

Embodied Femininities in Language Pedagogy. A Study of Two Language Teachers' Experiences

Feminidades Encarnadas en la Pedagogía de Lengua. Un Estudio de las Experiencias de Dos Profesores de Lengua

Karen Tatiana Camargo-Ruiz¹

Daniel Aponte-Moniquira²

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia

Abstract

Gender studies have become relevant for English language teaching and initial teacher education. This study uses a narrative inquiry approach to inspect two language teachers' life stories in an initial teacher education program. We document how their femininities and identities are embodied through their language pedagogy since it is a praxis that allows resistance and resurgence against paradigms that limit their identities. Findings reveal that femininities provide a broader spectrum of individual gender realities and constructions. Teachers' femininities are embodied in teachers' practices. This is why some traits of these embodiments can be related to hegemonic aspects of gender, without this necessarily meaning that there is no resistance in the pedagogical field. On the contrary, it shows the capacity to redefine these attitudes that, from the pedagogical perspective, resist the hegemony of teacher gender identity.

Keywords: embodiment, English language pedagogy, femininity, gender, identity

¹ She is a language student who currently studies at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia, in the undergraduate program of "Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras con énfasis en Inglés". She is an active member of the institutional research seedbed "Internautas: Contextos y Prácticas".

katcamargor@correo.udistrital.edu.co

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7121-5891>

² He is a language student who currently studies at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia, in the undergraduate program of "Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras con énfasis en Inglés". He is an active member of the institutional research seedbed "Internautas: Contextos y Prácticas".

dsapontem@correo.udistrital.edu.co

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6012-377X>

Received: July 22nd, 2022. Accepted: May 19th, 2023.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No-Derivatives 4.0 International License. License Deed can be consulted at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>.

Resumen

Los estudios de género se han vuelto relevantes tanto para la enseñanza del inglés como para la formación inicial de docentes. Este estudio utiliza un enfoque de indagación narrativa para inspeccionar las historias de vida de dos profesoras de inglés de un programa de formación docente. Documentamos cómo sus feminidades e identidades se encarnan a través de su pedagogía de lengua ya que esta permite la resistencia y el resurgimiento frente a paradigmas que limitan sus identidades. Los hallazgos revelaron que las feminidades brindan un espectro más amplio de realidades y construcciones de género individuales. Las feminidades de las docentes se encarnan en sus prácticas, inclusive, algunos rasgos de estas encarnaciones pueden relacionarse con aspectos hegemónicos de género, sin que ello signifique que no existan resistencias en el campo pedagógico. Por el contrario, esto muestra la capacidad de redefinir estas actitudes que, desde la perspectiva pedagógica, resisten la hegemonía de la identidad de género docente.

Palabras clave: encarnación, feminidad, género, identidad, pedagogía del idioma inglés

Introduction³

Documenting masculine and feminine identity constructions in English Language Teaching (ELT) is not common. In the Colombian milieu, some scholars have shown interest in exploring gender within the ELT classroom (e.g., Castañeda, 2012; Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2017). Such interest has brought to the table the importance of documenting how English language teachers and learners build their identities and professional selves regarding gender. Although these studies have shed light upon gender configurations, relations of power, and gender discourses in ELT, not much has been explored regarding the construction of femininities in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs. Little has been said about how English language teachers embody their own gender identities in their language pedagogy.

The issue of gender has as well dealt with differences in which gender is contested because of its colonial binarism (Lugones, 2007); one that has positioned women as subalterns (Sunderland, 1994) due to a colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal genealogy (de Sousa-Santos, 2009) still present in teaching. Feminine expressions in teaching have kept a minor role given the social injustices associated with patriarchy (Edwards, 2018). In this arrangement of male ideology, “English language teaching and learning are simply a [...] European/capitalist/military/Christian/patriarchal/white/heterosexual/male ideology” (Castañeda-Peña, 2018, p. 27). We believe that such a colonial legacy has not allowed the exploration of varied gender expressions, nor has it been permitted to analyze its implications within ITE.

³ This manuscript is the result of a study conducted by members of the “Semillero de Investigación Internautas: Contextos y Prácticas” of Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. It is embedded in a broader study -Language pedagogy and teacher identity. Learning from narratives told by Colombian Teachers of English – ID: 4-165-611-20.

As a result of this evident coloniality, we believe that Language Teacher Identities (LTIs) are not just cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical (Barkhuizen, 2017), but we consider these are also forged in gender. We refer to the notion of femininities to explore how these are expressed in language pedagogy. This last, a concept we problematize as a deeper and complex idea that is not only related with ELT from a methodological point of view, but one that also moves and is permeated by gender.

Theoretical Foundations

This theoretical section's rationale draws on the notion of embodiment. In Figure 1, we position it in the center of our analysis to intersect the following terms: language pedagogy, gender, and teacher identity. Figure 1 then illustrates how these elements intersect and are built from and related to the notion of embodiment.

