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The role of student-teachers' imagined identities in their investments in English in an "Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education" (ICLHE) Catalan pre-service teacher education context

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CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The aim of this study, as stated in Chapter 1, was to examine the role of individuals' imagined identities in their interest towards English and in their investments in this language. Similarly, such a general aim has intertwined with the ways in which the EMI-PEBD has affected the students' lives and their relationship with English. More specifically, a close examination of several aspects has been thoroughly carried out: a) the sociolinguistic factors that led the student-teachers to choose the EMI-PEBD; b) the ways in which English CoPs affect their imagined identities; and c) the ways in which their identities as English learners evolve over the course of their participation in the degree.

With the aim of concluding this study, the present chapter is structured as follows. First the main findings and general conclusions of the three studies presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7 will be presented (section 8.2.). Following, section 8.3. provides a discussion focusing on general aspects that were considered worth highlighting, as well as on degree-related issues. Section 8.4. then examines some of the main implications for English language teaching that emerge from the discussion and the findings obtained throughout this investigation. Next, section 8.5. provides a discussion and a reflection on the main boundaries and limitations that this piece of work faces. Then, Section 8.6. aims to outline possible suggestions for future research that would be interesting to explore further. Finally, the chapter closes with section 8.7., with a brief comment on the overall thesis contributions.

8.2. MAIN FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The aim of this study was to unravel the underlying beliefs, attitudes and opinions behind a group of student-teachers' interest towards English. It was contextualized in

relation to globalisation processes that shape individuals' lives regardless of the "time-space distancing" (Giddens, 1991:21). The extent to which such interest was connected to their future profession was also investigated. Its chief interest lies in the role that English plays in the current state of the world, as well as in how this reality might affect individuals' investments in the learning of this language. Overall, such interest towards English appears to be driven by factors that are interweaved with the students' identities. Their future identities (imagined identities) take shape as this language gradually becomes part of their lives. While engaging in English CoPs, whether in real life or through the power of imagination (Norton, 2001), the participants envision future possibilities and start to seek legitimacy in their imagined communities (e.g. an imagined community of world citizens who need to master English perfectly). In reality, they start to invest in their aspired identities.

In this section the main findings and conclusions that emerged from each of the three studies included in this doctoral thesis are foregrounded. The main conclusions and discussion will be presented in relation to the theoretical framework that was raised in Chapter 2.

8.2.1. MAIN FINDINGS ON THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THE STUDENTS' CHOICE OF DEGREE

The student-teachers' imagined identities (Norton Pierce, 1995) were found to be the most important factor influencing this group of student-teachers' choice of degree. Their imagined identities, who they want to become in future, were envisioned through previous participation in a wide variety of English CoPs. Such imagined identities and their connection to their interest to learn English cannot be understood without considering the role that English plays in globalisation processes. All students were aware of the significance of English in the world and its uses as a "lingua franca" (Seidlhofer, 2004, 2005). Obviously, such reality encompasses practicalities that were also mentioned by all students, although they did not seem to be decisive. In fact, they all stated that they would not have chosen the degree only due to its practical reasons.

The English role worldwide can contribute to the formation and expansion of the students-teachers' identities, by allowing them to envision future life-changing experiences and by affording its speakers with cultural and symbolic power, turning this language into a highly valuable tool which allows them to be positioned as more valuable citizens. Similarly, even though the study looked at them as English learners, their future identities as teachers, or what Block (2015a) calls "occupational identity", also seem to acknowledge the role that English can play in their future role as educators.

The participants' willingness to invest in the practices of the community (or communities) they seek to belong to was found to be another relevant factor and all students mentioned it. As Pavlenko (2003:253) argues, "imagination plays both an educational and an identity function".

8.2.2. MAIN FINDINGS ON THE WAYS IN WHICH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE THROUGH ENGLISH AFFECT THE STUDENTS' IMAGINED IDENTITIES

The reality of what it means to incorporate a new linguistic resource into one's personal repertoire of social possibilities is a multidimensional, dynamic, amorphous, and idiosyncratic journey. Following this premise, the findings in S2 indicate that the student-teachers' participation in English-mediated communities of practice leads to identity changes: both their real and future identities evolve and take shape. As they participate in communities through English, this language gains more importance, becoming a key communication tool for their personal and professional future possibilities.

The findings indicate that there are two main types of communities in which the student-teachers engage through English. On the one hand, an imagined global community that has been created and which is envisioned through the role and status that English has acquired in the world. This community reaches the students' lives through the globalisation process, such as through TV, music, the possibility to travel anywhere in the world by mastering this lingua franca, communication technologies, etc.

On the other hand, the students also seem to participate in real CoPs (e.g. stays abroad, travelling, meeting internationals at home or abroad, in English language classrooms or in the EMI-PEBD).

Bearing in mind that each student carries his/her own life history, and that their evolutions are different and unique, different patterns seem to emerge. Those student-teachers who have had the opportunity to live abroad temporarily for relatively long periods of time, and who have widely engaged and interacted with other English speakers and users, have had the opportunity to reposition themselves and to go through identity struggles that have shaped positive linguistic identities and imagined identities (Pattern 1). Unlike this first group of participants, those students who have envisioned L2 imagined communities and identities through imagination have not had the opportunity to gain legitimacy in their aspired community/ies, which do not yet seem to be clearly defined (Pattern 2A). Additionally, two student-teachers do not seem to have any L2 identities or communities in mind before starting the EMI-PEBD, a degree which affords them the possibility to go through repositionings and to develop L2 imagined identities as English users (Pattern 2B). This issue is further explored in S3.

In all cases, through the use of English in their day-to-day lives, they come into contact and envision an imagined community of English users who use this language for a wide variety of purposes. Their range of identity options becomes wider as they participate in what globalisation brings to their daily lives (Aneta Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004): nowadays, the mastery of English means accessibility to a global community where individuals share values, a global culture, information and cultural and economic resources. The “global imagined community” (Ryan, 2006) that English creates, thus, seems to provide the participants with possibilities to envision English-speaking imagined identities, whether these are identities as multicompetent speakers (Cook, 1992; Pavlenko, 2003) or identities based on native-speaker norms (Llurda, 2004; McKay, 2002; Phillipson, 1992; Widdowson, 1994, 1997). Such a global CoP, thus, affects their imagined identities in that it shapes and defines them. However, following the assertion that identities are always “multiple, changing, and a site of struggle” (Norton & Toohey, 2011:414), it is through participation in real English CoPs when

students are given more possibilities to reposition themselves and to gain legitimacy within their desired community (or communities). Overall, data pertaining to those students who have wider experiences in real English CoPs point to imagined identities which fit into the approach that views English users as owners of the language or multicompetent speakers, rather than looking at them as English learners (Cook, 2002; Cook, 2007). Similarly, data from the two students in pattern 2B seems to lead to the assertion that the EMI-PEBD has a similar impact on the students' identities, although this issue is further looked at in S3. On the contrary, the imagined identities and communities of those student-teachers who have mainly participated in English CoPs through imagination seem to be more vague and undefined.

Family influence appears to be a highly relevant factor. The global community of world citizens seems to have been displayed in a very clear way in the case of those students who have taken English lessons since very young, who have been abroad to learn English or those who have interacted with internationals through the values that their parents awarded to the need of being cosmopolitan citizens. In most cases, the participants in this study seem to have had considerable English-mediated experience and, in the case of those who have not had the chance to participate in real English CoPs as much as others, they all still appear to pertain to families who value the social, cultural and symbolic power that mastering English encompasses.

After having envisioned an imagined global community, whether thanks to imagination or to real engagements in international settings, such engagements seem to have an effect on the student-teachers' investments in the language (stays abroad, ELL, international contacts through social media...) and also in their identities as world or global citizens (e.g. travelling experiences). Regarding the issue of periphery and full participation, Wenger (1998:96) argues that CoPs are surrounded by a periphery of their practice that connects that particular community with the rest of the world and opens doors to different levels of participation: "the ability to have multiple levels of involvement is an important characteristic of a CoP, one that presents opportunities for learning both for outsiders and for communities" (Wenger, 1998:117). Individuals gain entry to new CoPs through "legitimate peripheral participation" through exposure. In

order to become full members of that community, individuals need to gain enough legitimacy: “only with enough legitimacy can all their inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion” (Wenger, 1998:101). When getting involved in “critical experiences” (Block, 2002a) through English, the student-teachers seem to envision something. The more meaningful these experiences are (in terms of friendships, for example), the clearer their future investments in English seem to be. As Murphey et al. (2005:94) point out, “investing in language learning is usually spurred by a significant event involving the creation of an imagined community, often with near peer role models and friends”. According to Wenger (1998:96), “learning has to do with the development of our practices and our ability to negotiate meaning. It is not just the acquisition of memories, habits, and skills, but the formation of an identity”. Following this idea, through participation in English CoPs, not only do they envision L2 imagined identities, but they also become eager to participate in global contexts, where English serves as a global language (Crystal, 1997, 2003) or a lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2005), used at an international level. Hence, their future identities end up going beyond their linguistic repertoire and they also seem to aspire to obtain countless sociological aspects. Such cultural capital embedded within the global identity they are pursuing is what will turn them into legitimate members of an international community of English users who share values, knowledge and lifestyles.

