind person whose authority and classroom management had improved (excerpt 20a). Such a belief was then contrasted with what she did in the language classroom (excerpt 20b) followed by an explanation of the teaching goals (excerpt 20c). The findings showed convergence between her stated beliefs and classroom practice. Another student identified herself as a creative, artistic, and caring teacher who listened to students (excerpt 21a). Although the comparison between stated belief and classroom practice showed an ambiguous alignment (excerpt 21b), the explanation of a vignette of



her class showed a critical reflective ability to judge her own teaching (excerpt 21c). It is important to note here that the participating teachers showed a clear ability to see themselves as distinct professionals with a lot of personal and professional potential. Zembylas (2003: 107) argued that ‘the teacher is an autonomous individual, constantly moving between the need to connect with other colleagues and the need to maintain a sense of individuality’. This emerging self is a fundamental part of the nature of being a teacher.

A sharp distinction between two generations of teachers also appeared as a narrative construction in the findings. One participating teacher offered a perspective on the prevailing paradigm that labels teachers as either traditionalist or modernist. She categorised herself as belonging to a new generation of teachers whose motivation, age, and ideas were in clear opposition to senior teachers who were considered old, tired, and traditionalist (excerpt 22a). An observation of her classroom practice showed genuine traces of creativity and dynamism (excerpt 22b) as well as a sense of pedagogical achievement and professional motivation (excerpt 22c). This finding is in line with similar phenomena noted elsewhere (e.g. Clarke, 2008).

This study found the categorisation of teachers as traditional and modern paradigmatic and intriguing. This distinction may not precisely correspond to a fair judgment of the role of teachers in the past or the present, who are undoubtedly contributing to constructing new systems of knowledge and consequently generating alternatives for the development of society. There is a latent risk in taking for granted that age and experience are necessarily synonymous with professional traditionalism and tiredness. Unfortunately the evidence in this study cannot prove that these prospective teachers belong to a new and non-traditionalist generation of teachers and this could perhaps be explained in those culturally coined paradigms that label teachers by their age.

The findings also suggested awareness of personal values, professional motivation, and belongingness to a new generation of teachers. The participants also acknowledged themselves as possessing teaching potential, knowledge and skills. Nevertheless the integration of these potentials into the global structure of the community is not a smooth process. There are, indeed, practical difficulties in articulating the internal self into the structure of a teacher community which at times restrict the possibilities of exercising a sense of personalised independence.

The findings revealing the participating teachers' capacity to see their teaching potential gave insights into the interplay between the social and the personal sides of teachers' lives and work. Since the professional self does not exist separately from the teaching community, being able to exercise, for example, self-initiative requires a cooperative environment, which is sometimes difficult to achieve. A model of cooperative action between trainers and trainees could be a useful alternative. Edwards and Protheroe (2003: 228) found 'very little team teaching where mentors work alongside student teachers, enabling their peripheral participation and access to teachers' decision-making while teaching'. The findings also suggested that mentoring was fundamentally concerned with observing lessons and providing feedback resulting from the tutor's conceptions of teaching and learning. The authors went on to report that an analysis of post-observation feedback between mentors and student teachers showed '79% of feedback talk focusing simply on descriptions of observed events' (*ibid*: 229). Ten Dam and Blom (2006: 648) also argued for the benefits of a collaborative school-based teacher education model. They stated that:

"an important part of the process of learning to teach should be embedded in experiences in a school setting, thereby stressing the situated nature of knowledge and learning. Collaboration between schools and universities is a prerequisite, if the connection between the improvement of teacher education and school development is to be realized"

To what extent does teacher identity evolve from collaborative action between the personalised meaning of teaching and the mode of participation in a teacher community? The present author's experience as a teacher educator in the last decade in Colombia has provided background information about, for example, tensions at school and lack of possibilities to exercise professional independence and freedom. So, what the findings initially suggested were fundamental representations of individual teaching potential may shift once teachers have to negotiate their participation in the teacher community. While there is a latent discourse in the majority of the Colombian institutes which fosters creativity, innovation, and dynamism, in practice these are subordinated to educational policies, budgets, relationships between school administrators and teachers and tensions among teachers, students, and other members of the community. Although it is apparent from the limited data analysed here that this issue warrants further research, this study does claim that teacher education could do a lot more to create better modes of cooperation between trainers and trainees which could help to articulate the personalised values of the student teachers into the structure of the teaching community more effectively.

## **6.8. Constructing Ownership**

The findings in this study showed that beliefs concerning the role of a primary school teacher go beyond the teaching domain. It has been argued that professional identity involves complex dimensions of teachers' lives and work. Despite the emphasis that teacher education programmes has placed on what have been called the technical dimensions of teaching – lesson development, task achievement, assessment, classroom interaction – the participating teacher's ideological orientations were also crucial in understanding how they construct their professional identity.

One participating teacher clearly explained how being a teacher implied far more than pedagogical duties (excerpt 23a). This belief was further manifest in a

passage of the lesson when he changed direction in order to cater to one learner's specific needs (excerpt 23b). Although it could be argued that this situation is simply unavoidable in a primary school classroom, and that any teacher might have behaved in the same way, a well-grounded understanding of the meaning of being a teacher was later confirmed in the stimulated recall session (excerpt 23c). Apart from establishing congruence between thought and practice, this showed that the student teacher was constructing a form of professional ownership represented in his understanding of his role as primary school teacher.

