

# An exploration of pre-service teacher identity construction through visual and textual metaphors\*

Explorando la construcción identitaria de profesores en formación por medio de metáforas visuales y textuales

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## ABSTRACT

Research on teacher identity has expanded to include narratives about learning processes and teachers' becoming in a globalized world. This study investigates identity construction in an English language teacher education program, focusing on multimodal and globalized perspectives. Through a case-study narrative analysis approach, the study examines textual and visual metaphors of pre-service teachers, revealing complex ways they conceptualize their roles. Data from four pre-service teachers address tensions and possibilities of identity construction in a globalized context, and their imagined roles as English language teachers in a highly technologized world. This critical examination highlights the impact of multimodal literacy environments on teacher identity formation, emphasizing the situated and fluid nature of identity construction in a digital era.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, narrative analysis, pre-service teachers, teacher identity, visual and textual metaphors.

## RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga la construcción de la identidad en un programa de formación de profesores de inglés, centrándose en perspectivas multimodales y globalizadas. A través del análisis narrativo, se examinan las metáforas textuales y visuales de los

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera, análisis narrativo,

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futuros profesores, revelando las complejas formas en que conceptualizan sus funciones. Los datos de cuatro profesores en formación abordan las tensiones y posibilidades de la construcción de la identidad en un contexto globalizado, y sus funciones imaginadas como profesores de inglés en un mundo altamente tecnologizado. Este examen crítico pone de relieve el impacto de los entornos de alfabetización multimodal en la formación de la identidad docente, haciendo hincapié en la naturaleza situada y fluida de la construcción de la identidad en una era digital.

profesores en formación, identidad docente, metáforas visuales y textuales.

## Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world characterized by the pervasive use of technology across most facets of life, it becomes central to understand and problematize the social, cultural, political and economic factors and conditions that frame, and at times interfere with, English language teachers' positionings and identities (Harste & Kress, 2012; Moloney & Walker, 2007; Nguyen et al., 2024). The construction of English teachers' identities is traversed by cultural, political, social and economic configurations of forces. For example, the swift changes in the status of the English language in today's globalized world probes incessantly the identity of teachers as to whether the language is beneficial, an imposition, a consumerist and capitalistic tool, detrimental to local identities, or an eye-opening means to knowing other cultures.

Due to complex changes in English language education, motivated by globalization, English language teachers are confronted with an array of challenges that require them to reposition, reconceptualize, and renegotiate their identities as teachers. This has driven a line of research that has examined the sociopolitical dimensions that influence English language teacher identity construction (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Pennycook, 2001, 2007). English language teaching and education is, in this context, contested amidst waves of neoliberal policies (Peters, 2012; Themelis, 2021) that take language learning as instrumental for commercial exchanges, unilateral encounters with English speakers, and service based cyber communication. Consequently, the changing status and role of English and education in the globalized world requires on the part of teacher educators to delve into the processes of teacher identity configuration to reflect on the challenges globalization, technology and multimodality pose for the field of English language teaching in the Global South.

In exploring the intersection of language, discourse, and identity, it becomes evident that English language teachers' identities are not static but are constantly constructed, negotiated, and redefined within the contexts of contemporary discourses surrounding technology and English language education in a globalized society. As highlighted by Gee (2000), language and discourse are powerful tools in shaping individuals' identities, influencing how they perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Therefore, it is crucial to delve into how pre-

service language teachers navigate and conceptualize their identities amidst the prevailing discourses that valorize technology and English proficiency as essential skills in a globalized world.

Pre-service language teachers are particularly susceptible to the influence of dominant discourses surrounding technology and English in a globalized world due to their formative stages of professional development. As they undergo preparation to become language educators, they are exposed to various ideologies, pedagogical approaches, and expectations regarding their subjective positionings in society (Barkhuizen, 2019; Norton, 2013; Ricento, 2005). These discourses not only shape their perceptions of their roles as teachers but also impact their sense of identity and efficacy within the profession.