8.2.3. MAIN FINDINGS ON THE EVOLUTIONS OF THE STUDENTS' IDENTITIES OVER THE COURSE OF THE DEGREE

The types of imagined communities and identities envisioned by the students before starting the EMI-PEBD seem to be a decisive factor when it comes to the understanding of how such identities evolve over the course of the degree.

All participants gain legitimacy by incorporating English practices in their day to day academic life. It is worth highlighting that the degree brings IaH (Nilsson, 2003), which implies an envisioning of an imagined community of international English users that turns out to be key in the case of those students who had had few experiences or no

experiences in real English CoPs. In a sense, the degree brings the world to the students' locality, a reality that is experienced in very unique ways by each participant depending on previous life stories and on their present or absent imagined communities and identities. Put another way, all participants positioned in different ways at the beginning of the degree, something that needs to be taken into account in order to delve into how their identities evolve over the course of their university life.

Each one of the participants taking part in the study is different and carries a personal evolution that does not stop at the time of the data collection. Rather, each one of them follows a unique and personal itinerary that seems to take shape at every step of their life journey. However, three patterns seem to emerge. Student-teachers seem to experience the degree in ways that fall into three different patterns. Pattern 1 encompasses those students that tend to consider themselves as legitimate members of an international community of English users and who seem to invest in the EMI-PEBD in order to gain even more legitimacy. Their numerous previous English-mediated experiences in real CoPs have implied identity struggles which have eventually contributed to the hybridization of their identities. They have already visualized an international community of English users in which its members exchange values and lifestyles and found a balance between the global and the local and envisioned a global community. These students have accumulated a certain degree of symbolic, cultural and social power that helps them to be part of such a community, but they still invest in the EMI-PEBD in order to gather even more of such socio-cultural resources. During the degree they acquire more communication skills and the university-mediated practices bring them closer to fuller positions in their imagined communities. These participants have lived challenging experiences that have shaped their identities, while they have also ended up growing to like such changes, as they consider them something enriching.

Pattern 2 includes those students who seem to envision the experiences that students in Pattern 1 have already gone through. They appear to have very clear imagined identities and communities in which they need to master English, but they still position themselves as English learners. They align their activities towards the objective of acquiring as much legitimacy as possible in the community they want to take part in. Among these activities there is their choice of university degree, a degree which

provides them with a series of practices and possibilities that opens up the door to use English for real purposes on a daily basis, as well as providing them with the possibility to participate in stays abroad through university exchanges. The students in Pattern 2 earn a great deal of legitimacy and symbolic power, as they feel very satisfied with what the degree has offered them. However, it is not clear what type of communities they envision and this should be further explored. Some of the student-teachers envision an identity as English users, like those in Pattern 1. Others have future visions of themselves that seem to be more vague. It is precisely those students who did not have any previous experiences in real English CoPs before the EMI-PEBD but had strong English-mediated imagined identities, those who had been mainly in touch with English through media, songs or TV, who occasionally refer to an intriguing interest towards “English culture”. The power of globalisation and the communities it generates, thus, can be a real challenge when approaching ELT and such reality highly calls for the need to follow a critical pedagogy in English-mediated environments and classrooms such as the EMI-PEBD. Having said that, this degree seems to be providing positive linguistic identities to its students, as the rest of students in Pattern 2 and all students in Pattern 3 seem to be provided with the practices associated to IaH (Nilsson, 2003).

Finally, Pattern 3 encompasses those students who seem to acknowledge the importance of English in their society and in the world, a perception that seems to lead them to invest in the EMI-PEBD. However, at the initial stages of their university experience, they do not seem to have envisioned any English-mediated imagined communities nor identities (they also position themselves as English learners). Thus, this group of students did not have any L2 imagined identities in mind, but throughout the degree and its international practices, they end up incorporating the target language into their possible range of identities, and English becomes a key factor in the person they want to become and in the communities they envision. The EMI-PEBD seems to become a community in which all student-teachers use English in a “meaningful way”, where it turns into a tool to acquire knowledge and where they envision imagined identities as English users.

The identities of all the student-teachers’ taking part in this study do seem to evolve over the course of their studies, since English becomes their medium of communication.

Mercè, Natalia and Júlia's (Pattern 3) gain of legitimacy over the course of the degree, especially, seems to be key in their change of perceptions towards the language. In this sense, the EMI-PEBD appears to bring internationalisation to these students' home, something that seems to provide them with a clear opportunity to take part in international practices from their home university.

The EMI-PEBD appears to provide students with the possibility to reposition themselves and to experience identity changes that are especially prominent in the case of those participants in Pattern 2 and 3. Over the course of the degree, these student-teachers' linguistic identities shift from English learners to English users, while, at the same time, the degree offers them the possibility to visualize an imagined community of international English users (in the case of students in Pattern 3, that appears to happen for the first time), as well as with the possibility to engage in real English CoPs. The English-medium degree seems to contribute to the students' identities expansion, a process that seems to end up going beyond their linguistic identities.

8.3. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

8.3.1. GENERAL ISSUES

As a dissertation that explores sociolinguistic factors in individuals, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of the issues investigated. However, there seem to be two general issues which appear to be key and which were identified in the three studies included in this dissertation: the issue of "gaining legitimacy within a CoP" and "learners' investments in the target language".

All participants seem to have envisioned L2 imagined communities at different points in time throughout their lives (before the degree or throughout their participation in the degree). Therefore, there always seems to be a certain degree of an initial participation in an imagined international community of English users, whether it is peripherally or fully. The social and cultural processes that globalisation encompasses

provide L2 learners with images of themselves as members of an imagined global community of world citizens who interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, who move abroad, who travel often... and who turn these activities as part of their lives through the “global language” (Crystal, 2003).

Learners’ imagined identities as future English users are built and evolve as they evaluate themselves in relation to this global CoP, its linguistic resources and the symbolic, social and cultural capital they wish to acquire. Imagination, thus, is what guides these students’ investments in their identities. They decide to invest in real English CoPs that can empower them with cultural, social and symbolic capital (values, knowledge, opportunities, recognition), opportunities that provide them with more legitimacy.

All participants participated in an English community that reaches their lives through globalisation processes that connect global values and lifestyles. When participating in real English CoPs, they seem to gradually move from peripheral positions towards those of newcomers in a global community of English users. During such a process, their identities seem to shift to different degrees, as well as seeming to envision imagined identities in which English plays a key role. It all seems to be connected to the individuals’ opportunities for repositioning within their imagined communities. By the time of T2 data collection, they all seem to have differently positioned within these L2 communities depending on the amount of experiences in real English CoPs they have engaged in.

As it has been repeatedly said throughout this study, the patterns emerging from the data analysis helped to describe general trajectories and experiences, but still the uniqueness of each participant’s story shines through in the data analysis. Similarly, a critical view on the neoliberal uses of English in the 21st century was also taken into account and examined, although the data analysis seems to indicate that the mastery of English as a symbolic tool encompasses much more complex factors that go beyond the imperialism of the language in the global era., some of which promote positive, multiple and unique identities to the L2 learners.

“Critical experiences” (Block , 2007a) seem to be very powerful sources of identity expansion. It is clear when looking at the data analysis of those students who have had extensive experiences in real English-mediated CoPs, as they have had numerous occasions to gain legitimacy and visualize more positive imagined identities, which tend to fit into an imagined global community (Ryan, 2006) that allows them to feel like equally legitimate English users (Pavlenko, 2003).

8.3.2. DEGREE-RELATED ISSUES

The role that EMI-PEBD plays in the present study calls for a general discussion that focuses on the impact of this degree on the issues that have been explored in this dissertation.

The participants in this study experience their participation in the English-medium degree in very dissimilar ways (see Chapter 7). The degree seems to be a direct entrance gate to an international/global imagined community. However, the promotion of students’ imagined participation in such communities, and establishing their legitimacy therein is a key factor that needs to be brought to light. (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Overall, the students experience identity changes within the degree that seem to be very different in nature. At the beginning of the English-medium degree some of them positioned themselves as English learners and at the same time felt they were illegitimate users of the language. Other students had already had numerous opportunities to face identity struggles throughout their previous experiences in real English CoPs (e.g. stays abroad, English language courses abroad, international experiences due to their hobbies or family acquaintances...) and their degree of legitimacy as English users was higher. As Study 2 (Chapter 6) showed, over the course of individuals’ participation in English-mediated CoPs, there seem to be dynamic identity shifts from English learners to English users (Pavlenko, 2003), and, in this sense, and focusing on the context in which this research was carried out, the EMI-PEBD becomes a key CoP.