It has been argued in the literature on teacher education that foreign language teachers play distinct teaching roles (Becher and Trowler, 2001; Walls *et al.*, 2002; Borg, 2006). These authors claimed that language teachers follow, for example, methodological principles which are different to those of teachers of other subjects. Since language teachers' main goal is represented in the process of learning another language, attention is placed on developing communication skills, which entail, for example, the use of specific interactional strategies and means and methods of instruction. Since, this claim emphasises the roles of language teachers from the perspective of mainly teaching the target language, little research has been undertaken in order to interpret other important characteristics of primary school language teachers.

The findings in this study confirm the above characteristics, and also provided insights into how the student teachers coped with situations concerning pupils' special needs. This finding echoes similar phenomena discussed elsewhere. For example, Reeves & Kazelskis (cited in Walls *et al.*, 2002: 40) argued that 'conceptions of teachers and teaching held by pre-service teachers appear to focus more on affective (e.g., caring) than on cognitive issues'. However, although there is no doubt that the role of primary school teachers is also concerned with caring, the evidence in this study is insufficient to support Reeves & Kazelskis' claim that affect prevailed over cognition. The present author's experience as a university supervisor in the last decade in Colombia has shown that student teachers have contributed importantly to enriching the

learning and teaching alternatives available in the context of foreign language education.

Borg (2006: 22) found that language teachers' relationships with learners were 'closer, more relaxed, and generally more positive than those between teachers and learners in other subjects'. Despite the lack of relevant empirical evidence in the present study, Borg's findings cannot be entirely accepted given the complex variety of relationships and behaviours that exist in the language classroom. Needless to say, since its main purpose is to deal with communication processes, there should be a more evident disposition to boost stable relationships in language classes. However, the findings in this study indicated that the classrooms observed included cases of well-established relations and situations involving latent or explicit sources of tension. At face value, this seems to indicate that the language classroom shares characteristics with those of any other subject.

The findings also suggested a range of beliefs concerning the purpose of education. One participating teacher stated that a fundamental role of teaching was to place a strong emphasis on personal values (excerpt 24a). Although observation of her language classroom provided evidence for a close connection between stated and enacted beliefs (excerpt 24b), the explanation given by her in the stimulated recall session suggested that there were certain contradictions in what had previously seemed a congruence between thought and action (excerpt 24c). However, this might be explained by the fact that she was still experiencing the transition between being a student of teaching to becoming a teacher. This could have led her to now be more concerned about pupils' behaviour and how to gain control of the group rather than the achievement of pure pedagogical goals. This finding is in line with similar phenomena described in the literature. For example, Book *et al.* (1983; cited in Walls *et al.*, 2003) argued that 'prospective teachers believed that improving student self-concept was a more worthy goal than promoting students' academic achievement'.

The level of convergence between stated and enacted beliefs is not the primary concern here. What is more important is noting the emerging capacity of the participating teachers to understand the social purposes of language teaching. This provides insight into the political dimension of teaching – an area of research that has been under-explored in the context of language teacher education. Borg (2006: 13) argued for language teaching as a political activity and went on to explain that it ‘has a dimension of power, and control, inducting learners into ways of thinking and being which reflect those of the target language’. The teaching of values, as reflected in the data, might indicate a sense of professional ownership – an ideological dimension which directly concerns professional identity.

It is helpful here to break down the above argument into two basic conclusions: (1) the need to articulate knowledge *for* teachers and the knowledge *of* teachers (Fenstermacher, 1994), and (2) the evidence that language teaching is not merely concerned with fostering communication skills. While the former prompts a new debate in terms of what has traditionally been the establishing paradigm in teacher education, the latter provides insight into the notion that ‘language teaching is a profoundly value-laden activity’ (Johnston (2003: 1). These two ideas are briefly discussed below, and certainly warrant further research.

Fenstermacher (1994: 7) asserted the need to integrate ‘what teachers already know, in contrast to producing knowledge for teachers to use’. This represents a significant step forward in the understanding of what teachers need to know as part of teacher education. Furthermore, research in the field of teacher cognition has found that experiential knowledge informs practice more than theoretical knowledge (Johnson, 1994; Peacock, 2001; Pajares, 2002). Therefore the integration of both into the curriculum of teacher education programmes, for example, could contribute to opening new possibilities for more informed decisions about what teachers need to know. The findings in this study provided evidence of how the participating teachers articulated experiential and theoretical knowledge in the classroom practice. This might also

contribute to resolving the tension between supervisors and student teachers noted in the findings in this study. It is apparent from the limited data presented here that students' knowledge was included neither as part of the curriculum nor during the teaching practicum.

The data also give important insights into the need to overcome the paradigm which states that language teaching is primarily concerned with developing skills. Johnston (2003: 1) asserts that, although teaching values is not completely ignored in the literature on teacher education, attention to it has been very restricted. He went on to argue that:

“The moral dimension of teaching has rarely been talked about, and most of the time teachers are not consciously aware of it; yet there is a great need to uncover and examine the values that inform teaching, in the interests both of the professional development of teachers and of the practice of language teaching”.

The notion that language teaching also entails ethical and ideological dimensions has not certainly been considered in the literature on teachers' cognition which has mainly explored knowledge about language, pedagogic principles or knowledge of learning and learners. In summary, this section has presented three general topics for discussion concerning the connection between beliefs and classroom practice, including beliefs about culture and language, the emerging self, and constructing ownership. The next topic of discussion addresses the participating teachers' professional expectations for the future.

## **6.9. Professional Expectations**

Teaching experiences, relationships with pupils and other members of staff, teaching resources, budgets and educational policies have been identified as possible causes of

affiliation or disaffiliation with teaching (Lasky, 2005; Yost, 2006; Clandinin *et al.*, 2009). Although the participating teachers were at an early stage of their professional careers, the findings gave an important insight into how their first teaching experience had a great impact on their professional expectations for the future. This impact might be reflected in a wish to improve their qualifications at the level of postgraduate education or a sense of resistance to continuing in teaching.