The purpose of this paper is to engage in a critical examination of how a group of English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers conjure up their identities and how these intersect with broader socio-cultural and technological landscapes of English language education. The exploration of how pre-service teachers imagine and conceptualize their identities is undertaken through textual and visual metaphors which they were encouraged to generate. The significance of this study lies in its methodological and theoretical lens, incorporating narrative analysis and a socio-semiotic perspective. By using narrative analysis, it delves into the personal and professional stories of pre-service teachers, exploring how their identities and positionings are constructed and negotiated over time. Simultaneously, the socio-semiotic perspective allows for a deeper understanding of the meaning-making processes involved in their engagement with dominant discourses, particularly those related to technology and the global status of English.

The overarching question guiding this study is:

How do pre-service teachers imagine and conceptualize their (developing) identities at the interplay between technology and the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world?

## Conceptual framework: Narrative analysis

The investigation of the narratives of teachers in initial education is a field of little and recent interest. Barahona (2014) includes an account of interviews with Chilean students in professional practice with the

purpose of accounting for the teaching identity of English teachers. In other fields such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology, the study of narratives (e.g., Labov & Waletzky, 1967) is generally associated with identity studies (Bamberg, De Fina, & Schiffrin, 2008). Although narratives have long played an important role in sociolinguistic studies, the growing interest in narrative inquiry as in narrative analysis has led some to speak of the “narrative turn” (Georgakopoulou, 2007).

As a methodological tool, narrative inquiry in language teacher education has been used by Bell (2002), Johnson and Golombek (2007) and Pavlenko (2002), among others. As pointed out by Vásquez (2011), it is necessary to make some distinctions regarding the use of narratives in identity research. On the one hand, it is essential to distinguish between narrative inquiry and narrative analysis. Georgakopoulou (2007) mentions that narrative inquiry is interested in the what of the narrative, while narrative analysis is interested in the how. Vásquez (2011) adds that narrative inquiry focuses more on what the content of the narrative reveals about identity, while narrative analysts study discursive features in detail in order to identify identity aspects (p. 540). Another distinction Vasquez points out is between large and small narratives. Favoring, as we do, the option for small stories, Vasquez proposes that it is time to change the big stories that were generated from interviews, clinical encounters, autobiographical writing and other interrogative methods, for small stories, particularly when “the focus of the research is on the identities of individuals” (p. 538).

It is worth noting that a significant portion of narrative studies have focused predominantly on the linguistic (verbal or textual) recounts of individuals’ experiences. However, much less attention has been given to other forms of meaning-making through which people also make sense of the world and of themselves. Kress (2003, 2010) highlights the centrality of an array of semiotic, multimodal systems that allow people—from the onset of humanity—to construe their life stories, experiences and interactions with the world through image, gestures, movement, color, sound, among others. While we value the place of verbal and textual forms of language in narrative studies, we capitalize on the role of visual images as conduits for conveying nuanced meanings that help us construe our stories, selves and identities (Harste & Kress, 2012).

To integrate the multimodal nature of meaning-making into methodological procedures, recent studies have employed ‘techno-reflective narrative interviews’ (TRNI). Zhang (2024) investigated second language learners’ identities and language learning investment in an English as a medium of instruction (EMI) setting through a digital multimodal composing project. According to Zhang (2024), TRNIs are useful methodological tools as they provide “spaces for students to negotiate their multiple identities through multimodal artifacts, especially the fluid identities defined social domains” (p. 998).

In this paper, we use the methodology of narrative analysis and extend it to the analysis of visual narratives. In particular, we take a critical position when investigating teacher identity, following Georgakopoulou (2007) when she points out that “it is in the details of speech (including narratives) that identities can be conjugated, reworked and, in more or less variable and subtle ways, invoked” (as cited by Vásquez, 2011, p. 540). At the same time, we opted for small stories, since they allow us to address in situ how identities are constructed and performed in local and situated contexts, as is the case of the visual and verbal descriptions of the self-image of the participants in this case study. In this regard, Vásquez quotes Freeman (2007) “the self-image that is constructed in small stories is more fully anchored in social life” (p. 539).

