

# A Narrative Inquiry into Pre-service English Teachers' Imagined Identities<sup>1</sup>

Una Investigación Narrativa sobre las Identidades Imaginadas de Profesores de Inglés en Formación

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## Abstract

This paper explores co-construction processes of EIL (English as an international language) pre-service teacher identity in an undergraduate English Teacher Education Program at an Argentinean state university. The study focuses on the professional nature of future language teachers' identities expressed in the individual stories the young people co-composed with the author working as participant researcher. The design employed narrative inquiry as a research methodology whose techniques allow the gathering of field texts inside and outside the Program's classrooms. The overall study included 24 sophomores whose professional identities were conceptualized narratively during the 18-month-long inquiry. This paper offers four participants' accounts, evincing the co-authoring of an imagined (future) teacher identity. After rendering the students' stories, we briefly discuss some implications this power of envisioning the (prospective) teaching self may have for EIL teacher education.

*Keywords:* Higher education, in-service English teacher education, narrative inquiry, identity co-construction process.

## Resumen

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Este trabajo explora procesos de co-construcción de la identidad profesional de docentes de ILI (inglés como lenguaje internacional) durante su formación como profesores de inglés en una universidad estatal argentina. El estudio se centra en el carácter profesional de las identidades de estos futuros docentes

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expresados en las historias individuales compuestas conjuntamente con la autora que trabajó como investigadora participante en el proyecto. El diseño metodológico empleado fue la investigación narrativa cuyas técnicas permiten la recopilación de textos de campo dentro y fuera de las aulas de clase del programa. El estudio completo incluyó 24 participantes cuyas identidades fueron concebidas de modo narrativo durante 18 meses. Este artículo presenta los relatos de cuatro estudiantes, resultado de la construcción conjunta de la futura identidad docente imaginada. Después de la interpretación de las historias de los estudiantes, el artículo discurre brevemente sobre algunas implicancias de visualizar la identidad docente en la formación de profesores de inglés.

*Palabras clave:* Educación superior, formación inicial de profesores de inglés, investigación narrativa, procesos de co-construcción identitaria.

### **Resumo**

Este trabalho explora processos de co-construção da identidade profissional de docentes de ILI (inglês como linguagem internacional) durante a sua formação como professores de inglês em uma universidade estadual argentina. O estudo se centra no caráter profissional das identidades destes futuros docentes expressados nas histórias individuais compostas conjuntamente com a autora que trabalhou como pesquisadora participante no projeto. O desenho metodológico empregado foi a pesquisa narrativa cujas técnicas permitem a recopilación de textos de campo dentro e fora das salas de aula do programa. O estudo completo incluiu 24 participantes cujas identidades foram concebidas de modo narrativo durante 18 meses. Este artigo apresenta os relatos de quatro estudantes, resultado da construção conjunta da futura identidade docente imaginada. Depois da interpretação das histórias dos estudantes, discutiu-se brevemente algumas implicações de visualizar a identidade docente na formação de professores de inglês.

*Palavras chave:* Educação superior, formação inicial de professores de inglês, pesquisa narrativa, processos de co-construção de identidade.

## Introduction

The teaching and learning of English as an international language (EIL) in Spanish-speaking South America constitute rich areas for studying processes of in-service teacher identity construction, which have remained to date mostly under researched in this milieu (Renart & Banegas, 2013). As opposed to English as a second language (ESL) and English as lingua franca (ELF) contexts (Norton, 1997, 2013), our setting constitutes an interesting field for exploring the professional aspects of that identity (Czerniawski, 2013; Day & Sachs, 2009), away from essentialist native-nonnative speaker dichotomies (Holliday, 2009).