Language Teacher Identities

LTIs have been standardized by a colonialist perspective imposed in the ELT field. For instance, one can find discourses that establish a hierarchical order, extolling native English speakers as the most prominent authoritative knowers of English (Torres-Rocha, 2019). Such a trend has become a well-established meta-narrative that undervalues local teachers' knowledge, identities, and practices (Guerrero-Nieto & Meadows, 2015).

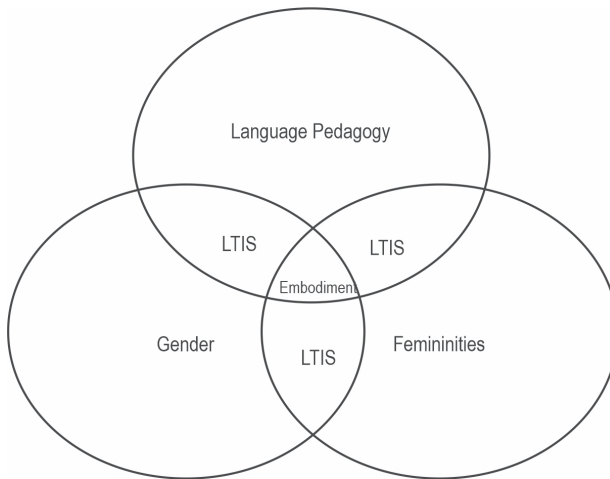


Figure 1. Theoretical foundations.

As the colonial meta-narrative present in the ELT has aimed at “breaking the link between the subject of enunciation and the ethnic/racial/sexual/gender/epistemic place, [...] [and] the epistemic, geo and body-political place of the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks” (Grosfoguel, 2010, p. 459), LTIs, in the plural, should be seen from other enunciative perspectives. Ubaque-Casallas and Castañeda-Peña (2021) claimed that gender is still an area to be addressed as traditional hierarchies have imposed colonial structures of being. This approach to understanding LTIs echoes scholars who point to the scarce research concerning queer LTIs (see Lander, 2018). Although this study does not adopt a queer perspective, it understands LTIs in the teacher and the outside world (Barkhuizen, 2017) to study identity and the gendered expressions of femininity that can be displayed in teaching.

Embodied Gender and Femininities

One of the most standard ways of understanding femininity starts from the binary generalization, in which “sex is polarized as females and males, sexuality polarized as homosexuals and heterosexuals, and gender polarized as women and men” (Johnson & Repta, 2012, p. 1). This binarism is a construction imposed by a colonial and patriarchal system (Lugones, 2007), where the masculine is bounded with power, intellectual and physical superiority, and the feminine as a synonym of submission, dependence, and delicacy (Martínez-Martín, 2016). As researchers, we can see how assigned roles according to an individual's biological sex may not come close to women's and men's reality. Rallón and Peñaloza-Rallón (2021) echo this by claiming that there is indeed a determinant social connotation that universalizes behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs concerning women and men.

Considering the need to explore new visions that allow the plurality of the gender spectrum within ITE, we place decoloniality as an essential aspect of this study. Since “decolonial theories question the hegemonic Eurocentric patterns that [...] justify a discriminatory differential treatment for people who do not fit into their modern classification: male, white, literate, heterosexual, and purchasing power” (Saldarriaga & Gómez, 2018, p. 46), we believe this lens can help to rethink the role of gender today and see that gender and sex subjectivities are nested and challenged in colonial discourses, practices, and representations (Lugones, 2007) that are expressed in the body.

Since gender is provisional, shifting, contingent, and performed, it refuses essentialisms, non-changing concepts, notions of genuineness, truth, dominion, and objectivity (Butler, 1991). Following that, as researchers, we think of femininities as a series of variable, and changeable spectra materialized and embodied through people's narratives (Rojas, 2012) and chosen behaviors. In this way, we adopt Fausto-Sterling's (2019) notion of embodiment as it is “automatic, unintentional and found in all aspects of our nervous system” (p. 5). This

study conceives femininities as embodied and related to each teacher's subjectivity, which leads to understanding that a multiplicity of femininities spectra exists.

Language Pedagogy

Language pedagogy (LP) is a critical dimension in ELT. For years, English language teachers have approached language teaching using different methods. That theoretical-based approach to teaching has broadly categorized three significant language pedagogy dimensions: the language, the teaching process, and the learner (see Richards, 2015). However, this categorization barely conceals pedagogy beyond the instrumental view of language and teaching process. In addition, language pedagogy has been built from ideas promoted by official entities that hegemonize and make subjectivities invisible, creating a language stipulated as a mere mechanism of work and economy (Rivera & Salazar, 2020). Therefore, the role of English language teachers has been limited to instructing, transmitting, and teaching grammar.