## Narrative identity and language learning

To understand narrative identity, it is vital to look at where and how narrative intersects with identity. Narratives are essentially stories, or assemblages of meanings that help in the process of how people make life experiences meaningful (Barkhuizen, 2016). Narratives, or storytelling, according to Bruner (2006), are vital in our sense-making processes of the world and our specific place within it. Narratives, which can be of different kinds such as written, verbal, multimodal or digital (Barkhuizen, 2016; Zhang, 2024), are effective avenues through which individuals understand, make sense of and reflect upon themselves, their positioning in the world, and the social, cultural and political conditions that enable or constrain it. As such, narrative identity may be seen as a theory that attempts to explain how individuals construct and keep a sense of themselves by means of the stories they tell themselves and others. McAdams and McLean (2013) mention that narra-

tive identity “reconstructs the autobiographical past and imagines the future in such a way as to provide a person’s life with some degree of unity, purpose, and meaning” (p. 233).

Narrative identity is central to how language teachers construe their selves in the language learning and teaching process. In their article on the state of the art in research on identity, language learning and social change, Norton and Toohey (2011) mention that there has been an explosion of interest in studying identity in relation to language learning and point out that the concept of identity appears in most encyclopedias and books on language learning and teaching, such as (McKinney & Norton, 2008; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Ricento, 2005). In the field of second language acquisition, this interest gained relevance after Firth and Wagner’s (1997) call for taking into account the interactional and contextual dimensions of language use. To this end, more recent studies have paid attention to the attributes, conditions and characteristics of the social context within which teachers develop, construct and negotiate their identities. Neupane and Gnawali (2023) identify the need for a comprehensive analytical approach that considers what (content), where and when (context), how (form), and who and why (agency and discourse) of the story.

Regarding the methods for studying identity in the language learning process, Norton and Toohey (2011) mention at least three issues pertaining to identity studies in language learning, two of which are of interest for this paper. One of them is related to the problem of structure and agency that the researcher must consider in order to account not only for how structural conditions and social practices position or frame individuals but also for how individuals struggle to situate themselves in the contexts in which they find themselves (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 427). Another methodological problem, related to the previous one, has to do with the search for “a better understanding of how political and economic issues interact with language learning, constraining and enabling human action” (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 427). Researchers who follow this methodological line generally resort to the conceptual approach advocated by Foucault (1979). For the narrative analysis presented here the concept of power is understood as discursively produced, reproduced and legitimized, which at the same time is consistent with the approach of critical discourse studies, in particu-

lar, the line of critical discourse studies in education (Rogers & Mosley, 2013).

In this regard, Park (2009) in her research on the identity of Korean women in teacher education programs defines the concept of identity as multiple, socially and discursively constructed, contradictory and fluid. For their part, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) cite Flores and Day (2006) in defining the development of teacher identity as “an ongoing and dynamic process that involves making sense and (re)interpreting one’s values, experiences” (p. 762).

## Language teacher identity

Language teacher identity is a complex construct that has gained significant attention in the area of language education. Scholars have emphasized the importance of understanding how language teachers perceive themselves, their roles, and their professional identities within the broader socio-cultural and educational contexts (Barahona & Toledo-Sandoval, 2022; Borg, 2015; Gong & Gao, 2024; Johnson & Golombek, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Mathews et al., 2025; Riffo-Salgado, 2024; Weinmann et al., 2024). Furthermore, language teacher identity has become a central dimension to understand language teachers’ development and performance (Varghese et al., 2005) because it contributes to the process of teachers’ being and becoming. To this end, language teacher identity is not to be viewed as a static concept but rather as a dynamic and evolving construct that is influenced by various personal, social, and contextual factors (Varghese et al., 2005). Eslamdoost et al. (2020) further add that teacher identity is, first and foremost, dynamic in nature, and that “is mediated by myriad factors that are both personal and external to the teacher” (p. 327).

Language teacher identity has been studied in different contexts and from different angles. Sarasa (2017), for example, uses narrative inquiry in her investigation of the identity of 24 students in an English teacher education program at an Argentine university. The author poses a similar question to our study, “How do undergraduates narrate this negotiation of their unfolding teacher identity?” (p. 28). Sarasa’s results indicate that the participants in the study exert their agency in the personal and temporal (re)investments they make regarding the sequencing of their career curriculum and the acquisition of their teach-

ing identity. The author mentions that one of the contributions of her study is that it has allowed seeing how these future teachers recognized their real, lived and curricular trajectories. Sarasa's study also made it possible to understand "the differential gap between the future-oriented timing of the curriculum and the individual paces —circular, digressive, turning backwards, forwards or static— of the student's lived time" (p. 39).