Throughout the EMI-PEBD degree, English seems to serve as a communication tool that allows this group of student-teachers to acquire content-related knowledge. Using

the target language as a commodity (Heller, 2003), a conception of the language that most of the students seem to acknowledge and appreciate, the degree affords them opportunities that appear to be very positive in promoting identity changes. Such changes help them to move from local to the global, as they acquire more hybrid and fluid identities that incorporate the symbolic, cultural and social power that their new imagined communities require. They progressively move towards an imagined CoP of world citizens who use the language as a “lingua franca” (Jenkins, 2009).

In particular, the degree seems to become crucial for those students who were not invested in the language before starting the degree and who had not visualised any community in which they could participate. They experience changes that lead to new and different perceptions towards English, as they realize they are now using it in a “meaningful way” (in some of the participants’ words). The EMI-PEBD’s international dimension, what Nilsson (2003a, 2003b) refers to as IaH, appears to afford students “internationalised lectures” (Moore et al., 2013), lectures that seem to simulate experiences on par to that of intercultural experiences such as study abroad programmes. In this sense, the English-medium degree becomes a key CoP where all student-teachers are given opportunities to engage in activities that end up being similar to those that some (privileged) students had already had before the degree. Within this CoP, those who had not extensively participated in real English CoPs are given the opportunity to envision future identities that incorporate English.

As an innovative project in tertiary education, this degree affords a series of practices that not only contribute to the students’ linguistic abilities but also to their personal development. As presented in section 1.6., the English-medium degree aims to go beyond the mere teaching of subjects through the “global language” bringing with it an international dimension in a wide variety of aspects. The role of English, thus, turns this degree into a gateway regardless of geographical or cultural background. This reality positively affects the EMI-PEBD, making it more accessible and open to the world. It achieves this by firstly, welcoming visiting scholars from other countries and secondly, by welcoming significantly higher numbers of Erasmus students from other countries, who choose this degree over other options, as the lessons are delivered in English. In turn this results in creating opportunities for local student-teachers to

interact and work with classmates from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, leading to more exposure to intercultural values and awareness. In addition to this, university staff who are taking part in the EMI-PEBD organize and are in charge of internationalizing experiences in their classrooms. Helping students to interact with international educational institutions, by way of example, is something the lecturers promote and strive towards. Participating in innovative activities involving contexts beyond the students' culture, through the use of English and communicating for real purposes (Escobar Urmeneta, forthcoming 2017b) is one example of some of the decisions that are being made by those lecturers who are taking part in this innovative degree. Escobar Urmeneta (forthcoming 2017b) exemplifies such strategies with the case of a lecturer who organizes videoconferences with international exemplary institutions (e.g. Summerhill School) or educators. Finally, statistics obtained from the first cohort of student-teachers who finalized the EMI-PEBD indicate that they engaged more in Erasmus exchange programs and practicums abroad than any other students at the Faculty of Education.

Thereupon, in terms of social impact, the degree brings an unexpected sense of achievement that should be strongly emphasized, since this sense is a strong and positive advocate for the implementation of the degree. The EMI-PEBD turns out to be a major opportunity for those students that might belong to those sectors of society with low economic incomes. In other words, those students whose families have not been able to provide them with opportunities to engage in using the language for real and authentic communication can benefit from fair conditions when entering university.

Similarly, the study emphasizes the relevance of exchange programmes and stays abroad (Douglas & Jones-Rikkers, 2001; Jackson, 2008; Langley & Breese, 2005). Its findings indicate that, both before and during the degree, these experiences strongly impact on individuals' identities. Due to the role that English has acquired worldwide, English becomes the communication tool through which students live these experiences and through which their identities expand. Hence, becoming invested in the language is something that appears to go beyond the improvement of their English language skills. It seems to be more connected to a more general "awakening" and "open-mindedness" that also affect the way they relate to their local culture and to the world, as well as the

values they assimilate. Such identity expansion has a strong impact on their English investments and their degree of legitimacy in the community they envision. As far as university exchanges in particular are concerned, the findings reveal that those students who were not invested in the language before the EMI-PEBD start to invest in the TL for the first time by also participating in Erasmus exchanges and interacting with people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

With the aim to very briefly summarize the results obtained throughout the present study and to focus on the impact of the degree in such results, two concepts are worth mentioning: identity and tertiary education. Since the internationalisation of the degree appears to have a very strong impact on some of the students' identities (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006; Phan, 2009), that leads us to reassess the universities' responsibilities towards society and towards its shortcomings. Teaching the course through the medium of English provides students from lower socio economic backgrounds with the chance to participate in the course on a more equal footing. Training teachers to teach English and through English, while giving the opportunity to all kinds of society economic backgrounds is an issue that empowers the degree with effectiveness and social responsibility. The EMI-PEBD appears to become an opportunity for those students who have not had a family support in their English learning process.

The merging of these two concepts when implementing IaH in domestic universities can lead to a highly powerful cocktail that may help to deal with new challenges in teacher training and to evaluate how English language training can be incorporated in the cross-disciplinary education of future teaching professionals. Turning this language into a "commodity" (Heller, 2003) to achieve cross-disciplinary values and objectives, what the EMI-PEBD appears to succeed in, might be a promising alternative to the current English language teaching approaches in most formal education institutions. The reality we live in, the directions that society is taking us and the changes that are taking place in the world, certainly require this intervention in the training of English language learners/teachers in Spain. This in turn will also enable future English teachers to impart their knowledge more effectively to future generations of English language learners.

8.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Leaving aside the theoretical reflections presented in the previous section, this study also raises some pedagogical issues for discussion.

This study does not provide any data referring to identity changes or repositioning with the ELL CoP. This leads to question the methodologies that are employed in English Language classrooms, where no identity expansion options are made available to the learners. Presumably, they might still be based on the “dual competence model” (Pavlenko, 2003:256). In order to promote learners’ investment in English, it is crucial to admit the vital role of stays abroad and international contacts in general in order to create positive and plausible imagined identities as English users. When this occurs, students seem to be eager to invest in English-mediated activities, as well as becoming firmly invested in the learning of this language. CoPs always shape an individual’s sense of self (Lave & Wenger, 1991), but if English classrooms do not provide students with imagined communities where they can feel legitimate they will not envision achievable imagined identities (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Those experiences that caused students’ identity struggles, in which they had to work to find new positions, appear to contribute to repositions that lead them to finally see English from a totally different perspective: English becomes part of their possibilities for identity expansion.

More practical outcomes, thus, should be taken into account when looking at the findings presented. Following, such contributions are summarised through three different lenses:

- A) For English language learning in primary and secondary education
- B) According to the extent to which the role of English in teacher training is relevant
- C) For the English-medium Degree and its future directions

A) For English language learning in primary and secondary education

The present study shows the power that identity plays in individuals’ interest towards English. In addition, the findings indicate that English language classrooms appear to lead students to non-participation, as no positive nor reachable imagined communities

are made available to them. The student-teachers did not seem to envision any kind of community while participating in English language classrooms, that is, when learning English within the formal education system. English language classrooms do not seem to provide learners with imagined L2 communities in which they might want to invest. In this sense, findings on the students' participation in English language classrooms relate to Murphey et al. (2005) in that students' lack of imagined communities may lead them to de-invest in the learning of English. At the same time, none of them appeared to have enjoyed learning English in school classrooms. In fact, the participants in this thesis reported being very critical towards English language teaching methodologies that they had experienced both in primary and secondary education, while blaming the way they had been taught the language, especially when comparing such experiences with what English became later on in their lives.

This research emphasizes the relevance of "critical experiences" (Block, 2002), as them seem to lead to identity expansions that make individuals reconsider who they are and what symbolic and cultural power they can reach. If learners end up feeling "a sense of community", they may end up becoming invested in the learning of English. In fact, when Norton (2001) proposed the construct of imagined communities with respect to L2 learning, she argued that "it serves, in part, to explain non-participating and resistance in the language classroom" (Norton & McKinney, 2011:76). As Norton (1997:422) points out, "if learners of English cannot claim ownership of a language, they might not consider themselves legitimate speakers of that language". Such an assertion leads us to argue that helping students to feel like legitimate members of a community is of prime importance. Furthermore, Jenkins (2009) distinguishes between EFL and EIL, arguing that, in language teaching environments that are based on the former term, learners do not own the language. Following this idea, according to Murphey et al. (2005:85), "language learning activities that posit the native speaker as an ideal model are often in danger of creating dis-identificatory moments of non-participation and marginalization [...] due to the typically overwhelming distance of the native speaker from many L2 learners".