This paper stems from an overall narrative research aimed at understanding meaningful local, situated, identity construction processes of future English teachers studying in an Argentinean state university by posing the interpretive question “how do these undergraduates’ stories negotiate the development of their professional identity?” To carry out this qualitative research, we utilized the methodology and field-text gathering processes of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), working inside and outside the EIL classroom with 24 sophomores whose identity narratives in English—the language of instruction in their teacher education program—we co-composed over an 18-month-long phase. Through narrative analysis (Creswell, 2012) and contra punctual reading of the literature, we coined four teacher identities as desired (Zembylas, 2007), passionate (Day, & Sachs, 2009), fluid (Giroir, 2014), and imagined (Anderson, 1983). This article focuses on the imagined identities of four undergraduates. Their storied negotiations of their envisioning how to become EIL teachers suggest insights into the complexities of initial teacher education curriculum and practices framed within a South American Spanish-speaking setting.

## Literature Review

Initially, ELT signaled its concern with the relationship between teacher and learner identity in 1997 with the publication of *TESOL Quarterly's* seminal monographic volume. Moving beyond linguistics, the editor defined the concept as indicating “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 1997, p. 410). The paper’s preoccupation hinged on the last terms, i.e. “the ownership of English,” problematizing the *rights of property* to which speakers (self) characterized as belonging to different ethnic, socio-cultural, geographical, and linguistic

backgrounds, should be entitled—or not. These questions are relevant to those ESL/ELF spaces (Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014), in which identification issues concerning native/non-native speakers' economic, social, cultural, linguistic, and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu, 1984), together with their ethnicity, have been revealed away from simplifying polarities (Canagarajah, 2007).

Research on students' motivation and investments in their ESL/ELF learning selves (Norton, 2000, 2013); their member status in varied discursive groups (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011); and efforts to suppress splits between the subjectivities of native and non-native speakers of English (Holliday, 2009) has progressively emerged in ESL/ELF, mostly within North America, Europe, and Asia. For example, Norton's ground-breaking work (2000, 2013) has focused on the constraints of ethnicity, gender, and class, and how these constrictions affected the investment that migrant female ESL learners (Polish, Vietnamese, Czechoslovakian, and Peruvian) made to acquire the language in Canada. Benson and Nunan's (2005) work originating in their narrative research in Hong Kong presents studies carried out in the UK, wide-ranging Asian locations, and New Zealand, with European, (East) Asian, and Middle Eastern students of English who were constructing their language-learner identities. More recently, Nunan and Choi (2011) have compiled identity narratives by European, American, Australian, and Asian instructors, students, specialists, and researchers.

English teachers' identities have increasingly become the focus of many studies. Tsui's (2007) narrative inquiry into a Chinese EIL teacher struggling to position his multiple identities was pivotal in her country where research has been gradually carried out on the pedagogical identity crises suffered by an EFL university teacher (Liu & Xu, 2011). Others include studies of EFL teachers' narrative construction as university researchers (Xu, 2014); and Hong-Kong's and mainland China's pre-service EFL teachers' identities (Gu & Benson, 2014). Hayes' (2009) case study of an EFL Thai teacher in a state school has underscored the need to learn about teachers and teaching in world places—such as ours in the Southern Cone—where most English is taught but the least research is done. In the US, Zacharias (2010) probed into the identity construction processes of 12 Asian teachers in a TESOL graduate program. In continental Europe, Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate (2015) recently studied the development of agentic identity in freshman EFL Finnish student-teachers.

Hispanophone South America is a large area with long standing EIL (Sharifian, 2009) learning and teacher education programs.

However, teachers' and students' voices regarding their identity construction processes have remained basically under-represented and deemphasized in the literature (Barahona, 2016), albeit in some recent contributions (Arias, 2014; Renart & Banegas, 2013; Sarasa, 2014). In our own pre- and in-service teacher education, identity is examined in terms of its professional features, rather than non-existing local dichotomies between native and non-native speakers. The term professional has signposted the "complex amalgam combining teacher biography, identity work, and the values embedded within different communities of practice" (Czerniawski, 2013, p. 383), another comparatively novel category indicating "groups of people... bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise" (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p. 139). Along these lines, narrative inquiry has defined teacher professional identity as "narrative life compositions" (Clandinin, Cave, & Cave, 2011, p. 1), expressed by "stories to live by" (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p. 141). Thus, ontologically and epistemologically, "thinking of life as a story is a powerful way to imagine who we are, where we have been, and where we are going... We live stories. When we talk to others about ourselves we tell life stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, pp. 149-150).

