Editorial

Teachers' identities under the magnifying glass in the EFL field: Crossing intellectual borders

As a coeditor of CALJ, I would like to draw your attention to the rising importance of identity studies in the EFL setting and their contribution to the field. The Socratic imperative "know thyself" has inspired teacher researchers around the world (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Cheung, 2015; Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Norton, 2013) to raise awareness towards knowledge-power relations affecting our own constitution as subjects (Foucault, 1980). From a post-structuralist view, the comprehension of identity as something not given but constituted has illuminated a type of research more interested in revealing how interior and exterior forces—in Deleuze's (1993) words—influence our constitution as subjects of a practice. In the field of EFL, research examining identity contributes to the understanding of who English teachers and learners are and how these identities are related to the teaching and learning process.

When looking specifically at local studies, one has the sensation that a double effect has resulted from the use of identity as a category of analysis. On the one hand, its use has empowered the critical positions of researchers regarding sociocultural aspects that define and shape English teaching (Bonilla & Cruz, 2014), English teachers' roles in relation to policies and English teachers' identities (Gonzalez, 2010; Mendez, 2016; Quintero & Guerrero, 2013), English teachers' practices of interaction (Fajardo, 2013), and English teachers' self-perception of their non-nativeness (Viáfara, 2016). On the other hand, it has increased the interest of English teachers in their students' identities not only to understand aspects affecting the learning of the target language, but also to understand how aspects of identity such as gender, age, culture, and interest might interfere with the teacher and the language per se (Castañeda-Peña, 2009).

The knowledge emerging from these revisions is relevant to informing different layers of analysis (professional, personal, academic) that mainly contribute to stand for a self-directed existence to make better decisions and to be aware of events, experiences, and practices that affect and are affected by them. I would like to remark on two important aspects: First, the regaining of status of foreign languages pedagogies in the EFL classroom. Due to reflective practices, promoted by identity research procedures, English teachers' pedagogical knowledges—obscured by dominant discourses that reify methods or approaches and give a subaltern position to pedagogy—are being valued and validated to design curricula, syllabi, and courses within a complex understanding of what is involved in teaching English as a foreign language in the expanding circle. Second, the new trends in English teacher preparation programs in which the preoccupation with education to face inequality, social justice, discrimination, and segregation has claimed teachers' who see themselves as agents of change, promoting teaching practices that contribute to solve these problems (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sharkey, Clavijo Olarte, & Ramirez, 2016). From a sociocultural perspective in this reasoning, being part of an institution shapes how teachers enact their teaching and develop activities appropriated for their own purposes and understanding of the context of use, its norms, values, and opportunities for growth and development (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, 2016).

Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and, most importantly, teachers' knowledge of their sociocultural context are paramount to teaching English with political stances towards dominant discourses that determine what and how to teach as well as assuming the debate surrounding bilingual education. This means the adoption of a critical position that problematizes how "the must-be discourses" can be resisted, adapted, or re-elaborated to

devise local relevant pedagogies and revealing how our identity is constituted in relations to students, knowledge, institutions, and practices. As a way to exemplify, studies examining students' identities in the EFL field have helped teachers to make informed decisions and understand very important practices as the role of students' interaction into the classroom in located teaching setting (Benavides, this volume; Sharkey, Clavijo-Olarte, & Ramirez 2016). Here, the magnifying glass focuses on students' language used as a means to negotiate (affirm, modify, approve, or disapprove of) meaning and self-knowledge that might unveil how relations of power affect learners.

From my own work as teacher-researcher on the teacher-subject constitution complexity, being seduced—epistemologically speaking—by philosophical and decolonial dissertations within an interdisciplinary framework has been an open invitation to value local practices, teachers and students' voices, and to understand the complex process of becoming who we are by means of reflecting upon how we struggle to be the teachers we are. I would like to extend this invitation to all teacher-researchers to get in singularities, forms of mutual understanding.

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