In the case of a conception of EIL, language learners own English and thus, they are given possibilities to acquire different subject positions as they gain more legitimacy

within a community of English users who use this language for international purposes. EIL is the patrimony of its users and thus, language pedagogies should be based on such premise, as it would allow learners to encounter possibilities of legitimacy that would eventually lead them to invest in the target language. According to Phillipson (1996), non-native speakers should be looked at on their own right. The need to abandon the idealization of the NS as the ideal teachers also fits into the results of this study, as the student-teachers seem to be eager to share with their future students the possible gains of mastering this language from an international perspective and from an “L2 user” rather than “learner” standpoint (Cook, 2002, 2005). Overall, the idea of making students achieve native-like competence and acculturate to native speakers (Harmer, 2007; Sifakis, 2004) does not seem to fit into the results of this study, although particular data do show instances of positionings between the NS/NNS dichotomy.

The findings in this investigation could be fruitful when designing English teaching approaches from a more meaningful perspective. When discussing the power of imagined communities in learners’ willingness to invest in the learning of a language, Murphey et al (2005:84) argue that “teachers are in powerful positions to help create such imagined communities and to stimulate or stifle them. English becomes part of the students’ identities when they find it “meaningful” (using Sara’s words). Outside of the classroom walls they realize that the language can be a valuable tool that can bring them endless possibilities. The English CoPs where the student-teachers use the target language meaningfully, as they say, turn English into a part of who they are and who they can become. In other words, such engagements also make their imagined identities consider English as a required tool in order to be able to access the communities and opportunities they have envisioned. As Wenger (1998: 155) puts it, “a very peripheral form of participation, for instance, may turn out to be central to one's identity because it leads to something significant”. An imagined global community needs to be visualised in order for learners to visualize the possibility to own English and to realize their possibilities for identity expansion. When discussing what the role of English teachers should be in English classrooms, Lamb (2004:243) argues that they may end up ignoring the “genuine motivation” of their pupils, while “they may be unable or unwilling to engage with the newly available English-language resources which appeal to their pupils”. Such assertion needs to be taken into account, especially when looking

at the findings that point to the amount of English-mediated activities that the group of student-teachers autonomously seem to engage with outside the classroom walls. Having said that, the ways in which new technologies have spread all over the world vary a great deal depending on the areas, and thus, it should be the teachers' responsibility to present students with real and critical imagined communities that go beyond the "American way of life" and its attributed values that may come hand in hand with globalisation processes and that leave behind what some scholars have named a growing "McDonaldization" (Ritzer, 2004). As Warschauer (Warschauer, 2000:524) puts it, "the possibilities of Internet-based communication are available to only a minority of the world's people".

As Norton (2001) argued, a lack of awareness of learners' imagined communities and imagined identities can interfere in the ability of teachers to construct learning activities in which learners can invest. Murphey et al (2005:87) expand on this idea by arguing that learners often go through a roller coaster of "identifying and dis-identifying", while they highlight the role of the teachers, who can in fact "facilitate moments of identification for students". According to the scholars, "friends and near peer role models can be instrumental in the formation of identities and imagined communities" (Murphey et al., 2005:87). According to Kachru (1992:362), "what is needed is a shift of two types: a paradigm shift in research and teaching, and an understanding of the sociolinguistic reality of the uses and users of English". Murphey et al (2005:83) make a call to allow language learners, "their identities, their communities and their development be the main subject matter" in English language courses.

In fact, the rise of technology among English learners and the autonomous behaviours that social media promote might be acquiring a very important role students' language learning processes. On this matter, and by way of example, Dooly & Masats (2010:49) emphasize the relevance of PBL (Project Based Language Learning) as, according to them, it "has the potential to provide foreign language learners with optimal conditions for language learning".

In this regard, Wenger (1998:215) provides insights that should be considered when designing and implementing programs of teaching and learning English:

In order to redirect learning, it may be necessary to offer learners alternative forms of participation that are much a source of identity as they are finding elsewhere. The transformative practice of a learning community offers an ideal context for developing new understandings because the community sustains change as part of an identity of participation.

To sum up, the findings in this PhD thesis show how further research and changes are necessary to explore the methodologies that are being used in English language classrooms in greater detail. Likewise, they may also lead to the need to move towards English language teaching approaches that dare to imagine a global community of English users.

B) The extent to which the role of English in teacher training might be relevant

Having discussed the relevance of “imagination” in English language classrooms in the previous section, it is also important to acknowledge the pivotal role of stays abroad and international contacts in general, in order to generate positive and plausible imagined identities as English users. When discussing the issue of stays abroad, Coleman (2013) asks study abroad researchers to leave behind cognitive SLA approaches and to see sojourners as “whole people with whole lives”, instead of fragmenting learners’ “minds, bodies, and social behaviours into separate domains of inquiry” (Kramsch, 2009:2). In such contexts, identity changes seem to take place, and students seem to be eager and invested in the learning of English. Sara and Mercè invest more in English and participate more in communities where this language is spoken after having experienced identity changes. Sara’s comment clearly illustrates this idea: *“I’ve lived many enriching experiences, which only makes me want to learn more English in order to live more of these experiences”*. On the contrary, as one of the grids in Q2 shows, students do not seem to invest in activities such as studying English with a textbook. Spanish university students are encouraged to participate in exchange programmes to get involved in international studying environments and to improve their English skills. Alicia’s university exchange serves to exemplify how such stays abroad can contribute to the shift of students’ local identities towards more global versions of themselves in the world. In fact, those participants who had not yet experienced such situations were eager to incorporate them into their life story. Gaining intercultural awareness might also be part of the EMI-PEBD’s aim to bring IaH (Nilsson, 2003a), by providing pre-

service teachers with opportunities to engage in “risky behaviour” (Dunne, 2009) through university exchanges abroad.

Even though the present thesis looked at this group of student-teachers from a perspective of English learners, the findings are also very interesting to analyse from a teachers-to-be point of view, as these students will become future primary teachers of English or through English. In this sense, the values that they incorporate through English opens up access to communities that, without this language, they would not be able to access. Such reality opens up infinite possibilities to explore what this language may afford them as future educators of future generations of pupils. Hence, the fact that the participants in this thesis are going to become educators should not be left aside. In fact, some findings seem to provide insights into the relationship between the students’ English learning process and their future identities as primary teachers, indicating that the values acquired throughout their English-mediated experiences are considered to be very relevant assets as future educators. Not only do they seem to pursue certain future English skills, which will help them to teach it properly to their future pupils, but they also seem to acknowledge the ways to which English might contribute to their future students in terms of cultural capital. Hence, English should also be looked at from a knowledge acquisition perspective, in that it may signal accessibility to new values and open-mindedness. In this regard, and within the context of literature on network exchanges, Dooly (2011)’s research on online telecollaborative interaction in a teacher training programme also highlights the impact that social media causes on language learners’ identities and on their Intercultural Communicative Competences (ICC).

While the “identity work” that comes hand in hand with the learning of English might be a very relevant contribution for future educators, the issues related to critical pedagogy and ownership of English, which have been raised in the previous section (A), should definitely be taken into consideration. Becoming an internationally-minded person should never equal the imposition of an American/British language and culture, but it should aim to promote teaching philosophies based on the notion of EIL (Jenkins, 2002). Hence, a critical praxis in the field of ELT may help learners of English to achieve positive and constructive identities, helping them to feel legitimate English users and contributing to a move away from the NS/NNS dichotomy (Cook, 1999; Pennycook,

1999). In fact, the need to approach ELT from a critical perspective has been heard worldwide (Caine, 2008; Canagarajah, 1999b; Cook, 1999; Jenkins, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; McKay, 2002; Modiano, 2001; Phillipson, 1992; Sifakis, 2004). Many scholars have discussed the impact of the international role of English on the way that ELT should be approached, arguing that such methods should not be based on native speaker norms (Caine, 2008; Crystal, 2003; Higgins, 2003; Jenkins, 2009; Llorca, 2004; McKay, 2002; Phillipson, 1992; Widdowson, 1994, 1997). According to Modiano (2001:339) “one possible way for the language instructor to come to terms with the cultural imposition of English language learning is to utilize ELT practices which position and define English as an international language (EIL)”. If future generations tend to see English as an international language rather than as a language owned by native speakers and their culture, teaching practices might start to change and might provide future English learners with a broader and more positive idea of themselves as English language users.