For over a decade now, studies on English teachers' and students' identities have converged with narrative inquiry (Bell, 2002; Pavlenko, 2002). The profession has fairly lately coined the notion of narrative knowledging as "an umbrella term to refer to the meaning making, learning or knowledge construction that takes place at all stages of a narrative research project" (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 5). These developments have been probing rewardingly into those local, situated teachers' identity construction processes advocated by the literature (Canagarajah, 2005) as vital to the fields of ELT and EIL. Those endeavors are also fundamental to underpin continuous professional development (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) in a world zone like ours, where EIL is taught and learnt for worldwide communication beyond its continental borders.

## Methodology

### Research Design

Our research is inscribed in the qualitative paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It involves a narrative inquiry into the development of pre-service EIL teachers' professional identity. Ontologically and epistemologically, narrative inquiry—originally created by Connelly and Clandinin in their pivotal 1990 paper—encompasses "the study

of experience as story” (Dewey, 1998/1938), thus requiring a narrated “view of experience as phenomenon under study” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375).

### **Context and Participants**

The local context involved 24 Argentinean undergraduates attending an advanced English language communication course in an English teacher education program at an Argentinean state university. Most narratives were gathered in the second semester of 2014, during ten classes taught exclusively in English, led by the assistant professor, and accompanied by two teaching assistants. The year 2015 was devoted to co-composing 24 individual narratives and to validation encounters. Since I am a teacher educator within the program, my research evinces strengths and weaknesses inherent to a qualitative study involving a participant researcher. Apart from requesting and obtaining students’ informed consent, I took ethical safeguards (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009) in order to render the inquiry transparent while shunning power asymmetries or infliction of undue discomfort.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Instruments for registering oral and written field texts (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) within and without the classroom drew on life story interview techniques (McAdams, 2008), including the following, performed in English, the language of instruction in the course and the teacher education program: a) a personal information sheet; b) narratives on fictional and family stories, educational and linguistic biographies, memorable teachers, real life heroes, and significant challenges; c) an identity essay; d) a memory box on life’s turning points; and e) a group dialogue on wise academic decisions. Communication with participants also involved bilingual (English-Spanish, as the inside/outside of class settings dictated) face-to-face exchanges, emails, and interaction on the virtual learning environment to co-compose the content of the 24 narratives while emerging categories were validated (Creswell, 2007, 2012) during virtual and personal exchanges throughout 2015.

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The decision to gather the texts within the classroom—in the context of an advanced English communication course—and through the medium of the English language was grounded in several reasons. First, university English teacher education programs in Argentina only accept candidates with an advanced command of the language. This means that most cultural, linguistic, and pedagogic courses involve academic

disciplines taught in English, using authentic materials suitable for native speakers of the language studying those same subjects at college level. In this milieu, students naturally expect, and are expected, to use only English in the classroom, the means and object of instruction, and the content they will one day teach. Second, the literature reports on the benefits inherent to non-native speakers' writing experiences in EIL since identity reflection is enhanced when voiced in the target language. This also allows them to manifest their voices through their vast EIL linguistic resources (Norton, 1997, 2000, 2013). Finally, the use of EIL involves our participants' very teaching identities while the fact that they are hyper-aware EIL users enhances their stories' verisimilitude (Kramsch & Lam, 1999).