It is common across the literature of teacher education that practice plays an important role in the process of constructing professional identity. The findings generally suggested that the participating teachers showed a well-grounded sense of alignment with the teaching profession, which was represented in their wish to continue their studies (excerpt 25 a & b), to travel to an English speaking country to improve their communicative skills (excerpt 26 a & b), and to contemplate images of ideal working environments (excerpt 27 a & b). These points are in line with the findings of similar studies (e.g. Beijaard, 1995; Hargreaves, 1998; Nieto, 2003; Yost, 2006). The teachers exhibited positive and stable identities as they constructed good relationships with pupils and the institution they worked in.

However, the findings also showed how the three-month teaching experience had a negative impact on two student teachers. While a strong motivation for teaching was manifested by one student teacher before the practicum (excerpt 28 a), this dramatically declined as a result of factors such as pupils' misbehaviour (excerpt 28 b), such that his professional expectations now lay beyond the classroom (excerpt 28 c). This finding is in accordance with those of studies such as Inman & Narlow (2004), who found explanations for teachers' job dissatisfaction in class size or rough institutional atmospheres.

There is no doubt that life at school is in many respects no different from those complex modes of social behaviour that characterise the rest of contemporary society. It



is beyond the scope of this study to examine the misconduct of youth; however, such phenomena do relate to the social nature of teaching and its role in constructing a better society, as well as understanding teaching beyond the linguistic domain as has been argued in this study. By the same token, pre-service and in-service teachers need to see their job as an opportunity to strengthen personal values. This is ‘absolutely central to maintaining and improving educational quality in our schools, and to the work of educational leaders who are ultimately responsible for producing that quality’ (Hargreaves, 1998: 315). It is also worth noting that this task not only concerns teachers but also, for example, those designing teacher education programmes, policymakers, educational authorities, and trainers. This new reality challenges trainers to maximise teachers’ preparation beyond the restricted level of becoming technicians of education, because it necessarily implies ‘how the work of teaching is organised, structured and led’ (*ibid*: 316).

A sense of disaffiliation with teaching was also manifested in another participating teacher. While he showed a strong interest in the profession before his teaching practicum started (excerpt 29 a), this was transformed somewhat as a result of his supervisor’s feedback (excerpt 29 b). He manifested conflicting perceptions and frustration and felt that his motivation had dropped dramatically (excerpt 29 c). Evidence of similar findings has been reported elsewhere (e.g. Farrell, 2001; Brown, 2005) in studies reporting about pre-service teachers’ feelings of frustration, lack of guidance, and communication problems with their supervisors. At face value, this could suggest a need for changes both in the structure and purpose of teaching mentoring, and the need to encourage higher levels of thinking. These two broad ideas are discussed briefly below but, again they warrant further research.

Mentoring is generally acknowledged to involve ‘on-going supportive relationships’ between mentors and mentees (Peeler and Beverly, 2003: 1). There has been a growing acceptance of the need for the guidance of a newcomer into the teaching profession by an experienced and more reliable professional who helps ‘them to

appropriate the skills and knowledge they require' (Ball, 2000; cited in Peeler and Beverly, 2003: 1). This conception explicitly implies that a newcomer – a pre-service or first year in-service teacher – lacks skills and teaching knowledge, an argument which is not accepted here. Instead it is argued with a high level of certainty that the findings in this exploratory research show that the participating teachers manifested well-grounded teaching skills and knowledge. Put simply, mentoring has to be understood as a fundamental step that has to be taken in order to help a new teacher understand the transition into the profession. This necessarily entails cooperation and negotiation which would be more effective through a process of socialisation (Farell, 2003) implying a short term trajectory generally located during the teaching practicum or in the first year of teaching.

The second conclusion to be discussed here concerns the use of a longer-lasting strategy to promote action among teachers. Common across the literature is the identification of factors contributing to the retention of teachers or their early retirement. No studies were identified in the review of literature in this study, which reported findings concerning long-term action aiming to construct alternatives to help teachers overcome the tensions which arise in their course of their careers. Nevertheless, theoretical domains in education are directly connected with this issue. Reflective practice, for example, could significantly contribute to this task; however, it would have to go beyond the model of a written assignment, a learning log or diary, or a discussion between a supervisor and classmates. Alsup (2006: 1260) stated that:

“it is not only about learning content, pedagogical technique, or research strategies for reflecting on practice. It is also about how to honour personal beliefs, life choices, and experiences that have value and meaning while enacting elements of the professional identity that society demands”.

## **Summary**

This chapter has explored and discussed the findings in this exploratory research and compared them with the results of previous studies. Most of the findings of this study were in general agreement line with those of the majority of similar studies in almost every aspect investigated, and where this was not the case plausible explanations for such differences were given. The findings as a whole were then interpreted in the light of an enhanced theoretical understanding of the nature of the professional identity of teachers. Finally, the next chapter draws the conclusions of the study and makes suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 7. Conclusions**

### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter six discussed the findings and their significance in the exploration of how pre-service teachers' construct professional identity. This chapter includes a summary of the aims (7.1) and the research undertaken (7.2). The overall significance of the findings (7.3) in terms of the limitations of the study, the implications in the context of teacher education, suggestions for future research, and personal reflection is discussed.