It is hoped that the group of student-teachers taking part in this study, after having realized the contexts in which they find “meaningfulness” in their relationship with English, are able to incorporate new teaching strategies into their future classrooms. As Cheung (2001) highlights, the current global culture should be made obvious to English students as an opportunity to present them with immediate and meaningful contact with the language. Bourn (2011:560) refers to Ray (2007) and also discusses the impact of globalisation on education: “the myriad cultural influences leading to challenges to one's own sense of identity and belonging within a community”. Depending on which imagined communities we aim to take part in we will develop our own identity as second language learners or speakers: “imagined communities provide insight into imagined identities”(Norton and McKinney, 2011:76). These kind of experiences promote the development of a global identity, something that, according to this author, is very likely to happen to young people, since they may end up developing global and local identities, giving them “a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture” (Arnett, 2002:32, as cited in Jackson, 2008:33). Similarly, the learning of English in primary and secondary classrooms could promote more respectful attitudes towards multilingualism and among classmates from different cultural backgrounds. As Giampapa (2010:426) argues, “educators should invest in students’ multiliteracies and

multilingual identities as resources inside classrooms and schools”, as “to leave them at the school door sends a message that students’ and their families’ linguistic and cultural capital are not welcome and are unimportant”. In this sense, any “marginalizing forces” based on ethnicity or nationality might be diminished through the use of a lingua franca that served as a respectful link among cultures and origins (Giampapa, 2004: 207).

To sum up, under the premise that teachers’ attitudes are “an essential and inevitable part of any pedagogical innovation” (Karavas-Doukas, 1996:188), the fact that the group of participants in this thesis are going to become primary school teachers and, at the same time, belong to a generation of young graduates who are required to participate in numerous experiences abroad, master languages and create a story of life beyond their own culture (something they are currently doing) may also lead to new pedagogical perspectives towards English. Such new pedagogies could certainly benefit from the perceptions towards English that these young future teachers have acquired. In fact, it is hoped that such change of perceptions positively contributes to their future English teaching practices.

C) For the English-medium Degree and its future directions

The findings obtained in this research study raise some issues that are directly related to the implementation of the EMI-PEBD. In the Catalan context, the growing importance of English mastery in Spain and the directions that some higher education institutions are taking, such as the implementation of a new degree in Primary Education through English, certainly demands to take several issues into account, as internationalisation is far from being free from controversies and complexities. As Knight (2004:28) puts it, “key words used to study and analyse the international dimension of higher education have been complex, multifaceted, diverse, controversial, changing, and challenging”. The scholar refers to internationalisation both as an actor and as a reactor “in the new realities facing education”. Just like identity, thus, the EMI-PEBD’s international dimension may not leave behind the complexities that are usually associated with university-based international practices.

Firstly, the issue of the acquisition of cultural capital through English is worth mentioning in relation to the EMI-PEBD. Knight (2004) cites several institutional-level rationales for bringing an international dimension to home universities: international profile and reputation, students and staff development, income generation, strategic alliances, and research and knowledge production. Likewise, with the aim to go beyond that, Knight (2004:25) argues, “it may be optimistic, but it would be reassuring to think that social and cultural rationales for internationalisation will be given equal importance as the economic and political ones”. In this sense, the positive values that come hand in hand with teaching (or learning) through English should be carefully examined and when considering bringing IaH to higher education institutions in Spain. Raising awareness about what English can bring from such a perspective can also be positive in order to change attitudes towards this language that consider it as a linguistic resource confined to an elite or as a seal of economic guarantee.

Second, all practices associated to IaH appear to be extremely positive, as the degree’s practices seem to promote the student-teachers’ identity expansion as English users, while they seem to afford them with plausible and constructive linguistic identities. Knight (2004:26) highlights that some of the factors that internationalisation can provide both students and staff are the understanding of global issues and international relationships. The scholar expands on that by stating that “the mobility of the labour market and the increase in cultural diversity of communities and the workplace require that both students and academics have an increased understanding and demonstrated skills to work and live in a culturally diverse or different environment”. For intercultural awareness to spring out from English learning classrooms, promoting the development of international environments in English learning lessons or in content learning through English is of prime importance. This group of future primary teachers might have acquired the necessary intercultural skills that might benefit their future English lessons. In this sense, Clifford (2011:556) argues that “a key factor in building new curricula and pedagogy is the cosmopolitan identity of the staff”.

The degree offered at the UAB seems to offer English teaching practices based on the notion of EIL, which in turn seems to provide students with a sense of belonging to a much wider and more positive community. Most speakers of English in Spain use

English for international mobility and it is in these situations where they use the language as competent and legitimate speakers. The degree seems to take such reality into account and seems to afford students with identities that move away from the “NS-NNS dichotomy” (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Piller, 2002). McKay (2003:13), as cited in Caine (2008:6), observes that “as an international language, English belongs to its users, and as such it is the users' cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy” (see section 2.4.). By following a critical pedagogy (Pennycook, 2001) the English learners enrolled in this degree appear to find the balance they need to acquire both their local and their global identities. As Warschauer (2000:530) argues, the goal should be “to use the language less as an object of study and more as an additional language of their own to have an impact on and change the world... to express their identity and make their voices heard”. For a deeper analysis on the impact of the EMI-PEBD on the students' identities, see Chapter 6.

Third, having presented the positive implications that the mastery of English can bring to future educators in section B, several controversial issues should not be forgotten. The study indicates that there were a few participants who chose the English-medium degree for the wrong reasons, as their imagined identities as English users were even more important than their imagined identities as primary school teachers. Similarly, part of the reason behind all participants' choice of degree was because they wanted to keep learning the language. This means they considered themselves being not proficient enough, and this has several pedagogical implications that should be noted. Such a reality directly related to the factors raised in section “A”, as the formal education system through which these students have gone through does not seem to provide them with the necessary skills to master the English language sufficiently to feel confident studying a degree through this language. Likewise, further investigations could look at whether such lack of English mastery negatively affects the amount and quality of subject content eventually acquired.

Fourth, the use of linguistic autobiographies, just like the ones that were employed as a data collection tool for this thesis, are reported to have beneficial aspects and to be valuable pedagogical tools to reflect on learners' experiences of language learning. Murphey's work with Japanese students led Murphey et al. (2005:85) to state that “writing their histories allowed students to reflect on these forces and to become aware

of their own part in making their histories. Ideally this metacognitive awareness allowed them to take more control of future learning, to own the learning process they were involved in more completely and to become more self-regulated and autonomous". [...] "Teachers also can learn how to teach more appropriately from reading their students' LLHs. Junior and senior high school teachers reading collections written by university students can also get insight into students' evaluations of their teaching methods".

Finally, in the case of those student-teachers who might be planning to become English teachers, it is very important to offer them with opportunities to gain the sufficient confidence they need in order to teach the language properly and confidently to their future pupils. Feeling a sense of insecurity can affect teachers' motivation. According to Bernaus et al., (2009:28), there is "a clear relationship between teacher's motivational teaching practice and the language learning motivation in their classes". Similarly, if the teachers of English or through English have imagined communities in mind themselves, it might be easier for them to engage their students and make them feel more motivated and involved in the language classrooms. On this matter, Murphey et al (2005) emphasize how important it is for teachers to be good models of the community of L2 users themselves. In these scholars' words, "teachers who inspire develop their students' imagination and stimulate their investments in creating an L2 identity that can greatly facilitate their learning". (Murphey et al, 2005:91). In fact, one participant, Sara, even used the following words: "if someone has to teach them it must be someone like us", when discussing the ways in which she had learned English at school and what she envisioned later on in life.

To conclude, I shall quote Norton's words when discussing connections between her research and the real world, in order to wrap up the pedagogical implications presented in this section:

This story is a simple illustration of the view that the relationship between language and identity is not only abstract and theoretical but also has important consequences for positive and productive language learning and teaching (Norton, 1997:413-414).

8.5. BOUNDARIES AND LIMITATIONS

The significance of the present study lies in the specificity of the context in which the research was carried out and in the uniqueness of the 14 participants. As Agar (1994:107), as cited in Cohen et al. (2007) point out, “in qualitative data collection, the intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability”. Having said that, even though the present study provides insights into a sociolinguistic approach to the study of language learning in an endeavour to explore new paradigm shifts that invite quality and subtlety to understanding the sociolinguistics of English and globalisation, this piece of work also has important limitations. In the case of this dissertation, a widely spread theoretical framework had to be applied to a very specific and context-dependent situation, which may lead to the need for clarification regarding some of the study’s possible limitations. Recognizing strengths and limitations are part of what doing research means. By doing so, the issues under investigation can nourish from a wider and deeper understanding. In that spirit, several limitations are pinpointed as most arguable.

In the first place, as a novice researcher, this PhD thesis is not exhaustive due to the limited time and space to interact with the participants. An extra session for collection of data, for instance, could have been carried out at the end of the students’ university degree, thus providing further insights into the issues under investigation. However, in the case of this investigation, this was not possible due to the researcher’s time constraints.