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The co-configuration of stories and their analysis involve the researcher's narrative categorization of participants' identities (Creswell, 2007, 2012) since retelling means conceptualizing (Britzman, 2003). Identities were first structured along a throughline obtained from students' accounts. I categorized four original identity plotlines conceptualized as *desired*, *passionate*, *imagined*, and *in transit*. Due to space constraints, we present imagined teacher professional identities emerging from four participants' own compositions in the English language—the means and object of instruction in the teacher education program—highlighting their original authorial English quotes in the texts below, according to the long-established tenets of narrative inquiry (Cortazzi, 2001).

### **Results**

Drawing on students' narratives, we coined professional identities driven by *desire* (Zembylas, 2007); *passion for teaching* (Day, & Sachs, 2009); *fluidity* (Giroir, 2014); and *imagination*. These four stories of envisioned identity resignify Anderson's imagined communities, whose "members... will never know most of their fellow-members... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1983, p. 6).

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#### **James Nicholas White**

*With enough hard work and planning I am certain that anyone can find one's own style and become a great teacher.*

James was born in a nearby city in 1990. His chosen pseudonym combines his translated names with White Fang's surname in London's eponymous novel. James loves the epic genre he has read in *The Iliad* and watched in *Spartacus* because it "portrays some of the greatest virtues of men, such as love, brotherhood, honor, and perseverance." His hero is American social engineer Jacque Fresco, "whose idea of a global socioeconomic system based on social cooperation and scientific methodology will come true."

James attended a Catholic parochial school in our city where he started English in second grade. When he began watching American TV series with his elder siblings, he picked up the sounds of the language by relating them to their Spanish screen subtitles. At about 11, he started playing video games whose English captions he read out loud, acting out character roles and imitating the pronunciations heard on TV. By age 14, "I had learned a lot more English at home than at school and it was no wonder how I was getting good grades. The more I learned English on my own, the more I thought I had a gift and my motivation to keep learning kept growing." His family could not afford private lessons but a schoolteacher spotted his "virtues" and encouraged him to continue learning on his own. His educational experience was not smooth since in junior high he was bullied as a "geek" by the "cool kids." When he started playing basketball he found an exit from this "dark place." His identity essay reflects these struggles:

I am one of the billions of people who have been heartbroken, hurt, bullied, or abused in any way at some point in their lives. I am one of the people who are still standing. I am one of the people who see every difficult experience as a learning experience and an opportunity to grow stronger... I am one of the people who are reluctant to go to a shrink for that kind of counseling, believing the answer lies within them.

James' memorable schoolteachers include his exact science instructor who tailored her lessons to foster understanding of Newton's Third Law of Motion. His physics teacher introduced gravity empirically, encouraging his students to think critically. James is aware of "that kind of teaching [that] draws me more into pedagogy than the teaching of a specific discipline." When he graduated from school, he enrolled in biochemistry. With hindsight, he realized he had been overconfident and underprepared. His neglect of his studies was compounded as he started dating a classmate who left him devastated when she ended their relationship. In 2010, he entered the English teacher education program "to do something I had always been good at: English... so I figured I might use that talent as a future profession."

In his personal information file, James indicated that, by August 2014, he had taken 11 finals out of the 32 the curriculum prescribes. Two freshman courses proved to be enlightening for him. In the first, he underwent an epiphany after reading Frank McCourt's *Teacher Man*, a book he deems should be compulsory for its power to confirm students' vocation as it did his own.

I am... one of the very few men who intend to become English teachers, and one of the even less future English teachers that have a science-oriented former education. I am one of the countless people who stumbled across the field of pedagogy and found themselves, to their own surprise, loving the discipline.

In the second course, there was a lecturer "whose... way of making jokes and providing bizarre examples used to call everyone's attention... his style made it easier for everyone to focus in class and follow the explanations." His respect for this teacher increased after he realized the humor was carefully planned. Although he is not working as a teacher yet, he believes that, as he puts it, even if "not everyone can get to be a funny or likeable teacher... with enough hard work and planning I am certain that anyone can find one's own style and become a great teacher."

