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Translating teacher funds of identity into curricular proposals for the EFL classroom: a model for student-teacher innovation and professional development

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Abstract

This article describes the progress and findings of a research project, organized in the context of a university Masters course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), which aimed at translating the student-teachers' (STs) funds of identity into worthwhile curricular proposals for the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) subject. The first part of the research involved 38 STs in three workshops through which they became aware of their own funds of identity, expanded their own teacher identity, and finally designed curricular proposals that incorporated their funds of identity as valuable pedagogical resources. The second part of the research took place during the two-month practicum that the STs completed in regional high schools, during which period the professional development (if any) that the STs had undergone was collectively and qualitatively assessed in relation to their ability to put into practice their own innovative EFL proposals in real classroom settings.

Keywords: funds of identity; teacher education; English as a foreign language education; professional development

Introduction

This article describes the progress and findings of a piece of collaborative research designed to draw on student-teachers' (STs) *funds of identity* (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014)—cultural artifacts that individuals use to build their own identities—as a resource in teacher professional development. While language teacher identity research may be moving away from what Nunan (2017) recently called *a deficit perspective* (too focused on what language teachers lack) and advancing, instead, toward the notion of the *resourceful teacher*—more focused on what teachers “do know about” (p. 166)—, many teacher educators like myself still lack concrete models and classroom strategies to put the *resourceful teacher* notion into practice in our teacher-education modules and programs. Likewise, as a critical EFL teacher educator working in a Spanish public university, I cannot help feeling that this deficit perspective forms part of a more general professional *commonsense* (Gitlin, 2008) that constricts non-native teachers' and learners' professional identities in ways that make it extremely hard for either party to reach their potential (Block & Gray, 2016; Canagarajah, 2017; Guerrero, 2010; López-Gopar, 2011; Safford & Kelly, 2010). In the present article, funds of identity research—a strategy originally used *outside* the field of ELT, with immigrant learners in Catalonia—was used with a group of 38 STs registered in a university Masters program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, with the hope that by becoming aware of their own funds of identity they would be able to identify their own strengths and feel empowered to put into practice pedagogical alternatives for the EFL subject.

This research was carried out in full on two separate classes of the above-mentioned Masters program. As will be described in further detail in the Methodology section, the STs completed three different workshops that allowed them, first, to develop an understanding of

their own funds of identity; then, to expand their own teacher identity; and finally, to design curricular proposals that incorporated their funds of identity as valuable pedagogical resources, and subsequently put them into practice during their practicum placements in regional high schools. Pseudonyms are used in excerpts from ST's assignments in order to protect their identities, although the information necessary to identify the specific workshops has been maintained.

Obstacles to the *Resourceful Teacher* Orientation in Language Teacher Identity

The transition from a *deficit model* of instruction to the notion of the *resourceful teacher* (Nunan, 2017) is in line with socio-constructivist and critical orientations to language learning. The latter connection suggests that, if foreign languages and cultures are delivered in the EFL classroom (as they often are) through standard resources, course books, and approaches that either ignore or heavily misrepresent the students' L1, culture, and experiences (Sercu, 2004), then learners are often forced to silence their identities and alternative forms of cultural capital the moment they cross the classroom threshold (Cummins & Early, 2011). If “the construction of a coherent teacher identity . . . involves drawing from the diverse social identities one enjoys, many of them seemingly unconnected to teaching” (Canagarajah, 2017, p. 70), then EFL teachers will never build a healthy professional identity if they are forced to do so around foreign models that isolate them from who they already are. Indeed, while tensions deriving from the complexity of one's identity may keep one evolving as a teacher, paralysis and arrested development will surely prevail if teachers end up feeling—or are made to feel—that their diverse social identities are too far apart to be reconciled with their teaching. A wall may then arise within them, dividing the two identities.

More concretely, in the professional and academic field of ELT, “discourses of native-speakerism” (Toohey, 2017, p. 13) and the native-speaker role-model habitually produced by the educational industries of Western, monolingual, English-speaking countries (López-Gopar

& Sughrua, 2014; Phillipson, 2009), often prevent EFL educators from engaging their wide range of interests and identities in their classrooms. This engagement would not only make them more interesting teachers, but some of them would have greater resources to connect more with those of their own learners. In the same way that ESL and EFL learners are often judged by what they cannot do (e.g., speak like native speakers), EFL educators in Spain are often prevented from taking advantage of some of their best talents and personal pedagogical resources to enrich their language classrooms (Canagarajah, 2015). Instead, their professional identity becomes impoverished, their teaching becomes boring, predictable, and course-book oriented; they often risk no longer taking pride in their teaching, which further deepens their identity divide:

Generally, the EFL classes involved working through a couple of pages of a textbook, once again translating everything to Spanish, with no deviation from the contents. There were rushed grammar instructions worked into the process and then homework assigned from the workbook and a date set for an exam on the unit. . . . The teacher ignored his students for the most part, when he did speak to them it was generally to interrupt or shout at them. In class he never showed any personal interest, caring or sense of humor. . . . Most students were completely disconnected and understandably so. (Ricardo, ST, First workshop).

Quotes like the above, taken from the first workshop, suggest that the English language alone does not facilitate either the learners' or the teachers' identity investment in the subject of EFL. Hence the irrationality of thinking that the one thing needed to be a good English teacher is to speak the language (Guerrero, 2010). Actually, a foreign language does not strengthen the bonds between teachers and learners, but may easily corrode them; it does not create a classroom community but may establish a wall between its members, separating learners from teachers and teachers from themselves and their own funds of identity. As a

result, educators who place their sole attention on English and the learners' level, and who accordingly offer no anchorage for the students'—and their own—local realities and identities, usually end up betraying their original educational purposes and display a severe lack of involvement in their lessons, which impinges on the way they address and engage their learners.