### **7.1. Re-visiting the Aims and the Research Questions**

The aims included to gain a closer understanding of how identify of teachers is constructed while doing the final year practicum, and how this identity is shaped through their professional practice. This study also aimed to describe the connection between pre-service teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, as well to estimate the impact of teaching practice on their professional goals for the future. This exploratory research has investigated three research questions. Firstly, it has explored how the act of belonging to a teacher community, while doing the final year practicum, forms, sustains or transforms teacher identity. Secondly, it has examined in what ways the systems of knowledge and beliefs of pre-service teachers are manifested in their teaching practices with young learners.. Finally, the study has considered the impact of the teaching practicum on pre-service teachers' goals for the future. The main theoretical framework underpinning the study integrates concepts of communities of practice, teachers' knowledge and their professional development, as advocated by Wenger (1999), Grossam (1995) and Glatthorn (1995).

## **7.2. Summary of the Research Findings**

It is argued in this study that consideration of three interconnected domains helps in understanding how teachers construct professional identity: participation in a teacher community, the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice, and professional expectations for the future. Firstly, the study found that a teaching community plays a fundamental role in forming, sustaining and transforming professional identities. Four modes of participation and interaction were identified: choosing teaching, engagement, alignment and imagination. Choosing teaching appeared to be socially driven by family influences and past and present teachers as well as economic factors. Although the engagement of a new member with 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. On the other hand, alignment was represented in terms of teaching experiences abroad and commitment to target language improvement. Finally, imagination was represented in terms of self-consciousness and reflection.

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. Finally, the study found that the teaching practicum had a substantial impact on the participating teachers' professional expectations for the future in two contrasting modes: alignment with and resistance to the teaching profession.

### **7.3. The Overall Significance of the Findings**

#### ***7.3.1. Limitations of the study***

The study suffered from unavoidable limitations which need to be examined. Firstly, even though the findings suggested important evidence of the nature of becoming a primary language teacher, the present author is aware that more insights into the process of constructing professional identity could be gained through a longitudinal study. Put simply, teachers' identity, as suggested in the findings, entails understanding the interconnection of a complex system of personal and social dimensions, which are difficult to disentangle in a short period of time.

Secondly, despite the fact that the study proposed to integrate the two historical foundations of identity – the personal and the social – these were still separated in two distinct analytical procedures. Although such a potential limitation does not reduce the relevance of the findings, it highlights the fact that more research lies ahead in order to truly bridge the gap between them.

Thirdly, despite limitations in the sample size of research participants, the study explored how pre-service teachers' constructed professional identities but was unable to integrate the perceptions of, for example, senior teachers and supervisors or non-participating trainees. This might have provided a more comprehensive view of the connection between personal and social identity, which is argued in this study to be crucial in understanding the meaning of becoming a teacher. Fourthly, there are also limitations arising from the manner in which the data were analysed. At face value, the analysis lacked the participating teachers' own voices and representation. Furthermore, although the study used a multi-method approach to gain a fine-grained understanding of the topic investigated, the data gathered were provoked by the direct enquiry of the

researcher. The study lacked opportunities to collect data from, for example, spontaneous conversations among the research participants, school meetings or feedback sessions with supervisors.

Finally, the study also suffers from other methodological and theoretical limitations. Although the present author is aware of the need to focus research interest within a specific and manageable scope, teachers have hitherto been paradigmatically encapsulated in a restricted view of the classroom and subject knowledge. However, the findings in this study showed that the student teachers' participation and interaction in a teacher community, their systems of knowledge and beliefs and expectations for the future went well beyond the frontiers of the classroom. This implies a well structured perception of, for example, philosophical, ideological or political dimensions, which were a fundamental part of their understanding of the meaning of becoming a teacher. Regrettably, the study also over-emphasised the scenario of the classroom. Nevertheless, rather than diminishing the true value of the findings, these limitations suggest new research avenues in the future.

### ***7.3.2. The implications of the study***

The findings in this study represent an important contribution to the ongoing debate about how teachers take on a new identity. It is argued that teachers construct professional identity as a result of the experience of learning to teach. Furthermore, this process evolves as part of a long term trajectory in which they participate in local and broader teacher communities, develop teaching competence and undertake professional development. Nevertheless, a teacher education programme plays a substantial role in this trajectory. It generally provides pedagogical and subject matter knowledge, as well as teaching experience, which are all argued to be fundamental in doing the job. In a nutshell, prospective teachers are trained in the technical dimensions of teaching, and little has been done to prepare them for a more proactive participation within

professional communities, to identify the sources of beliefs and tackle possible misconceptions about language teaching and learning or to help them to affiliate with the teaching profession.

An overview of current trends in the field of pre-service teachers' identity construction suggested that few studies have been undertaken in this area. This study is expected to generate further explorations in this field. Furthermore, the findings could be used as a point of departure in order to introduce changes into the curricula of language training programmes in the future, and might also attract the attention of policymakers in planning action to promote professional development among pre and in-service teachers. More specifically, this study could inform the foreign language programme (FLP) at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC), where this study took place, to spark debate around the significance of the findings.

Although this exploratory research suggests substantial conclusions, further implications have to be considered. Firstly, this study has explored the personal dimensions of participating teachers but overlooked the social domain of professional identity. To remedy this, the social, political and economic environment where teachers work and live on a daily basis would also have to be considered. Secondly, the findings could be used to generate discussion and reflection in the institutions where the data were collected. Senior and supervising teachers, as well as the school board of directors, should take account of the findings. Finally, the findings are locally and contextually tuned and further generalisation should be exercised only with great caution.

### ***7.3.3. Suggestions for further research***

The study explored how the participating teachers constructed the meaning of becoming a teacher during the last stage of the teaching 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. Additionally, some introspection into professional expectations for the future was also examined. 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, 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 participant teachers have to participate and interact on daily basis.