### **Emma**

*I had to work extremely hard and retake several subjects. I think this is the way to achieve my goal: becoming an English teacher.*

Emma was born locally in 1990. Her selected name alludes to Austen's eponymous character. Her preferred fiction is *Pride and Prejudice*, "I found that period in England was even more interesting than I thought. I also liked how Austen described how being in love at that time was."

Emma attended a local Catholic school where she remembers several teachers. One "explained the main topics in a significant way" while another motivated them to continue learning. These "teachers had an impact on my life as I see myself doing that as a teacher in the future." Her political ideas teacher's "lectures were so clear and memorable that sometimes we did not have to study for the tests." Emma owes her deepest learning experiences to Taekwondo, whose principles initiated a new life for her at 16. Her Taekwondo master is her memorable teacher and real-life hero.

His wisdom has helped me to overcome the most difficult situations. He has never shown me the solutions but rather he had made me reflect upon my behaviors and choices so that I could come up with an answer.

Apart from earning a black belt, she also became a certified international instructor after completing a specialized course.

At five Emma started babbling away in “what I thought was English. I loved doing it because I thought I was very fluent.” In her early teens, she shared an English tutor at her cousins’ house where she had a revelation:

I do not remember the grammatical aspect... but I do remember the topic: the Triangular Trade... I was dealing with that historical subject at school... I became aware that English was not just about grammar and vocabulary; I realized that there was an entire new world waiting for me.

In 2009, she enrolled in our Program since she was interested in teaching and loved English “literature, history, and culture.” She suffered a number of setbacks because she had “believed that I knew a lot” whereas she realized she needed sustained work rather than innate talent. By August 2014, she had completed 13 out of the 32 mandated courses, several of which she had to attend again during “years of frustration and hard work.” She also learnt to prioritize study time, momentarily quitting Taekwondo and volleyball training. Emma values the care of a teacher in a freshman course who offered positive feedback, encouraging her to capitalize on her mistakes.

Not only has Emma overcome academic obstacles, but she has also surmounted personal ones. When she narrated her greatest personal challenge, she asked a classmate to read a text about abused women’s belief.

[They believe that] they are the problem because they have been continually told that by their abusive partner... [who] may quickly switch between verbally abusive and more caring behavior which means the woman is often unsure of what to expect.

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Today, she feels proud about having ended this relationship thanks to her friends’ advice and her own strength. This is the reason why she is able to represent herself as

[I am] one of the people who have to work hard to achieve their goals. I am one of the people who are not talented but are passionate about the things they do. I am one of the people who were mistreated by the person they loved. I am one of the people who had to overcome years of suffering after being told they would never succeed. I am one of the people who want to help their friends when they are facing similar problems. I am one of the people who would not let anyone hurt their feelings again. I am one of the people who now appreciate their friends' pieces of advice... I am one of the people who think that sacrifice is the key to achieve success.

Currently teaching English in her old school's kindergarten, she envisages attaining her goal of becoming a graduated English teacher.

### **Fátima**

*I am going to try it hard, even though it takes me three times more than the time it is supposed to take.*

Fátima was born locally in 1980. Her name purposefully alludes to Ildefonso Falcones' novel *La mano de Fátima*. Her parents met in Portsmouth, UK, where her father arrived on board a Navy submarine and happened to assist her British mother on a skating rink. After dating for seven years, they married and settled down in Argentina. Her mother initially spoke English to her children until a kindergarten teacher claimed the practice was harmful. Fátima never spoke English again until 24. However, she understood the words her mother spoke to UK relatives on the phone or during private lessons at home.

Fátima attended a primary Catholic school for girls where "the academic level was quite good," and "the nuns [were] very tough and strict". Then, she transferred to a state high school whose "academic level was not a very good one, so I got high grades without trying very hard." However, she portrays two memorable teachers. Her literature instructor encouraged students to analyze books personally and to choose some readings. Her history teacher had "a way of telling us historical events that seemed stories" since "she liked to tell us 'gossips'." Fátima was unable to opt for English, being forced to take up French.