Indeed, under the influence of ELT publishers and Anglo-American based language agencies that tend to privilege the native-speaker teacher model, even the national legislation that regulates EFL education around the world often questions the agency of local teachers and presents an extremely limited picture of what EFL teacher professional identity should be or can encompass. Guerrero (2010), for example, applied critical discourse analysis to the Colombian Ministry of Education's EFL education policy documents, and described three images that emerged from her analysis: EFL teachers as *invisible* ("they were scarcely mentioned in the handbooks"), *clerks* ("they are expected to just follow orders"), and *technicians* ("they are there to create a marketable product") (pp. 35-46). Due to the global thrust driving EFL trends (Phillipson, 2009), it is not surprising that this situation should apply to other countries such as Argentina (Banegas, Pavese, Velázquez, & Vélez, 2013), México (López-Gopar & Sughrua, 2014), or Spain, where the pro-innovation discourse with which the media often bombard Spanish teachers is not backed up with the institutional, professional, and pedagogical resources necessary to provide it. EFL teachers are thus asked to innovate in the void created by said lack of resources and institutional support. According to García Doval and Sánchez Rial's (2002) account of EFL initial teacher education in Spain, "Somehow the view of the primary school teacher as a technician has not changed very much: *Blind faith in the textbook! You don't need anything else!*" (p. 286).

The 'Student-teachers' Funds of Identity' Project

It was against this theoretical and practical background that I attempted to reorient my own module in a Masters program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the University of Valencia, in accordance with the principles and aims of the *resourceful teacher* perspective on language teacher identity. How could my classes expand, reorganize, and enrich my STs' nascent teacher identities to help them reclaim their own responsibility for the curriculum and take the path of "constant renewal", innovation, and ongoing *professional development* (Tsui, 2007, p. 1064)? Could the academic recognition and reappraisal of the STs' social identities prove empowering for them?

To make the leap from theory to practice, I drew on Esteban-Guitart and Moll's (2014) formulation of *funds of identity*. Itself a conceptual counterpart of Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González's (1992) work on *funds of knowledge*, funds of identity have extended previous research on the familial and community contexts where funds of knowledge are generated, to the realm of personal identity, where funds of knowledge are not always internalized.

Accordingly, funds of identity are:

historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for people's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding. In other words, the term *funds of identity* . . . denotes a set of resources or box of tools and signs . . . essential for constructing one's identity and for defining and presenting oneself. (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 37)

To date, this line of research has focused on learners, especially on immigrant students in Catalonia who came from social backgrounds whose cultures and linguistic capital differed from those normally prevailing in the school context. Qualitative, autobiographical strategies originally used by Bagnoli (2004)—mainly *self-portraits* and *significant circles*—had been used to gather relevant information about learners' identities, allowing teachers to design teaching units that build on and honor students' interiorized culture and experiences, instead

of problematizing or underplaying them. Depending on their origin and content, five ways of classifying funds of identity had been presented: *geographical*, “any reference to an area such as a river, a landscape, a mountain, a town, a city, a country or a nation”; *social*, “relevant people”; *cultural*, “artifacts such as flags, or religious symbols”; *institutional*, “any social institution such as references to marriage or the Catholic church”; and *practical*, “significant activities for the person such as sport, music or work” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 38).

The present research takes a different and novel approach to concentrate on educators’ funds of identity and translate them into innovative curriculum proposals for the EFL classroom. Determined to acknowledge the out-of-class lives and interests of my EFL learners inside the classroom, I embarked on a research project to assess whether explicit work on the STs’ funds of identity would translate into a richer professional identity which would, in turn, motivate the STs and give them confidence to innovate in the EFL classroom. In other words, I wanted to assess whether funds of identity could actually become a powerful engine of professional development by helping these STs reconcile the different layers of their social and professional identities. The research involved the 38 STs registered for the 2015-16 course, ‘An Introduction to Teaching Innovation and Educational Research in EFL education’. Along with ensuring that my research aims did not interfere with the academic goals of the course (Wallace, 2008) and vice versa, I also requested the STs’ permission to make public their work, as evidence for this research. Permission was granted in all cases.

Methodology

As can be seen in Table 1, the first part of the research consisted of three workshops undertaken over the 20 lessons of the course that ran from 19 October 2015 to 19 January 2016. The course created three zones of *proximal teacher development* (Warford, 2011) for the STs to identify their own funds of identity, develop pride and confidence in them, and expand their teacher identity to welcome these funds as potential pedagogical resources. The

second part of the research took place during the two-month practicum that the EFL STs completed at high schools in the Valencia region (from 25 January 2016 to 25 March 2016). During this period, the professional development (if any) gained by the STs was assessed qualitatively, in terms of their ability to put into practice their own innovative EFL proposals in real classroom settings. [Table 1]

Table 1.

<i>Research parts, phases, and calendar</i>	
Classroom workshops 19 October 2015 to 19 January 2016	Collaborative Action Research (CAR) 25 January 2016 to 25 March 2016
38 participants	8 participants
1 st workshop: Exploring our own funds of identity (2h x 8 lessons)	1 st Action research (AR) seminar, 25 January 2016
2 nd workshop: Creating our own teacher identity texts (2h x 8).	2 nd AR seminar, 15 February 2016
3 rd workshop: Designing innovative curricular proposals for the EFL class (2h x 7).	3 rd AR seminar, 7 March 2016 4 th AR seminar, 21 March 2016

1st part: classroom workshops.