Also, “the methods required for investigating the intersection between identity positions and language learning are complex” (Norton & Toohey, 2011:426). According to Llorca (2006:20), “complexity and diversity are two terms that define our contemporary world”. Thus, the need to acknowledge internal diversity within this group of participants needs to be highlighted, as each one of them lives and experiences his/her life in multiple, different and contradictory ways, as everything that has to do with communities, languages, learning and identity.

Several issues had to be taken into account in order to ensure the validity of the study and, at the same time, to keep the main source of interest alive, namely, the non-fixed, fluid and contextualized identities of the student-teachers. The coding procedures undertaken to analyse data in studies 1 and 2 served as the main focus of attention to delve into the short narratives provided by the participants during the interviews. In this regard, for S1 and S2, questionnaires and interviews (individuals and focus group) already provided a great amount of data and time limitations did not allow me to delve further into other types of data collection. Due to the lack of time to widely interact with the participants and due to my professional life outside of the university, coding procedures were considered the most appropriate in order to obtain a broad picture and scheme on how to look through the data and to obtain the first insights for analysis. Regarding the ways in which the evolution of the student-teachers' identities within the EMI-PEBD were analysed, it was done through linguistic autobiographies. In spite of the complexity of the field of study, data obtained through the three methodological tools were triangulated.

When discussing the methodological understanding on which researchers on language learning and identity rely on, Norton & Toohey (2011:426-427) list three. First, they state that "most reject the view that any research can claim to be objective or unbiased", adding that all research, whether quantitative or qualitative, is situated, and that, hence, researchers should always recognize that their perspectives and conclusions will inevitably be "situated" and "partial". Second, the scholars state that "identity researchers must account for not only how structural conditions and social practices place individuals, but also how individuals struggle to situate themselves in the contexts in which they find themselves". Finally, the researchers argue that identity researchers must "seek a better understanding of how political and economic issues interact with language learning, constraining or enabling human action". With an attempt to find a balance between data complexity, my lack of experience as a novice researcher and my limited time and resources, the previous considerations provided by Norton & Toohey (2011) provide a thorough explanation on the reasons why the methodological tools employed were considered the most convenient ones under the conditions on which this dissertation was carried out. As they further state, "this approach encourages language education researchers to reject 'grand theories' and methods, and to come

to understand the particularity of the persons, environments, and processes they wish to examine”(Norton & Toohey, 2011: 427).

Another limitation to this research was due to the amount of data obtained through individual and focus group interviews. It became apparent that the amount of information and the detail obtained through both types of data collection were very different. The amount of elicitation obtained from individual interviews was much wider than in the focus group interviews. That is the reason why data from Q2 became extremely valuable: it provided a comparable, parallel and stable amount of data for each and every participant. Having said that, the decision to include Focus Groups was due to their capacity to obtain several perspectives on the issues raised by the researcher and to obtain a more thorough discussion among different standpoints (see 4.5.1.2.), although it might be interesting to complement the data obtained with further details pertaining to each one of the participants in the focus group. Nevertheless, both participants from individual interviews and focus group provided very meaningful data and, following Murphey et al. (2005:87) limitations of their research, I contend that both groups show evidence of the phenomena that is being described. Having said that, this limitation was considered at all times, and that is the reason which led the researcher to incorporate a unique methodological tool for S3. Even though S3 was initially supposed to be carried through the analysis of individual interviews and focus group interviews, a very even amount of data from each participant (among other methodological reasons, see section 4.5.1.3.) was needed and, thus, such tools were substituted by linguistic autobiographies.

Thirdly, all participants in this thesis were studying to become primary teachers. Arguably, the findings on what it is that drives individuals to learn English might have been different had the study been conducted with another sector of society who were not as concerned about personal development. This should be further explored.

In fourth place, the fact that participants were all selected through purposive sampling, having similar profiles and certain perspectives towards languages and its connection with personal motivations may be seen as a limitation for the generalisability of the study. The fact that some of the participants might be people from

a certain social class or background could have slightly affected their views and beliefs (Block, 2007a). Making the decision to participate in an exchange and to travel to a foreign country might have been caused by a wide variety of factors, such as family education or social class, although such issues have been widely discussed. While it might be said that some participants in this research study might be part of an elite (Block, 2007a) who have had the opportunities to move around relatively often, when carrying out the sampling procedures, such an issue was taken into account and other participants' profiles were also incorporated. Still, Patton (1990) argues that the researcher should always discuss the extent to which the sample might have affected the findings, by accurately describing the decisions taken and the procedures.

Similarly, linking the point raised above, indeed, the aim of this research proposal is not to generalize the findings, as it focuses on perceptions taken from a small sample. Generalisations were not a starting goal. In this regard, case study methods have been criticized as scientific methods, but they allow emphasis and focus to be put on the specificity of the cases under investigation as well as being suitable for small-scale researchers (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2005). Although limitations of case-study research should be taken into account, the sample used was intended to find tendencies lying beneath the issues raised in the literature review, as well as an approximation to a phenomenon, analysing and describing a set of very specific experiences. Lincoln & Guba (1985), as cited in Denscombe (2007:299) refer to the notion of "transferability" "to arrive at a judgement about how far it would apply to other comparable instances", while Ritchie et al. (2003) add that a study, then, should provide a "thick description" behind the findings. Thus, this dissertation aimed at finding out about a possible generational tendency among a group of student-teachers who, as they participate in communities of practice through English, reposition themselves in relation to the world and to their society.

One further consideration regards the fact that this dissertation looks at the participants as English learners, who are still in the process of incorporating this linguistic resource as a personal cultural and symbolic resource. However, results show that their identities as future teachers interweave in several occasions with their relationship and interest towards English, which might be regarded as a possible limitation in that it may be adding complexity to the findings. In spite of that, this issue

was considered an important factor to bear in mind in the discussions and it might be argued that it opens up intriguing research paths and insights into the connections between English learners who want to become teachers. Such reality was not regarded as relevant but results turned it into a very meaningful lens through which to look at the data and to inspire further research.

To conclude, the present study was a remarkable challenge as a novice researcher, and in this sense all limitations were considered as opportunities to learn and to get immersed into what it means to do research. This PhD thesis has trained me as a researcher and has taught me to understand the complexity of the research field, as well as the value of being able to frame a series of ideas, theories and ways to understand the world and learning trajectories. Similarly, the limitations and difficulties that have emerged throughout the process have become major challenges which have pushed me to consider further questions and doubts that do nothing but to expand my personal knowledge and my eagerness to learn.

8.6. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research line initiated in this thesis opens up promising lines of inquiry that could benefit from further exploration of the various multidimensional issues that arose in this thesis. It is hoped that the intriguing results will inspire the field of language learning and identity. Meanwhile, some relevant proposals can be drawn for further research to complement the ones obtained so far.

The broad overview taken in this study, which addresses a web of closely intertwined themes, could guide future lines of enquiry towards more concrete insights into the factors that have been addressed here. Bearing in mind that identities are amorphous, idiosyncratic, dynamic, and multidimensional, many issues remain to be further explored. First, students' perceptions towards English and the role it plays in their identities in a wide variety of contexts could be a possible field awaiting further investigation. Further research on this phenomenon would benefit greatly from an ethnographic lens, which might be a promising methodological approach to add

complexity and qualitative analysis to the issues under investigation. Second, applying a similar research design while looking at the data through a teachers-to-be lens would provide intriguing and thought-provoking results that could have relevant implications for this degree in particular, and for any future degrees in Primary Education that aim to promote plurilingual practices. Third, further investigations could specifically look at how teachers' previous experiences in English CoPs affect their teaching practices, as well as how their opinions towards English affect their pedagogy. If the duty of those teachers who teach English or through English is to prepare students for the most likely communication situations they might encounter in the real world, ELT can no longer be isolated from the changing role of English in the world. In this sense, the notion of EIL accepts a rich diversity in its linguistic features, users and cultural background. Hence, it would be as intriguing as it would be necessary to examine the attitudes and perceptions of teachers who teach this language (or through this language) towards the target language. That would allow policies for proper support and measures to be implemented to advance EIL teaching. With regard to the group of student-teachers taking part in this study, it could be intriguing to look more closely into how their perceptions towards English and identities affect their future teaching practices, while exploring the mechanisms they employ in order to not fall into the pedagogical strategies that they reported as being inappropriate. Moreover, in order to explore the issues raised in this paper more in depth and in order to further trace changes in their positionings, similar studies could be conducted at different stages of their learning process: after a stay abroad; after completing the degree in Primary School Education; or after having worked abroad, for example. Similarly, the results presented in investigation shed light and also suggest an urgent need for further research into the role of identity in English language investments, as it could inspire new approaches to English language teaching. Finally, a research proposal that naturally springs out of this one would aim at exploring whether the students' content knowledge is affected by their low English proficiency at the beginning of the EMI-PEBD.