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We used the same book throughout the five years. Besides, my group of classmates was a rather rebellious one, and the French teacher had weak character which meant that we did not let her deliver her classes properly.

When Fátima graduated from high school, she "spent a year doing nothing, so my parents started getting angry." She finally enrolled in

architecture but, disliking it, dropped out after two years. Then she got married and traveled to Spain in 2005, working with her husband in a tourist resort for five years, and returning to Argentina to remain with their parents. In Spain, at 24, Fátima learnt English for the first time in her life attending classes at an institute where teachers were kind and students' ages wide-ranging. There, she found out that her childhood listening skills had remained intact.

Before arriving in Argentina in early 2011, Fátima had already enrolled online in our program since she had decided to continue studying English. By August 2014, she had finished 11 out of the 32 curriculum subjects.

I like what I am studying and the people I've met there. I think that most of the teachers... are very good teachers with a great knowledge of English. However... there are some teachers that do not show their love for what they do.

Her greatest challenge has been to start the program "at thirty, married, and with a job." She quit this full-time job, and though missing its economic benefits, she acknowledges the impossibility of studying while working. In 2015, she started delivering private English classes at home. Considering these experiences she reflects along the following lines:

I am one of the people who had the possibility to attend university after secondary school, but one who missed this opportunity because I did not know what course of study I would like to do. I am one of the people, who after ten years started studying at university again. And I am also one of hundreds (or thousands?) of students who are taking the English Teacher Training Course at [University] and that yearns to graduate in a near future. I am one of the people who enjoy being on their own, reading a book while sunbathing, and listening to quiet music in bed. I am one of the people who keeps on buying books I would like to read, but does not have time to read them.

Fátima knows that her struggles are not over:

I know that it is difficult, that there are some subjects that are "impossible to pass," and that many students have gone to other "easier" institutions to become English teachers... I have convinced myself that I am going to try it hard, even though it takes me three times more than the time it is supposed to take. I know that if I was able to pass almost fifty percent of the subjects I am going to be able to pass the other fifty percent.

### **Juana**

*I can see myself as an English teacher in the future.*

Juana's elected name belongs to one of her aunts. She was born locally in 1990. Because of her father's work they moved regularly along the country. Every two years she readapted to a new school, "a new city, a new house, new friends, new everything." Consequently, she felt unwilling to relate to each new milieu although she considers that this transitoriness has been her best instructor. Her deepest learning experience occurred while attending a Catholic school in a small riverside border town.

Before moving there, I lived in a wealthy neighborhood... When I first arrived, everything seemed normal to me, I had lived in [the province] before, so I was used to the weather and the countryside. But the second time I was there I was old enough to be aware of what was happening around me... I recall one moment... The government sent the school a survey for us, students, to complete. Questions ranged from 'does your family own a microwave?' up to 'what is the floor of your house made of?' Options included 'no floor at all', and 'do you have a toilet?' At first I thought the questions made no sense, but when I looked around, some of my classmates were actually ticking on the options saying they were missing what for me was fundamental house equipment... At one point one ticked on the option of 'one bedroom for the whole family' and just laughed about it. He was not ashamed of it; he did not feel bad about it... I was fourteen at the time, and it was the first time I remember I thought I should not take everything I have for granted.

At this school, Juana met Catherine, her real-life hero. This friend was the second of six children whose mother had committed suicide, abandoning them to a worthless father. As the eldest sister had left home, the second undertook housekeeping and mothering duties. Today, Catherine is a kindergarten teacher who looks after her sisters while feeding three small neighbors whose mother works. Juana confesses that "I do not think I ever told Catherine how much I admire her.... She is definitely a one of a kind person."