The STs' workshop outcomes and journal entries provided the main source of evidence for the first part of the research. The STs handed in a journal entry after each workshop, a text no less than 500 words in length that assessed, from their perspective, the general usefulness and interest of the activity of the workshop's activities. Each workshop spanned at least five lessons and included theoretical and practical activities completed by the 38 STs. A summary of each one follows.

1st workshop: Exploring our own funds of identity. The STs made use of *narrative inquiry* (Norton & Early, 2011) to write self-narratives in English in which they became aware of and explored their present funds of identity, and reflected on their previous experience as EFL learners. In accordance with the view that "identity, practices, and resources are inextricably linked and mutually constituted" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 414),

these narratives revolved around specific experiences that, in turn, were connected to the concrete, material practices through which these funds had been either inherited or produced.

2nd workshop: *Creating our own teacher identity texts.* Cummins and Early's (2011) proposal of *identity texts* (originally designed to enhance the identity investment and literacy engagement of second and foreign language learners) was adapted for the STs to investigate and, at the same time, honor their teacher identities. According to Cummins and Early (2011), identity texts are

the products of students' creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space orchestrated by the classroom teachers. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts which can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations of multimodal form. The identity text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. . . . Although not always an essential component, technology acts as an amplifier to enhance the process of identity text production and dissemination. (p. 3)

Using digital tools such as PhotoStory3 or Windows Moviemaker, the STs created identity videos that included written or oral English (using recordings of their own voices), visual resources (photos they had taken, pictures they had drawn, or footage from home videos or videos they had found), and also music they enjoyed and on occasion and performed personally. The final videos were thus a multimodal collage of textual, visual, and aural elements that were mostly of their own making. The videos were uploaded to the course's digital platform as *.avi files and were viewed and discussed in the group over two sessions.

3rd workshop: *Designing innovative curricular proposals for the EFL class.* In the final workshop, the STs designed classroom proposals that, if put into practice, would give them the opportunity to display their "substantial selves" (Elbaz, 1983) or renewed teacher identities (Da Costa & Norton, 2016). From a research perspective, these proposals bore

witness to the extent to which the STs had (or had not) gained enough confidence and ability during the course to creatively recycle their funds of identity into realistic and worthwhile classroom proposals, a process that simultaneously involved a transfer of positive funds of identity from the personal to the professional realm.

I analyzed the data in this part of the research according to Esteban-Guitart and Moll's (2014) classification of funds of identity into *geographical, social, cultural, institutional, and practical*, applied to the 38 STs' self-narratives, teacher identity videos, and curriculum proposals. Thus, each ST's funds of identity were traced throughout the workshops to assess whether they were retained or not, and whether the ST's perception of them changed from one workshop to the next. In addition, I was particularly interested in knowing whether the meaning and significance the STs attributed to each fund of identity gradually expanded and, if so, whether this expansion was accompanied by the STs' developing a heightened sense of pride in themselves, by assigning positive qualities to the corresponding funds of identity.

The fact that each workshop gave the STs a new opportunity to rework their funds of identity also posed specific challenges for the qualitative coding of the outcomes. During the analysis of the teacher identity videos, for example, I had to consider not only the explicit, verbal texts that the STs included but the whole variety of modes and literacies that the videos brought together, all of which had enabled the STs to express their diverse funds of identity (Giampapa, 2010). Indeed, the music and imagery of the videos—the materiality or “stuff” (Kress, 2000) they were made of—testified to the STs' funds of identity as much as the message they conveyed verbally. In order to make my coding more consistent and reliable in the face of these analytic challenges, my qualitative reading was double-checked (Dörnyei, [2007] 2016) with the help of Clàudia, a student who had completed the same course the previous year. She was familiarized with the terminology and had been awarded a university scholarship to perform a second coding of the data during the 2016-2017 academic year. Her

participation provided an external perspective that contributed to the reliability of the coding process during the first part of the research. In classifying and tracing the STs' funds of identity across the workshops, our degree of disagreement was low and only surfaced when we had to decide which specific category—geographical, social, cultural, institutional, or practical—best applied to a given fund of identity. If reaching an agreement was impossible, we opted for duplicating the labels to include the category that each one of us had assigned separately.

2nd part: practicum placement

In contrast to the first part of the research, the second part involved eight of the 38 ST participants, those whose practicum placement I directly supervised. To monitor this second stage and obtain as much qualitative data as possible, I set up a collaborative action research (CAR) (Mitchell, Reilly, & Logue, 2009) network to supervise the STs' work during their two-month placements. The STs and I met for four seminars which followed McKernan's (2008) suggested framework for an action research (AR) seminar. Each of these seminars lasted from two to three hours, during which the STs reflected on the advances made and obstacles encountered in the process of translating their coursework on funds of identity into real classroom settings. During this second part of the research the coding and analysis of the data focused on any oral or written manifestation through which the STs implicitly or explicitly connected the work they carried out during their practicum placement to our three previous workshops on their funds of identity, as evidence of ongoing development. The collective nature and data-triangulation processes afforded by CAR methodology helped me address the risk of bias during this second part of the research, since not only did data come from a diversity of sources but most of these sources consisted of written or oral discourse produced by the STs themselves. Most of the data thus resulted from the STs' autonomous self-reflection on their progression and development. Apart from the group sessions (which I

audio recorded, having first obtained permission from the eight STs), I drew on two written documents that each ST handed in at the end of their practicum: a 15-page report which described and reflected upon their activities, and a Masters Final Project consisting of an empirical investigation into a concrete didactic intervention they had completed during their internship. The STs used various qualitative methods such as diary entries, interviews, and questionnaires with secondary EFL learners and teachers in preparing these documents, which have enriched the Findings below.