Another study that has contributed to our understanding of language teacher identity is that of Barahona (2016). The study argues that the activity of learning to teach English as a foreign language should be guided by the formation of a teaching identity. Her analysis shows that the construction of identity is dialectical in nature and occurs in a continuum between interpersonal and intrapersonal processes which concurs with postructuralist definitions of identity as dynamic, iterative, non-static, and shaped by personal and external factors (Eslamdoost et al., 2020; Morita, 2004). Barahona states that "teacher identity is a dynamic, constant process of incorporating the professional and the personal sides of being a teacher in a community" (p. 113).

Similarly, Barahona and Toledo-Sandoval (2022) explore the multiple dimensions and conflicts that contribute to Chilean pre-service teachers' identity construction. Framed through a sociocultural lens, the study examined the identity trajectories of seven pre-service teachers they developed as they went through their English language teacher education courses. Findings of the analysis of various data sets revealed that the development of language teacher identity was a slow, recursive process that was influenced by a range of interactions and episodes of conflict in practice. In conclusion, the studies conducted by Barahona and Toledo-Sandoval (2022) underscore the complexity and dynamism of language teacher identity construction, highlighting the importance of considering sociocultural contexts and interactions in the process.

## Visual and textual metaphors

To situate the role visual and textual metaphors as meaning making resources, especially in the process of imagining and conceptualizing identity construction, reference must be made to social semiotics. Social semiotics is a multidisciplinary field that examines how meaning is

created and communicated through social and cultural practices using a variety of semiotic resources, including language, images, gestures, symbols, and artifacts (Chandler, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2005). It explores how these semiotic resources are used in different social contexts to convey complex messages, construct identities, and negotiate power dynamics. Social semiotics recognizes that meaning-making is a socially situated process shaped by cultural norms, ideologies, and social structures (Bezemer & Kress, 2016; Hodge & Kress, 1988). By analyzing the interplay between semiotic resources and social practices, social semioticians seek to understand how meaning is produced, interpreted, and contested in everyday interactions. This approach allows researchers to uncover the underlying meanings embedded within texts, images, and other forms of communication, providing insights into the ways in which individuals and groups make sense of the world around them.

The metaphorical analysis presented in this study includes three dimensions. The visual metaphors (metaphor in images) of students in initial teacher education are analyzed in search of the metaphorical conceptual structure (metaphor in thought) that motivates the metaphorical representations, in conjunction with the analysis of the metaphors nested in the textual versions (metaphor in language). This three-dimensional approach resembles what Forceville & Urios-Aparisi (2009) call multimodal metaphorical analysis, to which we added the field model and visual grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). In this respect, Steen (2011) and other metaphor scholars (e.g., Cienki & Müeller, 2008; Forceville, 2002; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009) have proposed a new and improved version of the Conceptual Theory of Metaphor (CTM) that can account for alternative forms of metaphorical expression such as gestures, images, and other modes of symbolization.

Pictorial images are a powerful semiotic resource for its high propositional content (Sedivy, 1997, p. 95), which can be metaphorical or literal. Unlike literal images, the content of metaphorical images or visual metaphors require a cross-reference between two fields of knowledge. This is clearly illustrated in the example of the conceptual metaphor 'our company is a racing team' provided by Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) who point out that to understand corporate labeling (one field

of knowledge) it is necessary to refer to our knowledge of how people (another field of knowledge) possess traits such as growth, flexibility, dynamism, connectivity, among others.

The relevance of the multimodal model in research in linguistics applied to language teaching and learning is highlighted by Low (2003, p. 239) when he mentions that “with the development of social semiotic approaches to language and literacy, and particularly of conceptual metaphor theory, metaphoric models have become increasingly popular as means for examining the nature of language teaching and learning”. The participants in our study are not only learning a second language but are learning it in order to teach it in the future; therefore, they find themselves at the intersection of constructing their identities as language learners along with their teaching identity and who they are becoming.