Before concluding this section it is worth emphasizing that, even though the research questions addressed in this study have been answered, interesting issues that were beyond such questions emerged from the data. The participants tackled broader thematic areas that would be intriguing to explore. A corpus of 13.153 words of textual

data has been created, as well as a corpus of 91.665 words of conversational data, corresponding to an extensive corpus of recorded video data (8h, 58 minutes and 54 seconds), all of which are within the reach of anyone wishing to further delve into different research questions.

8.7. CLOSING REMARKS

The above discussion and the findings presented in the three respective studies included in this dissertation highlight the transformative power hidden behind the mastery of languages. The present study springs from the need to document the multidimensional and complex stories of English learners in a country belonging to the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1986) to explore the role of identity in their English learning trajectories, their perceptions about the language and about themselves as Catalan/Spanish English speakers/users in the world, in Spain and in a university context. Not only that, but this research has also been a humble attempt to emphasize the prominent power of communities of practice and “imagination” in any learning trajectory. English seems to hide meanings in terms of personal development and enrichment, of growth in values and diversity and of global awareness. More importantly, this research has shed light on how learning can be achieved when it comes naturally within the formation of one’s evolving identity or, in the participants’ words, whenever individuals find experiences “meaningful”. Having said that, it is highly important to emphasize that implementing policies that promote the learning of English from a standpoint of communities of practice and of identity expansion would undoubtedly also call on the need to bear in mind local cultural values and languages, something that the EMI-PEBD manages to achieve by promoting dual values: the global and the local.

Although the study of identity and language learning is a widely researched field, the context-specific scenario that the EMI-PEBD creates would require the exploration of similar or new and emerging issues. In a world in which multilingualism is highly valued but, at the same time, in which “the lingua franca” is becoming a threat in small

contexts in which minority cultures and languages might be challenged by its presence, it becomes extremely important to accurately examine and explore the ways in which the implementation of practices such as the EMI-PEBD might be contributing (or not) to the required balance that leads to cultural richness and linguistic and identity diversity.

8.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter started with a brief overview, followed by the general conclusions and findings obtained in each study (section 8.2.). After that, a general discussion followed (section 8.3.), regarding general issues (8.3.1.) and focusing on degree-specific factors (8.3.2.). Next, the main implications for ELT were outlined (section 8.4.). In section 8.5., the boundaries and limitations of the present doctoral thesis were provided, followed by possible suggestions for further research in related fields of study (section 8.6.). Finally, before concluding the chapter, section 8.7. wrapped up the present thesis with a few final thoughts that were considered relevant to highlight.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Informed Consent

Consentiment informat per la participació en un projecte d'un estudi de recerca

Benvolgut/da.

Des del Departament de Didàctica de la Llengua i la Literatura de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona s'està realitzant un estudi d'avaluació i seguiment de la nova titulació d'Educació Primària en anglès. Una part d'aquest estudi pretén aprofundir en les creences, les actituds i la naturalesa de la motivació envers la llengua anglesa per part dels futurs mestres de primària, així com en el rol que aquesta ocupa en el teu dia a dia com a persona.

Agraïré la teva col·laboració en la resposta d'un qüestionari i en la realització d'una entrevista personal un cop l'any (durant tres cursos de la teva carrera) per poder analitzar aspectes concrets de l'àmbit de recerca. Aquesta col·laboració requerirà aproximadament d'uns 20 minuts de temps pel qüestionari i d'1 hora per la realització de l'entrevista (en grup o individual).

L'entrevista, que es realitzarà a una hora prèviament acordada, es farà amb el suport d'una gravació per poder ser transcrita posteriorment. Totes les respostes són vàlides i no existeixen respostes ni opinions correctes ni incorrectes. El teu punt de vista és el que compta. Part de les transcripcions de les entrevistes seran incloses en el recull de l'estudi, però seràn confidencials i anònimes. Si és del teu interès, se't podrà informar dels resultats de l'estudi.

Cal dir que participar en aquest estudi no implica cap mena de compromís. La teva participació és lliure i voluntària i tens el dret d'abandonar l'estudi en qualsevol moment. De totes maneres, com a reconeixement per les hores de dedicació, se't farà un certificat on hi constarà la teva col·laboració amb un estudi oficial de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Deixo el meu contacte per qualsevol dubte o aclariment que creguis convenient i perquè puguis posar-te en contacte amb mi personalment com a investigadora externa del projecte (berta.tvila@gmail.com).

Com a complimentació del teu compromís, prego signis aquest document, un cop llegides i enteses les condicions de la teva participació en la realització de l'estudi.

Moltes gràcies per la teva col·laboració.

La teva signatura: _____ Data: _____

Investigadora externa: Berta Torras Vila

Contacte: berta.tvila@gmail.com

APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire 2

QÜESTIONARI

Nom: _____

Moltes gràcies per dedicar el teu temps a omplir aquest qüestionari!

Berta Torras Vila

SECCIÓ 1

Omple els buits:

1. Edat: _____

2. Sexe: _____

3. Has estudiat/viscut mai a l'estranger? (p.e. programes d'intercanvi, cursos d'idiomes...)

Sí

No

Si has contestat que *Sí*, si et plau, especifica a on, durant quant de temps i les raons que t'hi van dur.

--

SECCIÓ 2

A les preguntes 8 i 9 senyala (√) la resposta més adequada.

4. Faig ús de/ aprenc l' anglès a casa...

	Mai	De vegades	Cada setmana	Gairebé cada dia
Mirant la televisió en anglès				
Escoltant programes de ràdio en anglès				
Escoltant cançons en anglès				
Llegint llibres/revistes en anglès				
Parlant anglès amb amics/coneguts (telèfon, skype...)				

Estudiant amb un llibre de text.				
Fent ús d'internet (p.e.e-mail, xatejant, jocs...)				
Altres activitats en anglès:				

5. M'agrada parlar en anglès per/ perquè...

	Totalment en desacord	En desacord	Indiferent	D'acord	Totalment d'acord
Les oportunitats a nivell personal que comporta					
Les oportunitats a nivell professional que comporta					
Em puc comunicar amb altres parlants de l'anglès de tot el món (no només amb nadius de l'idioma)					
Em facilita poder viatjar per tot el món i comunicar-me					
Puc accedir a molts recursos: pel·lícules, llibres, revistes, informació a internet...					
Incrementa el meu prestigi social					
Em sento més proper/a al món gràcies a mitjans de comunicació en anglès (TV, pel·lícules, diaris...)					
M'ajuda a tenir una perspectiva més àmplia del món					
Puc treballar a l'estranger si vull					
M'agrada molt aprendre anglès					
M'agrada molt aprendre idiomes en general					
M'agrada conèixer/mantenir el contacte amb gent de costums i valors diferents					
És una llengua internacional					

6. Si et plau, contesta a la següent pregunta.

Perquè vas escollir la opció d'estudiar Educació Primària en anglès?

SECCIÓ 3

7. Si et plau, contesta la següent pregunta. Si necessites més espai, segueix escrivint darrere d'aquesta pàgina.

Les teves motivacions personals han condicionat d'alguna manera l'elecció de cursar Educació Primària en anglès?

8. Si et plau, completa la següent afirmació. Si necessites més espai, segueix escrivint darrere d'aquesta pàgina.

L' anglès és important en la meva vida perquè ...

9. Si et plau, contesta la següent pregunta. Si necessites més espai, segueix escrivint darrere d'aquesta pàgina.

Creus que la teva motivació per seguir aprenent anglès i per seguir accedint a recursos en aquesta llengua té alguna cosa a veure amb les teves aspiracions personals? De quina manera?

APPENDIX 3: Individual Interview and Focus Group guidelines

TIME 1: Individual Interview 1 & Focus Group 1

SECCIÓ 1

- Informació general
- Quines raons et van dur a fer aquestes estades a l'estranger? (ex. Per què t'agrada viatjar, per què vas voler fer un curs d'anglès a fora, per què vas fer un voluntariat...)

SECCIÓ 2:

Activitats en anglès en la teva vida diària.

- Per què t'interessa accedir a aquests recursos? Hi ha alguna/es raó/raons que et motivin a fer totes aquestes activitats?
- Què t'ofereixen d'especial aquests recursos? (que altres recursos no t'ofereixen)
- Mantens el contacte amb gent d'altres països i/o cultures? T'agrada?

M'agrada parlar l'anglès perquè...

- Què és el que t'agrada de la idea de poder dominar l'anglès?
- Té a veure amb raons personals, professionals...? Si no hi hagués crisi i tinguessiu una feina assegurada a Catalunya/Espanya, no haurieu triat aquesta carrera?
- T'interessa parlar anglès només per les oportunitats que et pot donar FORA del país? O també creus que és important saber-lo DINS de Catalunya? Per què?
- Creus que la motivació per aprendre anglès i per aprendre altres idiomes és la mateixa? Perquè?
- Què t'aporta el contacte amb persones d'altres cultures? Quin paper creieu que hi té l'anglès en aquest aspecte avui en dia?
- Comentar aspectes de la taula del qüestionari.