Findings

Space restrictions prevent me from displaying the full trajectory of the 38 STs who took part in the three workshops or of the eight STs whose practicum placement I supervised, and who—as mentioned above—were the only ones involved in both parts of the research project. However, I have included five examples in Table 2, which are representative of the general dynamics that affected the 38 STs during the first part of the research, and of the eight students that took part in the second one. Concerning the first group, in all 38 cases funds of identity transferred across the workshops, which means that the course succeeded in helping the STs identify personal and biographical resources that they could rework and utilize from a professional perspective. Although this transference took different paths and displayed varying degrees of intensity, in all cases it was noticeable to the observer. Concerning the second part of the research, most of the eight students whose practicum I supervised were able to actualize the potential of their funds of identity by successfully applying the EFL curricular proposals they had designed in my course in real classroom settings. Such was the case of Miriam, for example, who not only drew on her own artistic talents (and reconciled them with EFL teaching in ways she had previously believed were impossible) but also turned her EFL class into a museum, in which students displayed their own paintings or gave presentations on famed painters whose work they had researched. For Miriam, art and drawing—two practical

funds of identity that in turn had links to her mother, who had taught her how to draw (a social fund of identity)—inspired her curriculum proposal and the way she put it into practice. Another ST, Carmen, had an extremely similar experience: she turned her concern for animal welfare (a practical fund of identity) into an exciting “Animal Protection Society Project” for the high school she was interning at (outcomes can be seen at <https://www.smore.com/ccvfn-our-flipped-classroom>). Or we could look at the experiences of Sandra, who drew inspiration for her final videogame project for the EFL classroom from her expertise on videogames (a practical fund of identity), which she started playing with her brother (a social fund of identity), and through which her English had significantly improved. And such was the case, especially, of Amelia, whose work I turn to next as an exemplar of the kind of teaching innovations that we might expect if educators succeed in enriching their teacher identities with their own funds of identity.

Table 2.

Classification and progression of five STs' funds of identity

	1 st workshop	2 nd workshop	3 rd workshop	Didactic intervention during practicum placement
Miriam	Art (p)	Mother (s), who taught her how to draw; drawing (p). University degree in English Language and Literature (c). Teaching (i): She wants to foster creativity and autonomy in her future EFL classrooms.	Students would choose painters they like and research their lives. They would then choose one of their paintings, draw a version of it, and finally write a creative text to accompany it, both of which would be displayed in a classroom museum.	EFL students took part in a Content and Language Integrated Learning project that brought together English and art. The students reflected on different art movements, discussed them, and wrote short texts around representative paintings.
Carmen	Computer programming (p). Writing short stories (p). Pets and animals (p).	Family (i): She enjoys learning about her family history by speaking to her elders and poring over old photographs. Her father (s) was diagnosed with cancer during her Erasmus stay in Norway and is strength in the face of this illness set her an example, one whose values she wants to apply to her educator role.	Students would create a webpage in English to analyze real problems in their surroundings. They would then start a campaign to organize a NGO to solve them.	EFL students created a school Animal Protection Society. They visited an animal shelter and shared their experiences and stories in English through a webpage.
Sandra	Videogames (p)	Videogames (p) helped her improve her command of English. Her older brother (s) introduced her to the world of videogames. Reading English literature (p).	Students would work around videogame heroes and compare them to real, everyday heroes in their families.	EFL students had the chance to carry out a number of language exercises around real, popular videogames in English, chosen by the ST thanks to her own expertise. The videogames were played in class so that the EFL students could analyze the short dialogues in the games, learn vocabulary, and write short texts around the videogame storyline.
Amelia	Foreign cultures (p, g) and languages (p). Old photographs (p)	Castellón, the city she was born in (g). She collected stamps of foreign football players (p) when she was a child. Period as an Erasmus university student in Holland (g, i).	Students would use old photographs to speak about their families, interview their oldest family members, and reflect on the feelings	EFL learners collected old family portraits and interviewed their oldest family members around those photographs, asking questions

		She worked as a teacher of Spanish in the island of Guadalupe, in the Caribbean (g, i). Love of photography (p).	and knowledge that this experience generated.	about their contexts. These interviews were then summarized and written in English.
Victoria	Reading about Spanish and English royal family trees (p). English history, literature and culture (p)	History and royal family trees (p): She liked to study Spanish history in school; one day she found a family tree of the Trastámara royal family, which was a turning point in her relationship with the English language and culture. Family (i): As an identity text, she produced her own family tree, in which she interviewed her parents and twin sister.	Students would create their family trees and explore and reflect on the interdisciplinary issues (socio-economic, geographical, etc.) arising in the process.	EFL students used corpus linguistics to solve their grammatical doubts and expand their knowledge of English grammar.