## Methodology

Following a case-study qualitative methodology, a group of ten pre-service teachers were asked to draw and narrate in writing how they saw themselves as teachers of English in a globalized and technologized world. The participants were pre-service teachers undertaking an Applied Linguistics subject at a state university in Santiago, Chile, in their third year within an English language teacher education program. In their seventh semester, when the data was collected, they were having their first exposure to teaching in schools through an observation activity. To protect participants’ privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used. An overview of the profile of participants is provided in Table 1 below. Of the seven participants that completed both the visual and textual narratives, we selected four that provided the longest narratives. As a prompt for this activity, they were shown a series of drawings of students from previous classes who had been asked to illustrate the process of learning a second language and that we reported in Farías and Veliz (2016). The participants were given a week to bring and share their drawings with the class. They sent to the Moodle platform the written description of their drawing and signed an informed consent form establishing the ethical protocol of the study.

We approached the corpus of four visual and textual texts as multimodal narratives motivated by a situated social practice. The analy-

sis focuses on metaphors that describe a moment in the construction of the participants’ identity as teachers, which is conceived as a fluid, open and contextualized process.

Table 1  
*Overview of participants’ profile*

| Participant’s name<br>(pseudonym) | Age range | Gender | Year of study |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Esteban                           | 21        | Male   | 3             |
| Karina                            | 21        | Female | 3             |
| Paula                             | 22        | Female | 3             |
| Alejandra                         | 21        | Female | 3             |
| Erika                             | 22        | Female | 4             |
| Maria                             | 21        | Female | 3             |
| Eugenia                           | 22        | Female | 3             |
| Valeria                           | 21        | Female | 3             |
| Susana                            | 21        | Female | 3             |
| Mireya                            | 21        | Female | 3             |

Analysis

These textual and pictorial narratives by pre-service teachers describe a temporal transition from one state-of-affairs to another and in which an assemblage of meanings is organized to represent aspects and instances in the construction of teacher identity. These narratives attract and deploy meanings from the local culture and the particular context that prompted them: a Chilean university program that prepares teachers of English for the educational system.

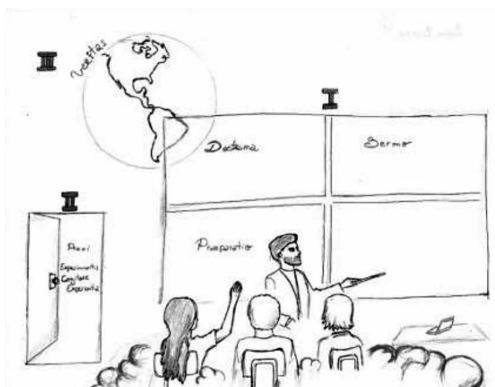
Most of the visual texts in the collected corpus use colors in the representation of teacher identity and in almost all the images, the teacher is at the center. From the teacher as the center, future students are pictorially placed in various formats-circular, linear, collaborative.

Each image and text are unique and particular in its representation of the individual vision of teacher identity or imagined professional future. However, it is also possible to identify common traits (sociocognitive dimension, shared mental models) that account for similar contexts (same institution, same program, similar previous educational experiences, same age range).

For the purposes of this paper, four images and the corresponding narrative texts were analyzed:

Figure 1

*Pictorial image 1*



In Figure 1, there are several pictorial elements that reveal aspects of how this pre-service teacher, Esteban, imagines and conceptualizes their identity. The first element that can be observed in Figure 1 is what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) call 'the visual structure' (p. 45), which refers to the order, position and structure of the elements deployed in the visual image. In this image, we can clearly observe the physical distribution of the place the teacher occupies in relation to, for example, the students. This offers insights into how the pre-service teacher envisions their role and position within the educational context. The structure of the visual elements, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), should not be treated arbitrarily, thinking that they only reproduce the structures of the social order of our reality. In this pictorial representation, the teacher points, by extending his index finger (indexing), to a blackboard or screen depicted as a four-panel window through which students can observe the world and access new knowledge. This window is located in front of the students and slightly above their visual field, clearly suggesting the presence of elements of control, inscribed in three of the panels through the Latin titles of *Preparatio*, *Doctrina* and *Sermo*. Through the window, the world is represented by the American continent and labeled also in Latin as *Veritas*. As outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the visual structure encompasses the arrangement and organization of elements within the image, providing

cues about power dynamics and relationships. This also evidences the interplay of a variety of elements pertaining to the classroom and the globalized world that shape the pre-service teacher's positioning in the world (Borg, 2015; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