Language pedagogy is more than a theoretical-methodological category. For instance, from a critical perspective, in the Colombian local ELT, Samacá-Bohórquez (2012) found that teachers are transformative intellectuals; they must reflect on ideological principles to make sense of their teaching. Therefore, as authors, we claim that language pedagogy must be rethought to move away from colonial notions in which teaching is only linked to practices and teaching processes. Language pedagogy cannot continue as a colonizing tool, reproducing ideals centered on marginalizing discourses and practices (Castañeda-Peña, 2018; Rivera & Salazar, 2020). We think about Language pedagogy as a space in which new knowledge, practices, and identities are experienced collectively. These forms of re-existence might bring about new horizons against colonialist purposes (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021a). We argue that language pedagogy is an extension of (English Language Teacher's) ELTs. However, we see it as an embodied category that can make explicit beliefs and ideological positionings.

Context and Contextualization

36

This study was carried out at a public university in Bogotá, Colombia. Two English language teachers and educators, Danna and Sandy, were invited to participate. Their teaching experiences were essential to document how their gender identities and femininities were embodied through language pedagogy. Danna's and Sandy's ages range from 27 to 35; they teach English language courses to student-teachers. These courses aim to instruct student-teachers in mastering the linguistic and formal components of the English language and going around language skills. However, their participation also responds to an interest

in exploring how femininities are portrayed in and through language pedagogy. Their voices and subjectivities were welcomed to start from their life stories and enter their experiences.

Research Path

Narrative inquiry examines how LTIs are in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). It is not limited to any methodological paradigm, as the participants in this study disassociated themselves from the concepts of researcher and researched (Ortiz-Ocaña & Arias-López, 2019). Instead, there was a conscious attempt to co-construct an alternative way to document data. Such a co-construction was seen as a process in which relationships among those who converse can build a shared meaning (Gill & Goodson, 2011; Talmy, 2010). Furthermore, authors such as Smith (2007) suggest that bodies are linked and known in part through narratives, as humans, after all, tell stories about, in, out, of, and via our bodies. In this way, we used narrative inquiry to show how femininities are embodied and narrated in our participants and their role in constructing language pedagogy.

Analysis of Experiences

Barkhuizen et al. (2014) claim a clear union between stories and research. As life stories are narrative accounts of experience, these can help researchers to access a reality that is individual and constructed from perceptions and social and historical contexts that distance from a pre-established 'truth' (Kim, 2015). To carry out this study, the life stories were divided into the experiences of each participant. Then, we first transcribed the stories narrated by Danna and Sandy. This process was assisted by ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. Our analysis of Danna's and Sandy's narratives took place in two phases. First, we aimed to organize data into central areas of inquiry that could shed light on how it is that through language pedagogy, Danna's and Sandy's own gender identities and femininities are embodied. After this, data were subjected to open coding to identify critical categories. We must say that after transcripts were coded, we followed a comparative method to merge common categories. This allowed us to reduce and identify many themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013) that could be used for a more in-depth analysis. Finally, as this analysis is not tied to a particular paradigmatic orientation, we focused on the individual realities (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). These will hereafter be presented as themes for analysis.

Findings

The analysis of Danna's and Sandy's life stories allowed us to identify several findings of their teaching work, their gender representation, and the spectrum of femininity that is part

of their LTIs. As a result of this analysis, Figure 2 illustrates how analytical categories were considered to help create themes.

The research project centered on the exploration of life stories as the primary focus. Through the examination of these narratives, participants provided valuable insights into various aspects, including femininities, life experiences, embodiment, and gender. These personal accounts formed the basis for identifying and generating key themes that emerged within the research.

Danna's Life Story

Although gender theorists have struggled to see how the theory can be applied to multiple femininities and the function of femininity in gender hegemony (Schippers, 2004), it is worth noting that comprehending femininities, in the plural, allows a broader understanding of how LTIs are constructed. As a matter of fact, femininity has always been perceived as a non-inherent category of identity. Castañeda-Peña (2018) highlighted that “there is a single and monolithic idea of the language teacher” (p. 18) that hinders teachers’ subjectivities. Therefore, the analysis will open a window to approach teachers’ gender and femininities from a non-linear understanding.

The Mother Image

We highlight that Danna’s narratives initially focus on her teaching experience with children in initial school stages; however, the role of ITE programs will be mentioned later.

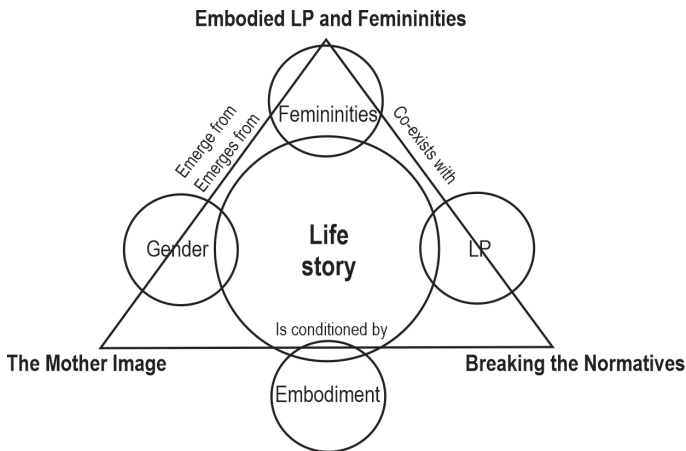


Figure 2. Emerging themes. A perspective from the life story.