Note. (g) = geographical funds of identity. (s) = social funds of identity. (c) = cultural funds of identity. (i) = institutional funds of identity. (p) = practical funds of identity

Amelia's case

As reported in Table 2, during the first workshop Amelia wrote about her “passion for learning about other people, other ways of living, and other ways of seeing the world” (Amelia, ST, 1st workshop). Among the various forms this passion took was her attraction to photography (a practical fund of identity), especially old family pictures that allowed one “to travel through time and see what your relatives looked like, the clothes they wore at the time, or how your neighborhood or your town has changed since then” (Amelia, ST, 1st workshop). During the identity video she produced in the second workshop (written in third person and whose script I have included in Appendix 1), Amelia chose to dwell on her own past, also through photos. Her video traced the development of her curiosity for languages, cultures, and countries (practical, cultural, and geographical funds of identity), which paralleled her own transformation into an adult who wanted to teach EFL (a professional fund of identity). Absorbed in the narrative, the video recalled how, as a child, Amelia collected stickers of foreign football players because she thought they had “cool” names and looks (even though she did not like football) [Figure 1]; or how she soon became keen on languages (including English) and how, in the end, this interest led her to feel the need to travel “to a new city... to a new country... and finally to a new continent!” At this point her identity video described her stay in Porto as an Erasmus student (a geographical and institutional fund of identity), but also, two years later, in Guadeloupe (a French island in the Caribbean), where she worked as a Spanish language assistant. Her video combined photos, music, and texts to vividly express how much of a key experience this had been in crystallizing her present identity, by discovering “breathtaking places, new people, and even new languages” [Figure 2].



Figure 1. Amelia, ST, Second workshop (00:30)



Figure 2. Amelia, ST, Second workshop (02:57)

As stated above, during the second part of the research, Amelia was eventually allowed to put into practice the EFL curricular proposal she had designed during the third workshop. Her proposal, entitled “The story of a picture”, used her original love for old photographs as a

way of encouraging her EFL high-school students to find old family portraits at home, research the original context in which they were taken, and finally share the photographs and the data in English through a final classroom display. “Through this proposal,” Amelia explained,

I will be able to transmit to students my passion [for old photographs]. I am extremely curious and precise when it comes to talking about the past and the memories of people so my students would learn the importance of listening and researching with real interest and respect. (Amelia, ST, 3rd workshop).

This was the general perspective through which Amelia had confidence in the educational value of utilizing her own funds of identity in the classroom. Yet this general aim coexisted with specific EFL objectives that she described in the following terms:

Making my EFL students connect to the English language by giving them the opportunity to express part of their own identities and feelings through English. . . . On the one hand, this project would make them feel proud of their relatives and their origins; on the other, I have always thought that the issues talked about in the EFL class are too far from the students’ reality. (Amelia, ST, 3rd workshop)

After putting her proposal into practice, she reported on its progress in the last session of the AR seminars. She had the chance to develop “The story of a picture” with two different groups (A and B) of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old students from a public high school on the outskirts of Valencia. It was group B which interested her most, since while A was a normal class of thirty mainstream students, group B had just fifteen students, many of whom were of immigrant origin (mainly Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Pakistan) and/or belonged to ethnic minorities such as the Roma. Most of them were from families with a low socio-economic status whose cultural capital—except for one who was originally from Pakistan—

did not include any command of the English language. The learners had not developed a strong academic identity, particularly regarding the subject of EFL.

Amelia had hypothesized that it was with group B that the teacher funds of identity project could best prove its success at motivating pupils whose interests would otherwise remain distant and beyond the teacher's grasp. Her expectation was that by sharing her own funds of identity and spreading her passion for old photographs among these learners, she might be able to uncover common identity traits between herself and the students—traits that would enable her to gradually and indirectly draw the students' interest toward the English language itself. From her comments during the seminar, she seemed to have succeeded. "I showed them photos of my own family", Amelia said.

First I showed an extremely old picture that I have of my great-grandmother—no wait, my great-*great*-grandmother—and they had to guess who she was . . . They enjoyed this very much. They seemed surprised by a teacher sharing things about herself, and asked: 'But are these *really* your photos?' The last one was a picture of my sister and I, so they could see it was true. (Amelia, ST, 4th AR seminar, 21 May 2016)

According to her description, the learners discussed their funds of identity in the context created by Amelia's photos, and the group concluded that family and friendship were pivotal elements of their own identity. Amelia "put a circle around the word *identity* and started tracing kinship relations on the board, such as 'great-grandmother', 'grandmother', and suchlike, to remind them of those words in English". Once they had refreshed this vocabulary, the students came up with questions in English that they could ask to find out more about the context surrounding Amelia's old portraits. "I wanted them to understand that a photo is not only what one sees but that it also involves memories, feelings, and so on," Amelia explained. "Some of the questions the teenagers came up with were: *Were you happy when they took this*

photo? What has changed since then?” (Amelia, ST, 4th AR seminar, 21 May 2016). After this, they went over other vocabulary related to feelings and emotions.

Then, at home, the students searched for old family portraits, chose one, and interviewed their oldest relatives by taking the questions they had previously formulated in class as a model for their own. To further bolster the activity, Amelia prepared a short dossier in which the students could paste a copy of the photograph they had chosen, write a summarized bilingual transcript of the questions and answers from their interview (first in their mother tongue, then in English), and finally a longer reflection in English on the feelings, emotions, and discoveries they had encountered while engaged in these activities [Figure 3]. The dossier also helped them organize their presentation in front of the class, which concluded the “The story of a picture” workshop.