As participation and interaction in a teacher community involves many participants, data from these different sources could be gathered in order to gain more insights into this process. The perception of student teachers, for example, could be then compared and contrasted with the view of supervisors, senior teachers, boards of administrators or students. This wider scope could contribute to consolidating a multivariate perspective in understanding the role of a teacher community in forming identity. Additionally, future research could explore models of preparing pre-service teachers for more pro-active participation and interaction in a teacher community, which need to integrate teacher educators and student teachers. The assessment of these actions might help to overcome some tensions arising between supervisors and student teachers, as the findings suggested in this study.

Further research in the field of pre-service teachers' systems of knowledge and beliefs could be also undertaken. While plenty of research has identified typologies of teachers' knowledge and beliefs, little research has explored the correspondence between beliefs and teaching practice. However, an important step forward in this field could involve the identification of the sources of such beliefs plus an intervention in order to tackle possible misunderstandings concerning language teaching and learning. The present findings also provided important insights into pre-service teachers'

theoretical and experiential knowledge. Research in this field acknowledging what teachers already know is also needed in the context of teacher education.

Finally, the findings suggested cases of the negative impact of practice on teachers' professional alignment. Research in this field could involve an intervention integrating supervisors and trainees working cooperatively with the intention of retaining teachers in the profession.

#### ***7.3.4. Personal reflection***

This study is certainly the most grounded scholarly task I have ever undertaken. The process regarding, for example, topic selection, definitions, theoretical understanding, design and evaluation have resulted in an immensely rewarding experience and a solid professional foundation, despite the high levels of anger, anxiety and even frustration experienced, which were unavoidable at this stage of my professional growth and development. This process surely started at the time I made the decision to strengthen my academic skills at the PhD level. Since then, and as a consequence of my enrolment in the IPhD at Newcastle University, I can claim that there are sufficient reasons to believe that both my research and professional skills have developed considerably. This will inevitably translate into new possibilities as a scholar and teacher educator.

This time at Newcastle University, including the modules, workshops and conference attendance, group discussions, conference presentations, and interaction with senior lecturers and supervisors, has contributed enormously to re-formulating former paradigms and refreshing my own professional understanding and identity. I now feel better prepared to make more grounded decisions with regard to expanding on my area of research – teacher identity – as well as transferring these skills to other fields of teacher education including teacher cognition, professional development and classroom interaction. Similarly, my deeper awareness of the use of qualitative and

quantitative analysis, NVIVO and SPSS in research in education are skills I would like to apply in projects in the future.

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**Appendix A:**

**Research participants' Questionnaire: wish to participate in the study**

**Newcastle University**

**School of Education, Communication and Social Sciences**

**IPhD in Education and Applied Linguistics**

Dear Student:

I appreciate if you answer the following questionnaire that asks you if you would like to take part in the study: 'Teacher Identities (TI) Construction: exploring the nature of becoming a primary language teacher'. The study is part of the requirements as a PhD candidate in the School of Education Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University, UK. The study will interview you twice, video-record two of your on-going lessons and exchange teaching views on an on-line teaching blog. You are also allowed to withdraw from the process at any stage that you consider there are reasons for doing so.

Thanks very much for your cooperation.

1. Would you like to participate in the research study?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix B:**

**Consent**

**Newcastle University**

**School of Education, Communication and Social Sciences**

**IPhD in Education and Applied Linguistics**

I manifest my wish to participate freely and autonomously in the research study: 'Teacher Identities (TI) Construction: exploring the nature of becoming a primary language teacher'. The research study is going to take place at the UPTC – Foreign Language Programme – from February to May 2010. I also accept that I have been informed by the researcher about the purposes and the aims of the study and that it is also my right to withdraw from the process at any time and for whatever reason that in my opinion might justify it. The information gathered has to be exclusively used for academic and research purposes. I also authorise the researcher to video-tape, audio record, transcribe and translate data, the same as use the analysis and findings for being published, both as final research report and/or in academic journals if needed. My name or any other direct reference as a research participant has to be protected and pseudonymous has to be used instead.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C:

### Research participants' profile

#### **\*Sarah MILANES:**

She was born in \*Tunja where she has lived with her family since. Sarah has three sisters and one brother. He is in Bogota. Her sisters are an engineer and a solicitor. The youngest is studying industrial engineering. Her brother is in secondary school. Sarah went to primary school in a catholic school in \*Tunja. She considers herself to have been a very good student, who shared a good sense of friendship with pupils and members of staff. She was good at music and languages as well as extreme sports. Her family gave her plenty of support in subjects such as sciences. She has very good memories of past teachers of music and languages because they motivated her a lot. She started to learn English in a catholic private primary school although it was only some basic vocabulary. She furthered then her secondary school in a private institution emphasizing foreign languages. This school, signed an academic agreement with the British Council and pupils had English teachers who taught them the foreign language and culture. She fell in love with English since then.

The teacher of music also motivated her to play an instrument. They became very good friends. She plays the piano. Sarah considered the possibility of studying music but then soon her family made her aware that living as a musician was not an easy task. She then made the decision to study languages at the UPTC. She decided to become a teacher as a personal motivation. Although, this was a decision she was hesitant to make. She was fully informed that the emphasis of the programme was on teaching languages to children. She thinks that thanks to her personality, teaching children matches her profile. She went to The USA as Au Pair for a period of six months. She would like to have her own language institute where she could teach languages to children. She plans to apply for a M.A programme, to travel and to learn

more languages. She is aware that becoming a primary language teacher in Colombia is neither economically nor socially rewarded.