In her narration, she seems to be constructed by her students from a hegemonic perspective, which has to do with women as a symbol of motherhood. Danna says,

In my classes, I represent their relationship with their mothers to my students. I feel that the mother's figure is significant to them. (...) So, the teacher can easily create that bond of "your mother is not here, but I am, I can protect you too"; then, apart from teaching, I think I can protect, I can be with them, I can be their support, and I think that makes me generate that bond, a bond I reinforce in my classes. [sic]

Motherhood is a long-standing gender norm expectation. Various researchers take different approaches to examining the maternal norm, focusing on different facets of how the normative expectation operates (Whitehead, 2016). Motherhood seems to be a salient category that constructs Danna's LTIs. She seems to reinforce this by building a figure of the female teacher as someone who takes care of students. As a matter of fact, what is feminine is idealized with characteristics associated with and expected of women (Connell, 1995). However, the association of an affectionate and kind teacher who allows herself to maintain a maternal relationship with the students can go so far as to contradict a hegemonic construction of a teacher who must maintain authority and command (Denman & Al-Mahrooqi, 2019). We believe this feminine construction of her professional self shows that Danna's gender identity embraces a more nurturing dimension.

Accordingly, Danna perceives that, although being a female teacher makes it easier for her to represent a mother figure in the classroom; it is also a personal representation that allows her to connect with the other, with the future English teacher. This relationship does not seem to be built on authority, but on a figure of love and care. Let us explore this in more detail by drawing on Danna's experience on ITE:

Maybe it can happen that the students look for that weak side of the woman in her warmth and that one is not so hard suddenly to say "you have 0 and I don't change it for anything" [...] At the university I had students who told me that the professors treated them badly. [...] I am more interested in their learning, that is for me the most important thing. [sic]

The relationship that Danna establishes between being a teacher and the protection that she can offer, replacing the mother figure in the classroom, is a feature to highlight both her femininity and her LTI. This construction of her femininity, which may fit into a hegemonic gender identity of women as friendly and passive (Barnett, Hale, & Sligar, 2017), reflects not only an alternative language pedagogy that allows her to connect with her student-teachers from affection, comfort, and familiarity. It also shows a particular way of resisting the vertical logic installed in teacher training in which students' comfort is not the teacher's primary concern. Danna's search for her students' well-being contests some classroom management agreements that set principles to maintain discipline and teacher authority in front of students.

Danna's narrative also shows other ways of opposing hegemonic constructions from language pedagogy. This analysis would make evident the idea that the forms of resistance have varied spectra and shows that there are some gray areas in between that also allow taking part in those opposition exercises. The mother figure, part of Danna's LTI, was not just externalized in her first job as a teacher, it has been present during all her professional career as part of her identity. She was able to perform her gender within the ITE classroom and embody maternal expressions thanks to the fact that they remained deeply rooted and linked to her identity. Klein (2008) argues that life stories narrate change since identity is inscribed in the experience of change, reconfiguring, and updating experience into the present.

Breaking the Normative

Danna's gender/feminine identity creates a unique way of being a language teacher. Danna incorporates different aspects of her gender to teach and reach her student-teachers and differentiate herself from other professors. However, in this personal construction, her language pedagogy distances itself from meeting the standards for ELT and learning (Granados-Beltrán, 2018). Therefore, this idea of language pedagogy is something we consider worth exploring. Danna says,

More than part of my pedagogy, it is part of my personality. For example, I sometimes feel that teaching is too distant from students. So, I intend to be warm with my students. No, I do not want to be that moody teacher whose personality changes! I like to reach people, [...], I feel that the main factor in pedagogy is knowing how to be a good human being and make others better. [sic]

Danna's language pedagogy does not seek to satisfy universal methodologies. Although these establish how the teacher should behave in the classroom, Danna finds a model of struggle based on her personality. She invests her values and beliefs to create better social relationships in the classroom (Salinas & Ayala, 2018). She shares a vision of an English teacher as a promoter of 'warmth,' she challenges the colonial forms of hegemonic power in teacher-student relationships (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021b).