The textual narrative reveals the elements and conditions that contribute to the construction of this particular pre-service teacher's identity. For example, he metaphorically uses the concept of 'fog' to refer to the subordinate and subjugated position of students in relation to the power represented by the teacher and knowledge which shows how the pre-service teacher engages in identity construction in a context of clear power dynamics (Bourdieu, 1991). He narrates that "they [the students] had been hidden from lighting (knowledge), nonetheless they are now seeking for a better understanding of the world, emerging from the shadows that used to hinder them". In order for students to successfully access and attain knowledge, they must systematically follow certain procedural stages clearly established in the image and illustrated by Roman numerals. This sequential path starts in I (*Doctrina*, *Sermo*, *Preparatio*) represented by the window, continues with II (*Praxi*, *Experimentis*, *Cogitare*, *Experiantia*) portrayed by the door, and ends in III (*Veritas*) represented by the world. The door, which is also at the front and which, as the pre-service teacher narrates, has been deliberately opened by the teacher so that students can put into practice the knowledge delivered by him. The computer (laptop) on the teacher's desk, and not the students', could represent different scenarios such as the importance of the use of technological resources in the teacher's pedagogical practices or the powerful media function of information technologies on how and where we access different forms of knowledge. All this reveals, in light of existing literature (e.g. Eslamdoost et al., 2020; McNamara, 1997; Tajfel, 1981), that multiple factors contribute to the development of identity which, at times, become sites of struggle, tension or conflict.

Through the arrangement of the different elements in the image, i.e., the position of the teacher and the students, the structured steps for knowledge and practice, the cloudy and subordinate position of the students, it is possible to say that there is a clear and imposing conceptual metaphor of knowledge as 'an object' (physical object) or as 'light', as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) point out. This transformation or transition

from 'darkness' to 'light,' or from 'not possessing' to 'possessing' implies an unequal relationship between the teacher and the students where one delivers, transmits and opens the windows of knowledge so that the others can receive it, and thus ascend from darkness to light. The metaphorical representation of the visual image and written narrative evidence the presence of certain conceptual and mental structures that are closely related to those found in Marchant's (1992) analysis of the metaphors used by future teachers, which include 'the teacher as authority,' 'the teacher as director,' 'the teacher as referee,' among others.

In Figure 2, the pre-service teacher, Karina, sees herself as a teacher at the center of the image, with both hands open in offering her knowledge to her future students that are represented by their heads from which different worlds emerge. While this may conjure up the idea of a teacher 'in control,' we argue that the central positioning of the teacher within the image symbolizes her perceived role as a focal point of knowledge and guidance for their future students. Moreover, the representation of the students' heads from which different worlds emerge adds depth to the narrative and underscores the teacher's connectedness to and positioning within a globalized world. Besides, this depicts recognition of the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of their future students.

Figure 2

*Pictorial image 2*



The heads are connected to her hands by bubbles of different colors, and the students' faces exhibit different shades of colors. In this image, the pictorial self-identity depicts a young woman using red lipstick and nail polish. Her textual narrative mentions that that is the way she sees herself as a future teacher of English in a globalized world and describes that we can see a woman "who is at the front because she is the teacher". The depiction of her teacher identity reveals aspects of intrapersonal and interpersonal elements (Barahona, 2016) that contribute to an imagined identity that facilitates her students' access to knowledge and the world. She adds that her hands are open because "she is giving the necessary tools to the students so they can expand their world and open their minds". In front of the teacher are her students, "where everyone has a different world on their heads, as everyone sees the world in a different way, and all will open different doors in the future". In her narrative, we identify what we found in Fariás and Veliz (2016) study that most pre-service teachers of English see the process of language learning/acquisition as a purely cognitive and individual endeavor, which is patently evident in the picture of open heads as empty receptacles that receive the teacher's knowledge. Overall, Figure 2 offers a compelling insight into the pre-service teacher's conception of their identity within the teaching profession. Through visual elements and symbolic representations, the image conveys the teacher's sense of purpose, responsibility, and commitment to fostering learning and growth among their students. It highlights the multifaceted nature of teacher identity, encompassing roles as a facilitator, mentor, and advocate for student learning and well-being.