**\*Julie PETRO:**

Julie is 24. She was born in \*Chiquinquirá. She has one sister, \*Jenny, 30, lives in Bogotá, and one brother, \*Matthew, 31, is a solicitor. Julie lives with her parents and her brother in \*Chiquinquirá. Her parents are business people. She went to primary and secondary school to \*Instituto Soto Aparicio in \*Chiquinquirá.

Julie was very good at chemistry, biology, and English. She was not very good at math, and Spanish became a nightmare for her. Her brother loved English, he was in secondary school and he used to teach her some basic words. His mum paid him to teach Julie. She started learning English at secondary school. She was always motivated and determined to learn it although she was aware that she made very little progress: a few words, the verb to be and some regular and irregular verbs.

Julie always dreamed to become a vet. She kept her dream almost until the end of the secondary school when she was aware of her mistake. She thinks that she got a wrong idea of what veterinary is about. Although Julie loves animals, she is unable to treat an injured animal. It took two years for her to make the decision to study languages. Becoming a primary language teacher was a decision she made by chance. During this time she took English courses which awakened her interest to becoming a language teacher. She is aware that her decision to become a teacher was made at the last minute. She had no information at all to be trained to teach languages to children. She soon realised that the FLP emphasized on teaching languages to young learners. It was a good motivation for her because she loves children. Her decision was also influenced by the fact that the language programme offered the opportunity to learn

three languages: English, French and German. She plans to take part in an exchange programme as au pair in the United States and then continuing her studies in Education Management. She would like to work with children and university students in the future. She disagrees with the statement that becoming a primary language teacher in Colombia is socially and economically well recognized.

**\*Christine BENEDETTI:**

Although Christine was born in \*Miraflores, Boyacá, she has never lived there. Her parents are also original from \*Miraflores. She has always lived in Tunja. She studied from primary to secondary at the same school \*Instituto de los Andes. Her parents got divorced when she was 10. She has one brother, \*Ramiro, and one sister, \*Margareth. Due to economic limitations at home, she went to live with her uncle for year in \*Cali. She got a job when she was in the last two years of secondary school, since then she has got a part time job as a singer and dancer in a band. This has allowed her to finance her own studies. She made the decision to become a language teacher because she thinks it a great profession. Christine loves music. Her brother is studying computing engineering at the UPTC, he is also self-funded.

Christine's first contact with English was in year three. Her teacher, who is still working at \*Instituto de los Andes, taught her some basic things: the numbers from one to ten and few children songs. She has very good memories of those times and she loves English since then. She considers herself a very good student who put a lot of effort in doing things properly. She was good at languages, physics and biology. She wanted to study music but she soon realized that making a living from music was not an easy job. Christine is aware that languages will give her better chances to travel abroad and to reach some more personal and professional achievements. She made the decision to become a primary language teacher as a personal motivation. She made this decision a long time ago. She carefully revised the two language programmes offered at the UPTC

and went to foreign languages based on the fact that it gave her the opportunity to learn two foreign languages: English and French and also a little German. So she was fully informed that FLP trained her to teach languages to children. She would like to work with adolescents and university students in the future. She went to the USA as Spanish language assistant for one year. She plans to go back to America. She would also like to further her studies in education management, which is currently offered at the UPTC. Christine disagrees with the statement that becoming a primary language teacher in Colombia is socially and economically well recognised.

**\*Andrew LOPEZ:**

Andrew was born in \*Bucaramanga. His father died three years ago. He has a sister. She is a vet. He has taught English to children and adults. His mother is a psychologist. She works as university tutor. Andrew's father was transferred from \*Bucaramanga to \*Tunja because of his job. This allowed the family to settle down in \*Tunja. He started to learn English at \*'San Carlos' primary school. He was transferred to a secondary school 'La Esperanza' where he had a real contact with the language. A German Teacher came to teach him in the last two years of his secondary studies. He was the only teacher who showed foreign language communicative ability and it motivates him to study languages. This teacher came to the classroom talking in English and although most of the pupils were not able to follow him, Andrew became captivated by the language. He was very good at most of the subjects except math. He remembers not been very good at numbers.

Andrew wanted to study languages although it was not his first choice. He started to study industrial design, a subject that attracted him long before. He soon realized that it was not what he wanted. He gave up and took another semester before registering as a student of foreign languages. He studied languages at \*'Tell me the way', a language institute in Tunja. Becoming a primary language teacher was a

decision he made by chance. He carefully checked the two options that were offered at the UPTC and although he was not very attracted to teaching children, he chose the FLP specially guided by the fact that this provided him the opportunity to study three languages. Nevertheless, this was a decision he was hesitant to make. He was partially informed that FLP trained him to teach languages to children. Although teaching languages to children was not very attractive to him he feels a little more confident now after some teaching experience. He would like to apply for a Master programme very soon and a PhD ideally. He would like to get a position as a University tutor because he thinks working with adults matches more his personality and teaching profile. He would rather prefer to become a researcher. He wishes he could work with languages but in areas such as translation or international business. If he had the option he would rather prefer to go abroad and to look for an overseas job, because he is aware that becoming a primary language teacher in Colombia is neither socially nor economically well recognised.

**\*Nicholas MONTENEGRO:**

Nicholas is from \*Moniquirá but he has never been there. His family settled down in Bogotá since the 90's where he studied till year seven. He remembers to be very good at math in year six and seven. He was not very good at English. Nicholas lives with his mum. Because an economic crisis, his mother decided that he should move out to a small city called \*San Gil, Santander, where his aunt worked as a teacher of English. The school, he went to, trains candidates to become primary school teachers. As part of the curriculum, he has to take subjects such as pedagogy, psychology and didactics. If he wanted to get a degree as a primary school teacher he should have taken two more years. He did not take them because he was determined to further his studies in teaching languages. He made the decision to become a primary language teacher as a personal motivation. This was made a long time ago.