Another salient aspect in Danna's narrative is the classroom benefits and limitations created by gender. There seems to be an authoritative construction of the male-teacher figure in which effective classroom management correlates with reducing disruptive behavior. This seems to be perceived by students based on the teacher's gender. Danna continues,

Sometimes, even men have a little more advantage when they are teachers [...]. For example, I noticed that the students behave better with male teachers; at least, they do not do it as much as they do with female teachers. However, (...) I think it depends on how creative and resourceful one is. I teach my classes being a female teacher and as someone who does not depend on authority but on respect. [sic]

Authority in the classroom depends on ideas related to gender. Danna and her authority have been subjected to sexist social constructions, in which roles are established based on gender (Burke et al., 1988). Litosseliti (2006) describes gender as social behaviors, expectations, and attitudes related to being a man and a woman. These constructions seem not to be far from the classroom. Danna's notion of power catches our attention. According to Freire (1997), power alienates students from teachers as 'necessary' to not lose class control. Danna does not see the need for power in total authority and obedience in the classroom. Instead, she proposes to develop a collaborative power relationship in which students and teachers, through warmth and trust, can rethink power relations and how to execute new effective ways of leading and interacting in the classroom.

Embodied LP and Femininities

Danna's femininity is embodied and expressed through her language pedagogy. This embodiment is reflected in aspects such as her way of dressing and tone of voice. These also become part of her teaching. Let us explore what she says about this:

Well, it is known that the image counts in all professions and if I dress too sporty, maybe the students will see me suddenly like "ah, this teacher is very relaxed" (...) So the image sells, right? If I dress with heels, (...) generates respect and generates the difference between student and teacher. [s/z]

There is a relationship between the construction of femininity and dressing. Historically, there has been a systematic variation between men's and women's clothing since the late Middle Ages (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2013). Although these relationships given from binarism are being left behind, Danna shows feeling identification with them. Moreover, she uses formality rules to portray herself as different from her students. On this, Dunbar and Segrin (2012) argue that teachers strive for a moderately formal clothing style.

Danna perceives the image as an essential resource that differentiates students and teachers. This is because clothing is an aspect of communication that can influence perceptions of credibility or attractiveness (Dunbar & Segrin, 2012). The search for physical differentiation does not necessarily try to recreate spaces of power but to maintain a student-teacher relationship in which each one differs in their way. This embodied femininity can be reflected in clothing or tone of voice and how and when humans communicate with others.

The embodiment process of femininities is then reflected in every apex of the body, even the tone of voice plays an essential role. Danna refers to it as an essential aspect of her relationship with students when she mentions:

I feel that one as a woman is sometimes sweeter, more affectionate, the voice does not raise so much. You try to reach the student more, and you try to get closer to them, showing that affection, not seeing it as “ah, you are the student, you are there in your position, and I am the teacher”. [sic]

A passive, soft, and sweet tone of voice can be easily related to heteronormative gender constructions (Barnett, Hale, & Sligar, 2017). Danna seems comfortable with this, as her way of relating to others within the classroom fundamentally avoids changing or raising her tone of voice to maintain relationships based on mutual respect and affection.

In this way, Danna proposes that it is not necessary to change the tone of voice to have class control but positions an alternative in which the teacher no longer represents an authority figure that needs to have a solid and tough tone of voice but experiments with a new way of relating to students putting their well-being and importance above everything else.

Danna raised a question about the overrepresentation of women in her classes, which led to a discussion about the link between LP and gender. Traditionally, women dominate in LP due to societal rules (Corzo-Morales, 2020). The body is the primary agent of change in this field. Danna aims to challenge the standard approach by promoting alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and living, which challenge Western ideologies and capitalism (Walsh, 2015). She shows perspectives on how to create liberating practices in the ELT.

We have seen how Danna sets aside hegemonic practices using aspects such as her motherhood, a pedagogy of “warmth”, and caring for the other. These notions built from her identity allow understanding that the LP “not only follows theoretical principles or a set of procedures but also, and mainly, that it be an extension of the personal epistemology and ontology of the teacher of English” (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021c, p. 37). We propose that LP is a space where the body and the embodiment then forge a knowledge from the local.

Sandy’s Life Story

Femininities obey a concept of multiplicity that allows their plurality and understanding from the individual. On the one hand, as authors, we can speak of hegemonic femininity, an idea in which femininity is defined as a reunion of characteristics that legitimize a hierarchy that positions men as dominant and women as subordinate (Schippers, 2007). In this order of ideas, hegemonic femininity follows guidelines based on binarism and indirectly allows a power relationship in which masculinity plays a ruling role. On the other hand, femininities that do not align with the rationale above can be considered non-hegemonic. Hence, they allow a greater capacity for variations that grant the plurality character of gender. We highlight that both ‘types’ are related to teachers’ identities and language pedagogy in this study.

The Mother Image

Regarding the development of a maternal image, Sandy shows no indication of this spectrum in her femininity. She even denies it and shows how she does not feel identified with this characteristic. Sandy seems more academically and intellectually focused, thus delegating the home and the mother figure. This special disidentification with the mother figure shows how Sandy performs her femininity, clearly resisting a hegemonic vision of gender that relates all women to motherhood. However, there are other visible feminine performances she embodies in her teaching.