Unlike Figure 1 and 2, Figure 3 does not represent the teacher-student relationship in a hierarchical order by placing the teacher in front and the students at the back.

Figure 3  
*Pictorial image 3*



The visual structure of the elements used in the construction of the pictorial meaning is rather parallel, placing an individual, who does not distinguish between teacher or student, on the right, a series of icons related to information technology on the left, and a hand holding the world at the center of the image. Part of this pre-service teacher's (Paula) written narrative accounts for her belief system and conceptualizations of the student-teacher relationship when she points out that: "I identify the teacher with the student as a fellow learner who has to deal with many of the same challenges and make use of many of the same tools as his/her students. For this reason, I am calling my drawing "The teacher/student of English today".

This narrative clearly alludes to the student and teacher as learners who, in her view, share some of the same challenges. In addition, she clearly expresses that she does not want to emphasize the distinction between teachers and students, which evidences a strong inclination towards shared roles and responsibilities in terms of teaching and learning. From this perspective, control, power, authority, and teaching and learning processes are shared among the main agents involved in such practices, teachers and students. Undoubtedly, this representation has very important implications for

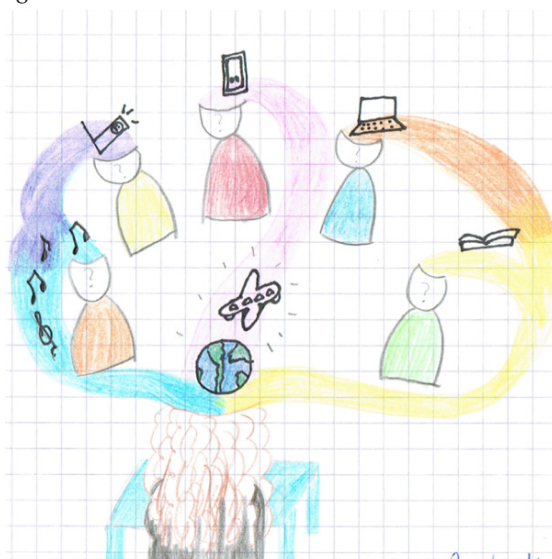
the future pedagogical practices of this student-teacher who will certainly consider students as actors in the teaching process and not as empty containers to be filled with knowledge. In this regard, Honyan Mak (2011) postulates that teachers' beliefs act as filters of the way they conceive their practices. Another important element in this image is what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) call the 'visual configuration' and 'contact'. The individual depicted in the image is not facing forward looking at the reader/viewer but looks sideways and we see a profile looking at both a series of encircled icons referring to technological gadgets and possibly to the world she holds in her left hand. This visual configuration establishes an indirect contact with the reader/viewer that, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, involves a social relationship of affinity with not only the semiotic symbols present in the image but also with the world and reality in general. The pre-service teacher, in her narrative, tells us that "the main figure in the image is the profile of an open head looking at a group of bubbles full of icons about information and communication technologies". The contact that the individual in the image seems to have with the various technological resources seems to be quite relevant in the processes of teaching and learning, which naturally points to the centrality of integrating multimodality in teaching. The use of books, music, video, social networks, cameras, and other technological resources, as evidenced in the image, occupy a central place in the view of this student-teacher, who surely has a deep conviction that learning does not occur only through that 'window' that the teacher opens to enlighten the students (image 1) but also in the daily and everyday practices of the students. Learning through the use of these technological devices is portrayed as happening in the head of the teacher/student and includes different types of knowledge: physics, mathematics, language, emotions. Within this context, we can clearly see the need to incorporate pedagogies of multiliteracies (Rowse et al., 2008) that can account for the complex socio-semiotic landscape we experience daily.