Nicholas always looked forward to registering at a state university, as it was his only chance due to financial restrictions. He also had some interest to study law but it represented applying to a private University and his family was not able to afford it. He thinks that thanks to his previous training in the field of pedagogy, this gave him some advantage as a student of foreign languages at the UPTC. He was fully aware that FLP trained him to teach languages to children. He would prefer to work with adolescents or university students. He partially agrees the statement that becoming a primary language teacher in Colombia is socially and economically well recognized.

Nicholas is looking forward to getting a job soon. If he had the chance to study law, as he initially wanted, he would then teach law in English. He would like to become a university tutor. He went to the USA, in the south of San Francisco. He stayed there for 10 months. He was Spanish assistance and interacted with primary school pupils from Nursery to year 5. He thinks that that particular experience strengthened his knowledge, skills and teaching vocation. Nicholas would like to get a job ideally in a public school in Bogota with plenty of resources, books and equipment.

**\*Jacob BORJA:**

Jacob is 34 and was born in \*Medellin but he has lived in Tunja for the last seven years. He is married, he has a five year son and a one year daughter. His parents live in \*Medellin. He has three brothers. One of them is living in Tunja, he is running a fast food business. His youngest brother lives in \*Medellin and works in a plastic enterprise. None of them has formally registered for any professional programme yet. Jacob's mum is a hair dresser and his dad works as a social assistant. He works for a charity that helps youths who are addicted to drugs, alcohol or gambling.

Jacob studied his primary school in four different private institutions: \*La casa encantada (The enchanting House), \*Gimnasio la Colina, \*Nicanor Parra and \*Juvenal Herrera. His secondary school was attended in two private institutions: \*Liceo Neruda and a military academy. He has very good and happy memories of his studies in primary school where he shared good relationships with classmates and members of staff. He was very good at math. The teacher was particularly friendly. He applied a good methodology and shared very a good relationship with pupils. Although he had some early contact with English since nursery school it was sporadically at a very basic level. He started a self-directed language learning journey in primary school which was supported by his mum who gave him a bilingual dictionary as a present when he was in year five. His motivation for learning English was influenced by the idea of travelling some day to The USA where his aunt \*Dolly lived and worked. She used to come to visit the family in Colombia. His aunty promised him that if he learnt English she would take him to New York for a year or so. She never kept her promise but it encouraged him to learn. When he was in year six his aunt bought a set of English materials which offered her the registration for a complete basic, intermediate and advance course. The offer included that two more people could take the course free of charge. He and his brother registered. Jacob was the only one who completed a three year course. His brother and aunt had an early withdrew. This experience plus his learning autonomy gave him certain recognition among his classmates who used to ask him for help. His interest for teaching became in this time.

Jacob's daddy was a frustrated policeman. He was not accepted as a policeman and he dreamed that one of his sons will become a general. Jacob was the chosen candidate. However he decided to register as a student of chemical engineering. He studied for a year and withdrew because of academic and financial restrictions. After a time of hesitation he enrolled in another course of English. She also got a part-time job. Jacob then registered for an evening Spanish-English teaching undergraduate programme at \*'Mario Benedetti' university. He studied there for three years and due to financial, academic and administrative problems he withdrew once again. While studying at \*'Mario Benedetti' he got his first formal full time teaching job as a foreign



language teacher. He worked with kids who lived in poverty. He then registered for an undergraduate language teaching programme at universidad Nacional. He became a full time student and also shared some time working as a teacher in a language institute. After four semesters and due to lack of academic achievements he withdrew. After working as a barman and studying a hotel and tourism management training course he registered for a course of English at a prestigious language institute where he completed the whole training programme. He met the person he later got married with in 2003 and came to live in Tunja. He got a job at a language institute and later he decided to register for an undergraduate language programme at the UPTC. He made the decision to become a primary language teacher because of vocation and it was made a long time ago. He was fully aware that FLP trained him to teach languages to children. He is close to finish it and look forward to furthering his studies in a Master programme at the UPTC. He also plans to go abroad and to strength his learning commitment with the target language and culture. Although teaching has been something he has regularly done he wishes to get a position as an administrator rather than as a teacher. He would like to own his own language institute. He prefers working with adults. He disagrees with the statement that becoming a primary language teacher in Colombia is socially and economically rewarding.

**Appendix D:****Interview schedule**

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Entry Interview schedule</b>	<b>Exit interview schedule</b>
<b>Sarah MILANES</b>	23	02-03-2010	21-05-2010
<b>Julie PETRO</b>	23	01-03-2010	21-05-2010
<b>Christine BENNEDETTI</b>	24	05-03-2010	18-05-2010
<b>Andrew LOPEZ</b>	24	02-03-2010	18-05-2010
<b>Nicholas MONTENEGRO</b>	24	04-03-2010	17-05-2010
<b>Jacob BORJA</b>	34	03-03-2010	20-05-2010

## **Appendix E:**

### **Entry interview**

#### **Part A: Personal Dimension**

Who are you?

Family history: relatives, childhood memories, family links to teaching.

Personal background: past time activities, motivations, aspirations.

Education background: learning experiences, favourite subjects, memories of learning, teachers and school's images, learning atmosphere and achievements.

#### **Part B: Professional dimension**

Why did you choose teaching as a professional choice?

Who helped you to make the decision?

What are some of your memories of those moments when you decided to apply for a teaching programme?

What are some of your short/long term goals as a teacher?

How do you link language teaching with the future of children and the country?

How do you see the future of teachers in Colombia?