Breaking the Normative

Sandy argues that expressing ideas is the main objective of teaching English differently. Sandy's teaching practice is based on comprehending that each student-teacher has different abilities. However, focusing on linguistic aspects is not the central objective to consider in the classroom. Instead, she prefers her students to learn English by expressing their beliefs and thoughts about daily life:

It shows students that some will be very good at reading, others at listening and writing, and each skill requires a very exorbitant accompaniment. So, to show the students all the possibilities, everything is a range of options, see what they like, and finally, talk about after all those processes. [sic]

Sandy's teaching practice offers a local context that changes from traditional approaches since language teaching has been subjugated to traditional perspectives in which students must achieve a mastery of the language and disconnect from reality (Mendieta, 2009). However, according to Sandy, it is relevant to allow students to take advantage of language to construct their own identity.

Support and comprehension also allow satisfactory language learning processes (Yunus et al., 2011). In essence, Sandy presents a caring language pedagogy that seeks to understand her students and form an environment that positively impacts them. She creates emotional support for students, showing them that their development is unique, making them feel confident to express their thoughts and ways of being.

Sandy's LTI's express her affinity for academics as a way of being a woman. In her narratives, she seems to face attitudes in the girls of her classes who follow hegemonic gender standards, as she talks about how studying is a way to free herself.

So, it is also from my role of "hey, wait, you are intelligent, you have a lot to contribute, girls, (...) it is not that you are scared to speak in public, but it is also you to assume that role of empowerment" (...) It is pathetic (...) what I have seen in the classrooms, 19 or 20-year-old girls are looking for a husband instead of studying. [sic]

In this way, Sandy's struggle is carried out, avoiding an alienating education. She leaves aside a language pedagogy that focuses on 'filling in' specific imposed topics to reflect on the world and themselves, establishing a different way of thinking (Freire & Macedo, 2018) about being women. Following Patarroyo-Fonseca (2021), Sandy's message is vital since a teacher transforms thoughts, behaviors, and realities.

Sandy's teaching tries to change heteronormative aspects such as gender roles, gender relations, and gender behaviors and attitudes in society (Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2017) that are aligned with a gender hegemony she seems to dislike. In her narrative about gender issues, she tries to empower women for them to reconstruct their reality and not continue with gender inequalities. Moreover, Sandy sees education as a way of carrying out changes in gender relations. The role of gender in her LTI is distinguished as she demonstrates that behaviors and thoughts such as *looking for a husband* might be put aside as they perpetuate gender roles. In her perception, it could change using educational means, allowing student-teachers to have a broader perspective of their role in society, considering the importance of their gender performance.

Embodied LP and Femininities

How Sandy embodies her femininity can be considered non-hegemonic. Her narrative rejects aspects such as rules about personal image and duties associated with gender. As Sandy's image is not essential for class development, she opts for more comfortable options such as tying her hair instead of having a glamorous hairstyle. The following excerpt allows going deeper into this assumption:

Because I am a woman, do I have to prepare lunch? I was not raised like that. Then suddenly, the students find it funny that if I pick a bun, I do not have to iron my hair; how students perceive that and my role as a teacher and as a woman suddenly articulated in my day today. [sic]

This shows how she embodies her femininity through her language pedagogy and how it is not defined by traditional standards in which women must follow clothing and hairstyle models aligned with fashion patterns; the latter, a conception that seeks to intervene in the management of appearance to match the social expectations of gender. Student-teachers find Sandy's actions funny due to an attempt to minimize new ways of embodying femininities by relating them to lack of self-image. This reaction may reflect the widely internalized idea of what femininity should look like so that non-hegemonic femininities are not readily accepted.

As Sandy moves away from hegemonic gender patterns, as researchers, we can support the idea that femininities are embodied in supremely multiple ways (Rojas, 2012). Sandy's contradiction to the gender guidelines that historically relate women to a hegemonic, maternal, and home femininity represents a clear and direct resistance.

In addition to reflecting on them in language pedagogy, Sandy tends to prioritize her comfort, one of her students, and the quality of her teaching over beauty standards, dress code for teachers, or gender normative guidelines. This can be seen when she mentions that:

As an English teacher, I can say, “I am going to do an essay in English, even though I have a bag full of clothes to wash and do housework,” I give priority to academics, for me, it is not a priority that I have to make lunch because I can ask for food delivery. [*Sii*]

This perception of Sandy about the priority of academics over housework is an apparent contradiction to the traditional guidelines on the behavior and duty of women in society. Having rejected those rules of hegemonic femininity supports the importance of the idea of femininities in the plural, as Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2017) state when mentioning that “a pluralistic vision promotes the idea that there is not a particular masculinity, but masculinities; and there is no single femininity, but femininities” (p. 142).