By reading and interpreting the different elements in Figure 3, we can obtain a holistic view of the multiple and complex identity aspects of the student-teacher. Harste and Kress (2012) point out that "just as we express our identity through speech and writing, so too do we express our identity in how we approach and produce images and how

we produce them” (208). Thus, what is revealed is the clear motivation and inclination of the pre-service teacher to exploit methodologically and pedagogically the different technological modalities in the pedagogical processes.

Figure 4

*Pictorial image 4*



In Figure 4, we find a reiteration of the space distribution we saw in the other narratives: a teacher in front of students. The teacher is sitting at her desk, and students are placed in a circle looking and listening to her. Each student is painted in a different color, “which means that every student has a different way of learning”, mentions the author (Alejandra) of this narrative to acknowledge that part of her teacher identity includes the respect for diversity. By representing each student in a distinct color, the narrative highlights the teacher’s awareness of the multifaceted nature of learning and her role in fostering an inclusive learning environment. The image encapsulates the teacher’s process of identity construction as she navigates the diverse needs of her students. Through the visual portrayal of the classroom dynamics —students seated in a circle— and the symbolic use of color, the narrative conveys the teacher’s commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where every student is valued and respected for their unique abilities and perspectives.

Another recurring element in this image is the picture of the world and technological devices. These pre-service teachers' identity regards the process of language learning as a means to know the world by travelling or gaining knowledge in different domains and the presence of technological resources attest to their understanding that they serve as pedagogical tools. The author of Figure 4 writes: "the message that I want to give is to help my students to learn English through technology and give them all the tools that I have got".

## Conclusions

Each image and text speak for themselves. Despite the small number of participants, the mediating role of technologies in the teaching process is evidenced as a new dimension of these pre-service teachers' identity. The centrality of the teacher as an actor and guide in the cognitive, affective and social trajectories of her students is highlighted, as well as the role of English in intercultural communication, as it is considered a lingua franca in a diverse and globalized world. Despite some of the clear tensions and conflicts (Barahona & Toledo-Sandoval, 2022; Eslamdoost et al., 2020) in participants' pictorial and textual narratives to do with their positioning in a multi-modal and globalized world, pre-service teachers acknowledge the centrality of their roles as future teachers and are willing to invest into guiding their students along the paths of knowledge. Another interesting element to highlight is that all participants imagined and positioned themselves in connection with the world, which, for some, was depicted as one highly technologized. This is an important attribute that emerges in their being and becoming, as it relates to their role as teachers of English in paving paths that allow them and their students to connect with the world through English as 'world language,' and through the medium of global technologies that influence their thinking and doing, as asserted by one of the participants: "I believe that we have to work together (teacher-technology and pupils) to improve the skills of the students using technology".

As for future possible research paths, exploring the construction of teacher identities among pre-service teachers at various stages of their preparation and across different institutional contexts presents an intriguing avenue for further research. By examining how contextual fac-

tors influence the formation of teacher identities, researchers can gain deeper insights into the complex interplay between individual experiences, institutional frameworks, and broader socio-cultural influences. Considering, as Sarasa (2017) says, the fluctuating investments, reinvestments and digressions in the use of time by students in initial teacher education, the analysis of visual and textual metaphors that depict their identity can be incorporated into the curriculum in order to provide the opportunity to reflect on the projections of teacher identity.

Even though these narratives were shared among participants and teacher, the interpretation stage is asymmetrical considering that the hermeneutic power resides in the teacher (one of the authors) who is here communicating these findings to the specialized community. Another further stage to be implemented is the in-depth group discussion of the narratives to explore and unveil their metaphors and connotations in light of micro, meso and macro frames of references, as for example, the role of technologies in the classroom, educational policies, the status of both English and educators in today's world.

These results can provide guidelines for initial teacher education to prepare English teachers capable of efficiently maneuvering amidst a globalized and technologized world and with a clear awareness of the diversity in each human group.

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