Group A, which was the “good” one, liked the activity... But I suppose that, since they normally received more stimuli or knew more English... they liked it but weren’t so thrilled about it. So they did it—some better than others—and that was that. However, in group B... there were three students who simply didn’t do it (they didn’t come to class) but those who did were really thrilled by the project! Once we finished I gave them a questionnaire asking them whether they had liked it or not, and I remember three or four among them—all of them enjoyed it, but I especially remember the faces of three of them—who nodded and smiled broadly, saying: *Yes! Yes! Really good!* (Amelia, ST, 4th AR seminar, 21 May 2016)

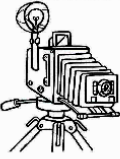


<p style="text-align: right;">29/2/2016</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; margin: 10px 0;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>THE STORY OF A PICTURE 'S PROJECT:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <p style="text-align: center;">IES VAE - ANGLÉS - 3ºE.S.O _</p> </div>	<p><u>1. The interview</u></p> <p>I interviewed my</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Q: Who appears in the picture and what are they doing?</p> <p>A:</p> <p>Let's say it in English:</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Q:</p> <p>A:</p> <p>Let's say it in English:</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Q:</p> <p>A:</p> <p>Let's say it in English:</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Q:</p> <p>A:</p> <p>Let's say it in English:</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Q:</p> <p>A:</p> <p>Let's say it in English:</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Q:</p> <p>A:</p> <p>Let's say it in English:</p> </div>	<p><u>2. My own reflections and feelings</u></p> <p>How was this experience? How did you feel? What did you learn?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>

Figure 3. Amelia, ST, 2nd part of the research: Classroom Dossier

By giving these teenagers the chance to express their funds of identity academically, in English, and in the classroom setting, Amelia enabled them to see themselves not only as

proud members of their families or communities, but also as capable (EFL) learners, by producing work in English they could feel proud of. There was plenty of evidence that the students in group B had transferred positive aspects of their own identities to their work in the EFL classroom. One pupil, for example, phoned his grandfather in Pakistan and had his mother ask him questions in their original language about a family portrait, while the student translated the information into Spanish and English to include it in the dossier. He called the dossier *Fun with my cousin*, since the photograph showed his uncle playing with his cousin when both of them were children. The student liked seeing his uncle look so happy in the photograph. Another teenager conducted the interview with his relative in Romanian and kept the original in the transcript, to which an English version was added. Despite the fact that the photograph she chose pictured her grandparents, mother and uncle with her, she pointed out in the text that the latter two were in Romania at the time of the workshop. That was the reason why she had picked that photograph, since she liked to think of her family back in Romania and was happy to show her relatives to her school friends. Finally, one other pupil chose a military portrait of his grandfather, taken while he was a mathematician at Damascus University who lectured in the field of topology, while also serving in the army. The student was surprised at this and was proud to learn new things about his grandfather.

Victoria's case

The experiences of Miriam, Carmen, Sandra, but especially Amelia, bear witness to how by explicitly elaborating upon teachers' funds of identity, the project sparked significant cases of parallel teacher identity and professional development that, in turn, led to innovative class proposals for the EFL classroom. And yet, amid these successful cases, the research also found evidence that the project did not fully live up to its promise; this was due mostly to institutional constraints that some STs experienced during the second part of the research. Because of this, the permanence and continuity of the funds of identity of Ana, Lorena,

María, and Victoria (who is also included in Table 2) was more apparent during the three classroom workshops than during the STs' practicum intervention. This outcome could have been expected since the practicum took place in a real educational context with its own actors and circumstances. The curricular demands of these high schools were often difficult to reconcile with the final aims of the funds of identity project, more concerned with the STs' professional development. Victoria's case was especially significant in this regard, since her intervention during the practicum bore little resemblance to her previous advances in harmonizing her individual and teacher identities during the classroom workshops. The factors that prevented this synthesis from coming to fruition during the practicum are also informative of the kinds of constraints that may hinder the development of STs' identity in language teacher education. Hence my decision to analyze Victoria's case in detail.

When I was a child, I came across a volume of a historical encyclopedia where there was a family tree of the Trastámara dynasty. The Catholic Monarchs had five children and the last one of them, Catherine of Aragon, became an English queen by marrying Henry VIII. This was a turning point in my life since, for me, this was the family tree which connected Spanish history—which was taught at school—with English history. I started reading historical novels and creating and writing my own 'royal' family trees, including the information I had looked up that day in the encyclopedias. . . . This was one of the reasons why I decided to take English Studies at university. (Victoria, ST, 1st workshop)

This was how Victoria described, in the narrative she wrote for the first workshop, her original encounter with genealogical trees, a cultural artifact which would become a significant practical fund of identity for her. The quote is indeed enlightening in many regards. The fact that the Trastámara family tree extended its historical branches over Spanish and English history alike allowed Victoria to symbolize her own desire to reconcile cultures,

languages, and identities in ways that her EFL classes did not provide for. “At school,” she recalled during our AR seminar, “English was seen as something isolated. . . . We could not relate English to the real world, by using English videos or English music . . . I would have liked English to have been related to other subjects, such as history or biology, so that English would not have been seen as something isolated from our lives” (2nd AR seminar, 15 February 2016). Scrutinizing family trees, learning about their epochs, and understanding their political motivations was something she “did at home, on [her] own and in [her] leisure time”, yet it ended up becoming the main engine driving her own EFL learning forward on the wheels of identity investment and intrinsic motivation.