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Juana's mother is an English teacher. Unwilling to instruct her children but eager for them to learn the language as early as possible she sent them to private classes in every location they inhabited. "The classes I attended were not always properly prepared for young children, or I did not have many classmates my age and, therefore, I hated English classes." About to finish junior high, she attended a

bilingual school in the Capital where she learned informally with her peers while they watched TV or listened to music. Juana also watched series with her mother, who bought her English books. She graduated from a Catholic school in our city, where she also took English classes at an institute.

Juana's struggles to find a course of study taught her to accept "life's uncertainties." Doubting what to study, she opted for architecture, which she soon loathed. Her subsequent enrollment in biochemistry was short-lived and displeasing. She ended up working in a call center. "I had wasted my time... I felt really lost, and under a lot of pressure from my family." Quitting her job and enrolling in our program in 2012 proved a turning point.

My unstable linguistic story is what made me love the English language and, at the same time, what made it so hard for me to take the decision of whether I wanted to be a teacher or not... I literally cannot think of a period during my childhood or adolescence when I did not attend English classes, so I considered them as a part of me rather than something I could study professionally.

By August 2014, Juana had completed 13 out of the 32 courses and begun teaching English. Her itinerant childhood and adolescence have led her to her current place, where she feels at ease and able to visualize the future.

### Conclusions

Our interpretive construction of an imagined (Anderson, 1983) teacher identity through these narratives can be reinscribed as envisioning membership in potential communities of practice (Wenger & Snyder, 2000) during a powerful act of creation mediated (Norton, 2013) by EIL, which constitutes the four participants' content and medium of pre-service learning and (future) instruction. James, Emma, Fátima, and Juana have managed to draw their more or less adjacent horizons of professional expectations based on the spaces of experience (Koselleck, 1985) provided by their schooling, their itineraries learning (and teaching) English, and their private lives.

Our future teachers' power to envision their co-creation (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009) as future graduate instructors of English involves an outstanding degree of agency and performativity together with identity co-authorship (McAdams, 2008)

allowing them to make choices for furthering their education. James', Emma's, Fátima's, and Juana's imagination also involves resilience (Day & Sachs, 2009), understood as their positive capacity to overcome problems within and without education by flexibly redirecting strengths and capitalizing on them. This socially situated and dialogically expressed (Bakhtin, 1994) agency highlights the proactive nature of pre-service teacher identity construction vis-à-vis reproductive conceptions of teacher education as mere training (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2015).

Surprisingly, the social and discursive negotiation of our four participants' imagined identities as (future) English teachers did not include their self-recognition as non-native students of the language or their longing to resemble ideal native speakers. Because of their South American socio-linguistic setting, where English is a language of international/global/communication, these participants differ from instructors and learners in other ISL/ILF milieus (Benson & Nunan, 2005; Hayes, 2009; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2013). James', Emma's, Fátima's, and Juana's unique focus lies on the development of their linguistic and pedagogic content knowledge at university, leading up to the attainment of the professional degree facilitating their legitimate membership within the Argentinean EIL teaching community of practice (Czerniawski, 2013; Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

We can see that emerging teacher identities are co-created within tensions between what is given and unmovable, what proves (im)possible, and what seems (in)existent. Although we have chosen a throughline for each of the four stories, and conceptualized their identities as imagined, they are neither immutable nor essential. Each narrative evinces ambivalences, conflicts, expectations, dreams, loves, and antagonisms. We have strived to suggest that—rather than the fixed targets of top-down-circumscribed graduate professional profiles so dear to curriculum designers—pre-service teachers exist as oxymora (Britzman, 2003) in-between the apprentice and the instructor. However, although they are not yet graduates but live instead a process of becoming, their professors often expect them to act as 'real' teachers in their practicums while wishing them to remain acritical recipients of lectures in the university classrooms. Our narrative inquiry into these individual and situated, yet complex, itineraries of EIL teacher identity co-construction may contribute towards the design of pre- and in-service development programs (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) made up by an academic, experiential, and vital curriculum (Murphy, Huber & Clandinin, 2012), thus enhancing and illuminating multiple ways of becoming a teacher.

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