Non-hegemonic femininities directly affect language pedagogy. Sandy stated in her narrative that she takes class time to talk about her perception of what a woman could be. This allows the classroom to become a space where gender issues are debated and authorized, broadening the horizons of students' beliefs about behaviors and duties assigned due to sex. We can say that Sandy's language pedagogy is undoubtedly loaded with a gender discourse directly related to her way of understanding femininity.

Final Thoughts

Femininities are characteristics of the being that alter any individual's personal and professional identity. In the case of Danna and Sandy, they not only embody their femininities in aspects such as their clothing, tone of voice, or behaviors but also embody it in their LP. Language pedagogy then is based on their individuality, context, thinking, and gender (femininities and/or masculinities), defining teachers' particularities.

By leaving aside the hegemonic vision of the English teacher as a mere language vehicle, and LP as an instrumental framework for teaching methodologies, language teachers can understand that through language teaching, teachers need to be faithful to their individual and professional identity, concepts that are permeated by gender. In this way, language pedagogy is embodied thanks to its relationship with LTIs, and this could be seen in how they understand the role of their students, their own teacher role, as well as the development of their classes in the Teaching Education Program (TEP) sharing their own perspectives to the student-teachers. The latter simultaneously allows femininities to be brought to the body in their construction process.

Concluding, we understand that femininities are multiple and cannot be categorized as 'correct' or 'incorrect' forms of being. They are unique ways of expressing who someone

is from an individual construction of being. On the one hand, narratives show that Sandy seeks to use class time and focus on empowering her female students breaking hegemonic standards. On the other hand, Danna is built by her students as a warm teacher, in which motherhood is the aspect that highlights the most, and that was re-signified to show how this can contradict some normative classroom management agreements.

Colombian literature has not deeply covered the construction of femininities in ITE. This study then invites various scholars to explore how it is that femininities are embodied in LP within the ITE context. We think that more research is needed to get further analysis on how future and present ELT's identities can also be thought from a gender perspective. We consider it is essential to emphasize that teachers create different ways of teaching English from their gender as they can exercise power in the classroom, express their thoughts, empower their students, or perpetuate hegemonies.

References

- Arvanitidou, Z., & Gasouka, M. (2013). Construction of gender through fashion and dressing. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(11), 111-115. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n11p111>
- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2014). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203124994>
- Barkhuizen, G. (2017). *Reflections on language teacher identity research*. Routledge.
- Barnett, M. D., Hale, T. M., & Sligar, K. B. (2017). Masculinity, femininity, sexual dysfunctional beliefs, and rape myth acceptance among heterosexual college men and women. *Sexuality & Culture*, 21(3), 741–753. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-017-9420-3>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Sage Publications.
- Butler, J. (1991). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Burke, P., Stets, J., & Pirog-Good, M. (1988). Gender identity, self-esteem, and physical and sexual abuse in dating relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 51(3), 272-285.
- 46 Castañeda, H. A. (2012). EFL women-learners' construction of the discourse of egalitarianism and knowledge in online-talk-in-interaction. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 14(1), 163-179. <https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.3827>
- Castañeda-Peña, H. (2018). Structuralist, poststructuralist and decolonial identity research in English language teaching and learning: A reflection problematizing the field. In H. Castañeda-Peña et al., *ELT Local Research Agendas I* (pp. 17-34). Editorial Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
- Connell, R.W. (1995). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.

- Corzo-Morales, M., & Galeano-Camacho, E. (2020). Las mujeres ante la educación superior en Colombia: una aproximación general. *Foro por la vida*, 3(10), 83-104.
- Denman, C. J., & Al-Mahrooqi, R. (2019). English teachers' classroom management procedures in Omani public schools. *Proceedings of the Multidisciplinary Academic Conference*, 30–38.
- De Sousa Santos, B. (2009). A non-occidental west?: Learned ignorance and ecology of knowledge. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(7–8), 103-125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409348079>
- Dunbar, N. E., & Segrin, C. (2012). Clothing and teacher credibility: An application of expectancy violations theory. *ISRN Education*, 2012, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/140517>
- Edwards, G. (2018). Feminist approaches to educational leadership in disadvantaged rural communities. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 6(7), 1619-1628. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2018.060722>
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2019). Gender/sex, sexual orientation, and identity are in the body: How did they get there? *The Journal of Sex Research*, 56(4-5), 529-555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2019.1581883>
- Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogia da autonomia*. Paz e Terra.
- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 50th anniversary edition* (4th ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gill, S., & Goodson, I. (2011). Life history and narrative methods. *Theory and methods in social research* 2, 157-165.
- Granados-Beltrán, C. (2018). Revisiting the need for critical research in undergraduate Colombian English language teaching. *HOW*, 25(1), 174-193. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.25.1.355>
- Grosfoguel, R. (2010). Para descolonizar os estudos de economia política e os estudos pós-coloniais: transmodernidade, pensamento de fronteira e colonialidade global. In B. Sousa Santos & M. P. Meneses, *Epistemologias do sul*. São Paulo: Cortez, p. 455-491. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.697>
- Guerrero-Nieto, C. H., & Meadows, B. (2015). Global professional identity in deterritorialized spaces: A case study of a critical dialogue between expert and novice nonnative English speaker teachers. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 17(2), 13-27. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v17n2.44194>
- Johnson, J., & Repta, R. (Eds.) (2012). *Sex and gender: Beyond the binaries*. SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230610>
- Kim, J. (2015). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The Crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Sage Publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781071802861>
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846–854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>
- Klein, I. (2008). *La ficción de la memoria. La narración de historias de vida*. Colección Comunicación y crítica cultural. Prometeo Libros. 191.