I was not surprised, consequently, when Victoria decided that her ST identity text would be based on this practical fund of identity: she would make her own family tree. The video she produced for the second workshop was called “Looking into the past”, and it started by describing her early experience of finding the Trastámara family tree in the encyclopedia [Figure 4]. However, just when her video seemed about to step into the different levels of kinship and marriage policies, its narrative suddenly stopped and Victoria’s voice was heard: “But wait a minute! Family trees and history are not only about kings and queens, princes and princesses. I’ve got my own family tree and history!” (Victoria, ST, 2nd workshop, [00:53]). From then on, the identity video introduced her own genealogy, from her great-great-grandparents to her twin sister and herself. Her family tree spread its branches around a town called Gandia and the video included old photographic portraits of her ancestors that depicted the times in which they lived [Figure 5]. Geographical (her hometown), practical (her love of family trees), and social funds of identity (her closest relatives) were thus synthesized in her outcome for the second workshop. Once the family tree reached her living relatives, the video progressed through short interviews that Victoria conducted with her grandmother, parents, and sister, in which she asked for basic information about their past and present. These

exchanges were carried out in Catalan, the family's native language and a cultural fund of identity in and of itself. The identity video ended with Victoria presenting herself in English, to symbolize her success at harmonizing different cultures, languages, and social and professional identities.

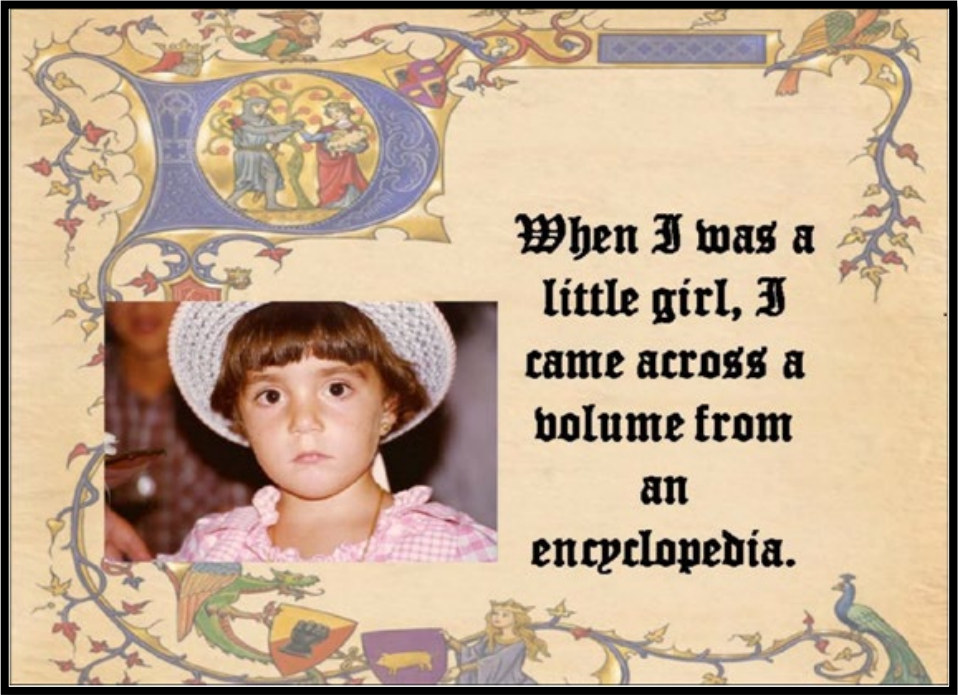


Figure 4. Victoria, ST, Second workshop (00:06)

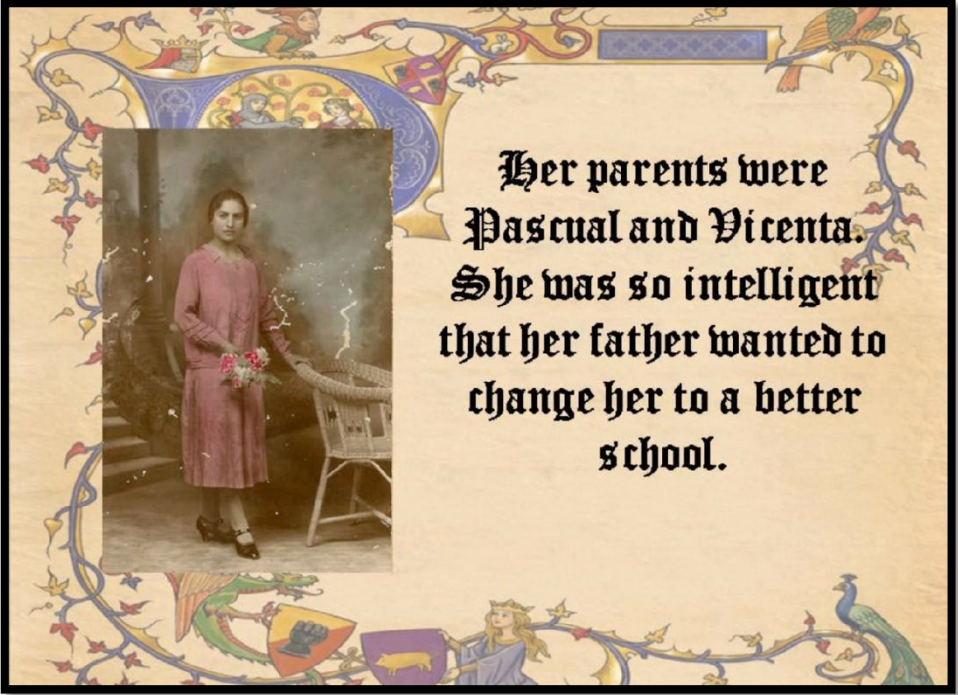


Figure 5. Victoria, ST, Second workshop (01:16)