Per què vas escollir la opció d'estudiar Educació Primària en anglès?

SECCIÓ 3:

- Les teves motivacions personals han condicionat d'alguna manera l'elecció de cursar Educació Primària en anglès?
- Perquè és important l'anglès a la teva vida?
- Creus que la teva motivació per seguir aprenent anglès i per seguir accedint a recursos en aquesta llengua té alguna cosa a veure amb les teves aspiracions personals? De quina manera?

EL GRAU A LA UAB:

- raons
- expectatives
- com creus que està evolucionant la teva relació amb la llengua des que has iniciat els teus estudis de Magisteri?
- com reaccionen les persones que t'envolten al saber que estàs cursant magisteri en anglès?
- Concepció de la llengua anglesa,
- Idea de marxar una temporada a fora?
- Per què t'agrada la idea que se't pugui definir com algú que domina molt bé l'anglès? Què significa/implica per a tu aquesta idea/repte?

TIME 2: Individual Interview 2 & Focus Group 2

2nd INTERVIEW

EL GRAU:

- Hauries estudiat Educació Primària igualment si la carrera no hagués estat en anglès?

L'ANGLÈS A LA SEVA VIDA:

- Descriu-me qui ets, què gaudeixes, què t'agrada, què t'omple... I quin paper té l'anglès en tot això?
- Què creus que et dóna aprendre anglès?
- Creus que saber anglès t'ha canviat? Si compares la persona que eres abans de dominar-lo i ara ?
- Gaudeixes aprenent anglès?
- Tens amics amb qui només t'hi relacionis a través de l'anglès?

*sí: t'agrada?

*no: t'agradaria?

- T'agrada estar informada del que passa al món?
- Amb amics/família... parleu de temes internacionals (notícies, medi ambient, conflictes...).
- T'agrada parlar i/o compartir el que està passant a altres racons del món? Ho fas sovint?
- Hi ha hagut mai un punt d'inflexió que t'hagi empès a voler parlar anglès fluïdament? N'has estat conscient?
- Com et sents quan parles anglès amb algú que el domina molt? (nadiu o no nadiu). Canvia alguna cosa pel que fa a la teva relació amb la llengua?) (si te'n surts.... /si no te'n surts...)

RELACIÓ AMB L'ANGLÈS

- Com et sents ara quan parles anglès amb algú? Sempre ha estat així? Per què?
- Recordes alguna sensació de les primeres vegades en què feies servir l'anglès? Com et senties? Com ha evolucionat?
- T'has sentit mai malament, incòmode , parlant en anglès? En quines situacions?

- Què has fet per solucionar-ho? Com reacciones a això? Has canviat alguna cosa?
- I en general, quan et sents còmode parlant anglès?

COMUNITATS DE PRÀCTICA

- L'any passat feies classes extres d'anglès? I ara? Per què?
- Quines activitats fas en anglès en el teu dia a dia? N'ha canviat alguna? N'has afegit alguna?
- Després de les experiències a l'estranger, com t'has sentit? Ha canviat la teva relació amb l'anglès? De quina manera?
- Tens pensada alguna estada a fora relacionada amb l'anglès en un futur pròxim?
- Com va l'anglès amb la carrera? Notes que estàs més animada, més motivada, has après...?

ANGLÈS I EL FUTUR

- Com et veus d'aquí a uns anys?
- T'agradaria que l'anglès formés part de la teva vida professional? O simplement amb aprendre la llengua durant la carrera ja en tindries prou? Et veus fent ús de l'anglès com a futura professional? O no té per què ser així?

IMPLICACIONS PEDAGÒGIQUES

- Com vas començar a aprendre anglès tu? Et va servir? Què és el que et va fer seguir estant interessada en aquesta llengua (tot i les males pràctiques pedagògiques...?)
 - Si et donessin aquestes dues opcions, quina triaries? (Norton, 2001)
- 1. *un curs d'anglès en què se t'ensenyi pronúncia, normes gramaticals importants i altres punts gramaticals com connectors, phrasal verbs, etc...*
- 2. *Un curs d'anglès en què es treballi la llengua tot parlant d'actualitat, a partir de textos, de diaris, de notícies, de mitjans de comunicació...*
 - Com a futura mestra, com creus que s'hauria d'enfocar l'ensenyament d'aquesta llengua a primària? La teva opinió té a veure amb la teva experiència com a aprenent de l'anglès en l'educació formal de la llengua fins ara?

APPENDIX 4: Linguistic autobiographies (Time 3)

BIOGRAFIA LINGÜÍSTICA

Escriu un text autobiogràfic que reflecteixi la teva evolució i la teva experiència com a usuari de l'anglès al llarg del grau d'Educació Primària a la UAB.

Aquestes preguntes i indicacions et poden guiar:

Com ha evolucionat la teva relació amb la llengua anglesa? Quin paper ha adquirit l'anglès al llarg de la carrera? I les altres llengües? Ha canviat aquest paper tan a dins de la carrera com a la teva vida personal?

Podries parlar sobre el grau de confiança que has adquirit al llarg de la carrera, si et sents/ja et senties com un aprenent de l'anglès, si et sents/ja et senties com algú que simplement el pot fer servir per a alguna cosa, o si et sents menys, més o igual de còmode que als inicis de la carrera... O si et sents ...?

Si creus que ha canviat algun d'aquests sentiments, a què l'atribueixes?

Els canvis, o no canvis, han afectat la teva vida o algunes decisions personals d'alguna manera? En què creus que les coses haurien estat diferents si haguessis optat per fer uns estudis diferents dels que fas? O si haguessis optat per fer el Grau d'Educació Primària en català...?

APPENDIX 5: Translated data included in the thesis

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APPENDIX 6: Coded data Study 1

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APPENDIX 7: Coded data Study 2

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APPENDIX 8: Coded data Study 3

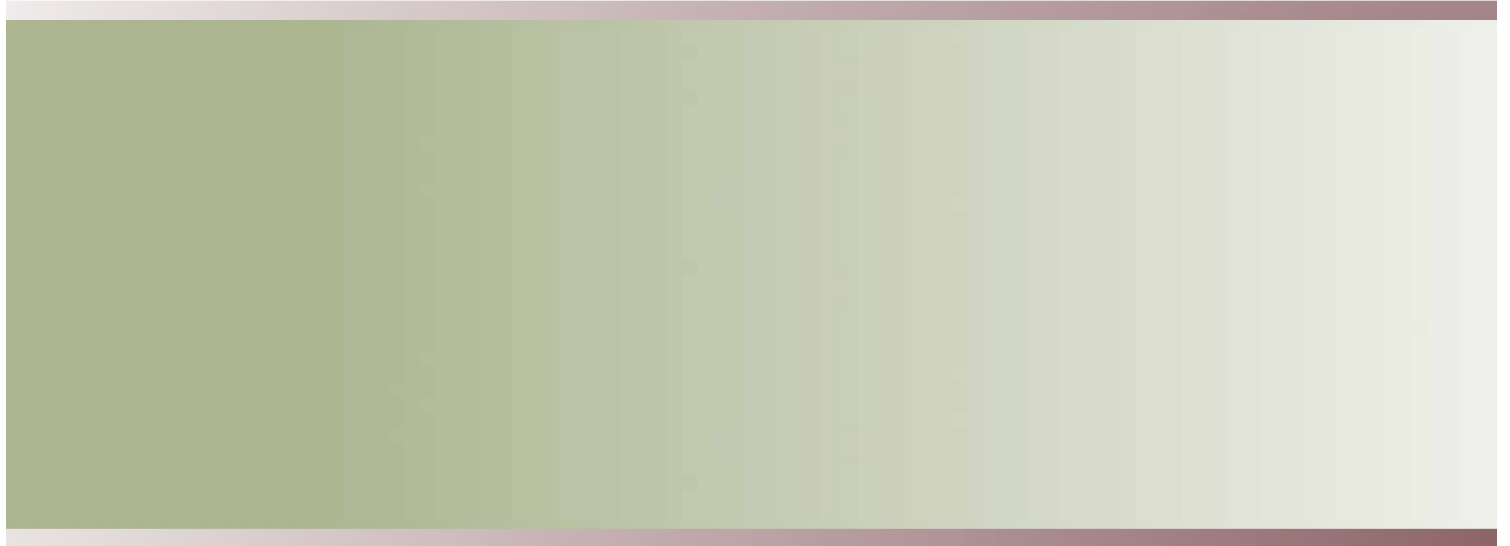
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APPENDIX 9: All textual and transcribed data

Available in digital version only (compiled in an attached CD)

APPENDIX 10: Video data

Available in digital version only (compiled in an attached DVD)



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