- Lander, R. (2018). Queer English language teacher identity: A narrative exploration in Colombia. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 20(1), 89-101. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v20n1.63658>
- Litosseliti, L. (2006). *Gender and language: Theory and practice*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203784792>
- Lugones, M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system. *Hypatia (Special Issue: Writing Against Heterosexism)*, 22(1), 186-209. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01156.x>
- Martínez-Martín, I. (2016). Construcción de una pedagogía feminista para una ciudadanía transformadora y contra-hegemónica. *Foro de Educación*, 14(20), 129-151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14516/fde.2016.014.020.008>
- Mendieta, J. (2009). Inquiry as an opportunity to make things differently in the language classroom. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, (11), 124-135. <https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.159>
- Mojica, C., & Castañeda-Peña, H. (2017). A learning experience of the gender perspective English teaching contexts. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 19(1), 139-153. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v19n1.56209>
- Ortiz Ocaña, A., & Arias López, M. I. (2019). Hacer decolonial: desobedecer a la metodología de investigación. *Hallazgos*, 16(31), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.15332/s1794-3841.2019.0031.06>
- Rallón, A., & Peñaloza-Rallón, A. (2021). Write on, women! Discovering personal skills through feminist pedagogy and narratives. *HOW*, 28(1), 163-182. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.28.1.567>
- Richards, J. C. (2015). *Key issues in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rivera, P. M., & Salazar, E. P. (2020). *English teacher*. Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
- Rojas, M. (2012). Female EFL teachers: shifting and multiple gender and language-learner identities. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 14(1), 92-107. <https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.3823>
- Salinas, D., & Ayala, M. (2018). EFL student-teachers' identity construction: A case study in Chile. *HOW*, 25(1), 33-49. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.25.1.380>
- Saldarriaga, D. C., & Gómez, M. I. (2018). Teorías feministas, abolicionismo y decolonialidad: teorías críticas que cuestionan la efectividad de los derechos de las mujeres. *Revista Prolegómenos Derechos y Valores*, 21(41), 43-60. <https://doi.org/10.18359/prole.3329>
- Samacá-Bohórquez, Y. (2012). On rethinking our classrooms: A critical pedagogy view. *HOW*, 19(1), 194-208.
- Smith, B. (2007). The state of the art in narrative inquiry. *Narrative Inquiry*, 17(2), 391-398.
- Schippers, M. (2004). Femininity, masculinity and gender hegemony. *Conference Papers -- American Sociological Association*, 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-007-9022-4>
- Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and Society*, 36(1), 85-102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-007-9022-4>

- Sunderland, J. (1994). General introduction. In J. Sunderland, *Exploring gender* (pp. 1-14). Prentice Hall.
- Talmy, S. (2010). Qualitative interviews in applied linguistics: From research instrument to social practice. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30(1), 128-148. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190510000085>
- Torres-Rocha, J. C. (2019). EFL teacher professionalism and identity: Between local/global ELT tensions. *HOW*, 26(1), 153-176. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.26.1.501>
- Ubaque-Casallas, D. (2021a). Language pedagogy and teacher identity: A decolonial lens to English language teaching from a teacher educator's experience. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 23(2), 199–214. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v23n2.90754>
- Ubaque-Casallas, D., & Castañeda-Peña, H. (2021b). “I’m here and I am queer”. Queer teacher identities in ELT. A Colombian study. *Folios*, (53), 91-105. <https://doi.org/10.17227/folios.53-11291>
- Ubaque-Casallas, D. (2021c). Language Pedagogy and Identity. Learning from Teachers' Narratives in the Colombian ELT. *HOW*, 28(2), 33–52. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.28.2.604>
- Walsh, K. (2015). Decolonial pedagogies walking and asking. Notes to Paulo Freire from AbyaYala. *Inter-national Journal of Lifelong Education*, 34(1), 9–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2014.991522>
- Whitehead, K. (2016). Motherhood as a gendered entitlement: Intentionality, “othering,” and homosociality in the online infertility community. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 53(1), 4–122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12093>
- Yunus, M. M., Osman, W. S. W., & Ishak, N. M. (2011). Teacher-student relationship factor affecting motivation and academic achievement in ESL classroom. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 2637–2641. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.04.161>