## Appendix F:

### NVIVO 8: Software guidelines for qualitative analysis

#### QSR NVivo 8



#### Explore & Analyse Information Like Never Before

- \* Video
- \* Interview Recordings
- \* Documents
- \* Photos
- \* Media Clips
- \* Podcasts

Platform: Windows

Videos. Interview recordings. Documents. Photos. Media clips. Music. Podcasts. Whatever your materials, whatever your project, whatever your background – NVivo 8's superior technology lets you explore, analyze and glean insight from your information like never before.

Whether you're working with documents, audio, surveys, pictures, or video, NVivo's powerful analysis tools guide you from questions to insights. Organize and analyze your information. Explore and visualize your material. Justify your findings. Share your work with others. Make informed decisions.

#### What is NVivo 8?

NVivo 8 is software that helps you easily organize and analyze unstructured information, so that you can ultimately make better decisions.

Whatever your materials, whatever your field, whatever your approach, NVivo provides a workspace to help you at every stage of your project - from organizing and classifying your material, through to analysis, and then sharing and reporting.

### **Who uses NVivo?**

From health research and program evaluation, to customer care, human resources and product development – NVivo is used in virtually every field. Yale University, World Vision Australia, the UK Policy Studies Institute and Progressive Sports Technologies all use NVivo to harness information and insight.

### **Code**

- Work through your information and assign it to relevant topics or themes called ‘nodes’. This process is called ‘coding’.
- View all the information gathered under one theme or ‘node’ together.
- Use NVivo’s autocoding features to deal with structured information like questionnaire responses.

### **Sources**

- The NVivo 8 ‘Documents’ folder has been renamed ‘Internals’. The Internals folder contains documents, pictures, audio and video.
- When viewing sources in List View, you can now choose to view ‘details’ or ‘thumbnails’ (small, medium or large).
- You can now import source files from your Windows folders—simply drag and drop the files into your project.

### **Styles**

- NVivo 8 ‘text styles’ have been renamed ‘paragraph styles’.

- Paragraph styles are no longer replaced during the import process. Imported documents retain their original paragraph styles and formatting, and these styles can be used for autocoding.

#### Coding

- The NVivo 8 paragraph coding feature has been renamed ‘range coding’ and enhanced to work with all source types. Use ‘range coding’ to quickly code sections of documents, audio or video clips, and pictures.

#### Nodes

- Nodes now open in a ‘tabbed’ Detail View. The Reference tab shows all the references coded at the node. The Summary tab lists all the sources coded at the node. Other tabs display as necessary—for example, the Text tab shows the coded content of any documents, externals or memos coded at the node; and the Video tab shows the coded content of any video clips or transcript entries coded at the node.
- When viewing tree nodes, cases or query results in List View, you now have additional options for collapsing and expanding all (or selected parts) of hierarchical structures.

#### Context, spread and proximity

- Context, spread and proximity settings now include measures for audio, video and picture sources—for example, when viewing a node, you can choose to spread coding to 30 seconds on either side of a coded section of audio or video.
- You can now use the new ‘narrow’ and ‘broad’ context options to quickly specify a small or large measure of context without setting a measure specific to each source type. For example, by default the ‘narrow’ context will add 5 words to text references, 5 seconds to audio and video references and 5 percent to picture references. You can adjust the settings used for narrow and broad context in the

**Appendix G:**

**Exit interview**

How do you feel being the teacher so far?

Some positive experiences of being the teacher?

And negative ones?

What are in your opinion, some of your strengths as a Teacher?

What de-motivates you to teaching?

What have you professionally achieved during this teaching experience?

How do you assess the role of this school in promoting or impeding your professional development?

**Appendix H:**

**Questionnaire**

**UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGOGICA Y TECNOLOGICA DE COLOMBIA**

**- UPTC -**

**FACULTY OF SCIENCES OF EDUCATION  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMME**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Student-teacher:**

Thanks for answering this questionnaire. that is one of the instruments of data collection in the research study: 'Teacher Identity Construction'. The information gathered will be exclusively used for research purposes. This is a requirement of the IPhD in Education and Applied Linguistics, a programme that is currently offered at Newcastle University, UK. Your answers will be treated confidentially.

Thanks very much for you cooperation and sincerity in your answers.

**(Bold or underline the answer of your choice. Choose only one answer for each question)**

**1. You decided to become a language teacher:**

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. because of vocation           | b. as a personal motivation |
| c. because of a family tradition | c. by chance                |

**2. Becoming a language teacher was a decision that :**

- |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. you made a long time ago | b. you made at the last minute |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|



- c. somebody helped you to make                      d. you were hesitant to make

**3. Were you informed at the UPTC that you were going to be trained to teach languages to children?**

- a. Yes, I was fully informed                      b. Well, I was partially informed  
c. No, I had no idea

**4. What level would you prefer to work with as a language teacher?**

- a. with children in primary school              b. with pupils of secondary school  
c. with university students                      c. with private lessons/courses

**5. Being a language teacher is socially and economically well recognised in Colombia nowadays.**

- a. totally agree                                      b. agree  
c. partially agree                                    d. disagree

## Appendix I:

### Transcription conventions:

T:	teacher
L :	learner (not identified)
L1: L2: etc.	identified learner
[ ]	overlap between teacher and learner or interviewer and interviewee
=	turn continues, or one turn follows another without any pause
James, Nicholas	capitals are only used for proper nouns
# #	description of events noted by the researcher
((no, this is not))	translation from Spanish
::	colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound
(0.2)	numbers in parentheses indicate silence by tenths of seconds
(.)	micropause
↑↓	shifts into especially high or low pitch
(xxxxx)	unintelligible speech
<u>word</u>	underlining indicates stressed syllables