As might be expected, Victoria's curricular proposal for the third workshop also revolved around family trees:

It will deal with encouraging students to trace their own family trees as far back as possible, by approaching their two most immediate social institutions: school and their families. In doing so, school will not be seen as an isolated body, but as a community where relatives can interact, participate and feel helpful in their children's learning process. Furthermore, in carrying out some research on their own past, students will be able to be in contact with their close and distant relatives and, thus, strengthen their own family ties. (Victoria, ST, 3rd workshop)

The linguistic side of her design, in turn, drew on code shifting, trilingual instruction, and flexible forms of classroom language ecology to cater precisely to the expansion of the learners' identity, to gradually include the foreign language:

Although this project will be carried out in the English class, any language together with English may be used for the completion of the task (Spanish, Catalan, or other L1 language), for, apart from improving their English skills, the main aim of this activity is to reconcile the students' two identities: that of being a FL learner, and that of being part of a family. (Victoria, ST, 3rd workshop)

Victoria's proposal clearly attempted to offer high school EFL learners the kind of education that she wished she had received but did not. Unfortunately, she was once again denied the possibility of having a worthwhile educational experience, this time as an EFL teacher. At this point in the research, institutional constraints emerged. The in-service teacher who co-supervised Victoria did not want to stray so far from her original objectives and plan, so she did not allow her to put her design into practice. This behavior was, I think, expressive of the fear of innovation that still inhibits EFL educators in Spain and checks their

professional development. “She had a traditional view of teaching, and also a poor vision of the curriculum, which for her meant following the course book units closely. So I couldn’t put into practice my original design” (Victoria, ST, 3rd AR seminar, 21 March 2015). As García Doval and Sánchez Rial (2002) state, this is not unusual in practicum placements:

you may be lucky and get your school tutor to comment on your lessons, give you advice, help you and, in general, monitor your performance and development. But you may also be very unlucky and then either your school tutor can take advantage of your presence by enjoying some free time in the staff room or you will spend six long weeks like one more piece of furniture in the classroom. . . . The whole system is far from being ideal and efficient. (p. 289)

Victoria’s experience did not coincide with either of the extremes noted above: she was allowed to intervene in class, just not to innovate so much by implementing her original proposal to display her own funds of identity. As shown in Table 2, instead she opted to use corpus analysis to deal with the grammar points that the teacher insisted on covering. Still, her progression during the first part of the research was testament to the hidden potential for innovation that lies dormant in STs’ funds of identity, and I hope she will be able to put her project into practice in the near future, as most of the other members of the group did.

Conclusion

This research has illustrated how funds of identity theory and practice can help STs and teacher educators embrace a *resourceful teacher orientation* (Nunan, 2017) as members of the ELT professional and academic community. By explicitly elaborating upon their own practical, social, geographical, cultural and institutional funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014), the participants in this research project gained confidence and expanded their own professional identities in ways that, I believe, helped them take a step forward in their aim of becoming more autonomous, more creative, and more responsible EFL teachers. This

research demonstrated that the desire to share, reconcile, and enrich one's teacher identity with one's outside-school identity traits—to turn one's individual funds of identity into professional ones—can kindle a constant drive for innovation, and that funds of identity can provide essential raw material for teachers to reflect on, enact their pedagogical judgment, and finally come up with innovative educational practices that are welcomed by their students.

As claimed at the beginning of the article, the English language, by itself, cannot provide sufficient common ground in which both teachers and students can plant the seeds of their identity and see them flourish. In the present global context in which ELT's ties with neoliberalism has turned it into a “signifier of social class privilege and access” (Vandrick, 2014, p. 88), it has become clear that English does not help establish a pedagogical relationship with many of our learners. If this difficulty is not detected and tackled, it can erode the quality of the teaching and learning processes in our schools. An immediate implication of this study is, therefore, that teacher education programs should welcome practical models for teacher development such as the one described above, to ensure that STs or in-service teachers are given the chance to reflect on their own funds of identity and integrate them into their professional lives.

Unfortunately, other findings from this research suggest that even these practical strategies may be limited in impact. The grip that center countries still hold on ELT often crystalizes in a number of commonsensical assumptions which manifest themselves not only in the curricula, course books, resources, and methods utilized, but also—and even more importantly—in the professional identities that accompany them as part of the same educational package. If these identity options are inadvertently interiorized by language teachers, they may end up shaping school cultures that—as in Victoria's experience—halt (or even crush) innovation, curriculum, and professional development, especially when they are still in their weakest and nascent forms, as embodied by EFL STs in the initial stages of their

career. One of the most critical insights this project revealed was how STs' internships are one of the first contexts in which the conflict between *deficit* and *empowering* professional cultures is played out (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005), and that this conflict may become particularly intense and counterproductive for ST professional development (Block & Gray, 2016; García Doval & Sánchez Rial, 2002; Safford & Kelly, 2010). Accordingly, it may not be enough for teacher education programs to organize safe contexts where STs are given reign to expand and enrich their own teacher identities if they are only to be subsequently “dropped”, during their practicum placement, in schools caught up in top-down scripted curricula and accountability discourses that clearly discourage in-service teachers from even trying to harmonize the various levels of their identity. As a result, whatever the positive consequences might ensue from the ‘Student-teachers’ funds of identity’ project or similar initiatives in the future, the positive effects would be strengthened in direct proportion to how universities, schools, and high schools tighten their dialog and cooperation and advance in becoming a unified *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998). This challenge still looms before us.

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